# Adele Keke Village Profile

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## The Site in Time and Place

Adele Keke is located on the right hand side of the road from Dire Dawa to Harar. It is almost 2,000 metres above sea level on the "great plateau of Harar" and is very close to Lake Adele which is seasonal (usually from the end of July and until September). Adele Keke is a very large Peasant Association consisting of 28 villages. Some are up to four kilometres apart while others like Kejero Oli and Kejero Gadi are very close to each other. Except for *ganda* Tabia and *ganda* Kusho (*ganda* =village) the villages are dotted here and there on hilly areas and on the ridges of mountains. Floods running down from hills and mountains have formed small and large gullies.

The total population of the PA is more than 4,500. There are 1,300 households of which 56 are headed by women. Proximity to the motorway has enabled the villagers to make frequent trips to urban centres. Going to the towns of Dire Dawa, Alemaya and Harar is regarded in a similar way to visiting a neighbouring PA.

The PA is in the *weyna dega* (temperate) climatic zone of the country. The Harar plateau has an average maximum temperature of 26🔾C and an average minimum of 15🔾C. The major rainy season, called *ganna*, extends from mid-June to mid-October. *Bad'eisa* is the local term given to the minor rainfall (*belg*) season which occurs from February to May. In some years *bad'eisa* rains do not come, for instance, in 1994. The dry season lasts from November through February. When there are heavy rains with resulting floods, communication between villages and travel to urban centres is briefly hampered but rarely for a whole day.

The temperature becomes relatively cold at the end of the *ganna* rains and the area remains cold until December. October is the coldest month; frost (*hamaday*) occurs which can affect all plants except eucalyptus and barley. All the dry season months are hot with temperatures of varying degrees. The heat does not cause problems for people or crops. The harvest of *chat*, which is a perennial crop, drastically decreases at this season.

The peasants of Harar plateau, including Adele Keke, depend for their living on the production of a wide range of crops, supplemented by animal breeding. Cash crops include *chat*, coffee and potatoes, cereals are sorghum, maize, wheat, and barley, and the pulses grown include beans, chickpeas, and haricot beans. In Adele Keke maize and then sorghum are the primary food crops cultivated. Wheat, barley, field peas, fenugreek, potatoes, cabbage, onions and sugar beet are produced to a lesser extent. After *chat*, potatoes are the major cash crop grown. As it is a source of good income, to have a big, high quality *chat* orchard is the dream of local farmers. The growing production of *chat* constitutes a major change in the local production system. More than 75% of the arable land of the PA is now covered with *chat* trees, and farmers speculate that in five years they will cover almost 100%. Plots of land are not reserved either for *belg* or *meher* seasons, although land that can retain water longer is preferred for *belg* cultivation. Usually the same land is used twice a year

## History

The Oromo are thought to have arrived on the Harar plateau in the 16th century. Then they were migratory herders. They had a long history of fighting with the Harari farmers and the Amirs of Harar. A gradual transformation of their economy took place and they became settled agriculturalists combining stock breeding. By the beginning of the 19th century the relationship between Harari and Oromo had developed into one of mutual economic interdependence. The Oromo of Adele Keke say they adopted the production of *chat* from Harari farmers. There was also some intermarriage between the two groups. At the end of the 19th century, the area was incorporated into the Abyssinian empire and fell under the political control of the emperor. The political organisation of the Oromo, based on the age-grade system, was affected and gradually disappeared.

The old dry-weather road from Harar to Kersa and then to Gara Muleta through Dawwe (which was abandoned a long time ago) was constructed by the local forced or free labour at the time of the imprisonment of Emperor Iyasu at Gara Muleta in about 1920. The road from Adele Letena to Grawa was built in a similar manner during the same period. The road from Harar to Dire Dawa was constructed during the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie before the Italian invasion by an Arab contractor called Sale Jamal. An old man who was a foreman on that construction was paid 20 *birr* for one week's labour plus one bucket of sorghum. The daily labourers were paid one *birr* and one bucket of sorghum for one day. During their five year occupation the Italians repaired and improved this road and constructed and re-erected bridges.

In 1936, when Emperor Haile Selassie left the country, the road from Harar to Kersa (which has now been abandoned) was built. Water wells were sunk by the Italians but were not used since they were suspected of being poisoned. They were filled with stones and soil and the inhabitants dug their own well later. This was also dirty since it did not have a cover. The Italians built small bridges and a gravel road from Harar to Dire Dawa, and introduced *goboni* (field peas). Trees were planted along the main road from Harar to Dire Dawa in the early 1940's. In 1945 pesticides were used to eradicate an armyworm infestation. The health clinic in Kersa was built by the *wereda*'s population (including Adele Keke) and the government in the early 1950's.

In 1961, about 31 types of vegetables were introduced by the Ministry of Agriculture. In 1963 fertilisers and improved seeds were introduced and tried by an American in the MoA. Credit for fertiliser provision was started at about the same time. Veterinary services, including vaccination and cross-breeding of cattle, was started by EPID in 1964. In the 1960's "Pipe Tabia" was constructed by Haile Selassie's government. Adele school was built in 1971. Extension services were started by EPID (MoA) in the 1970's. A well with a proper lid was dug by the government, with local participation, after a foreigner took a photo of a farmer's dirty well and showed it to local government officials. In 1984, many crops were damaged due to armyworm and cold. In 1985 many people suffered hardship due to severe drought; about 90% of the expected harvest was lost. The crisis killed more than 40 people and many livestock. Many men migrated to urban centres to seek daily labour and possibly beg. Many people suffered severe hardship in 1990 as a result of massive rainfall and armyworm infestation that destroyed more than half of the harvest. In 1994 drought and armyworm hit the area some four months ago. The swarms were contained by the MoA. Now peasants are expecting a relatively poorer harvest. Some crops show stunted growth.

The activities of the *Derg* affected the site in many ways. The 1975 Land Proclamation was a big advantage to the peasantry. In 1979 the literacy campaign was started in the area. During the same year, a Service Cooperative with one workshop, one tractor, one shop, and two flour mills was established. In 1980 soil and water conservation and tree plantation on mountains was started jointly by MoA and FAO and credit facilities to buy oxen for ploughing were made available. In 1984 the school of Adele Keke PA was built. In 1984 the Extension service reached Adele farmers. About 1986 improved seed varieties (of maize, sorghum, etc.) were made available by the government. In 1989 a workshop for the production and maintenance of farm equipment was established. It is no longer functioning but it is planned to restart services through the newly formed Service Cooperative. In about 1990 mills were built by the government with money borrowed from the World Bank.

National conscription took the sons of the area to battlefronts against their will. In 1983 and 84 the people paid 20 *birr* for the national call in the country. Farmers were organised in Producers' Cooperatives, in some places against their will. Those who refused membership had their land misappropriated by the P.C. The 1985 villagisation affected many people in the area including the residents of Adele Keke. The initial impacts were material and labour loss since people had to build new houses. Epidemics of human and animal diseases broke out in the PA (they did not know the reason) and killed some people and livestock. The villagers also faced the problem of reorientation to a new social environment as the 28 villages of the PA were drawn into three sites. The villagisation was carried out by force against the interests of the people and, since the demise of the *Derg*, people have returned and rebuilt houses at their former homestead sites. There were no resettlement programmes in the area. Many people who opposed the villagisation program were imprisoned, tied up and beaten, by *Derg* officials and their collaborators. Now the people remember the period with bitterness and dismay.

Since the coming to power of the transitional Government, conscription, Producers' Cooperatives and the old Service Cooperatives are no more. The Cooperatives were demolished by the will of the people. Farmers collected a relatively good harvest in the 1992/93 production year, which was attributed to sufficient rain and absence of frost. The new Service Cooperative was built some nine months before the fieldwork by 20 voluntary farmers. The society is now using its own language (Oromiffa) as a medium of instruction and as an official language in offices and courts. Since 1991 PA officials have not lost power in relation to the community elders; the two have begun to reinforce one another rather than coming into conflict.

The RRC report for the 1993 *meher* season suggested that the major cause of crop production shortfalls in Harerghe were displacement and tribal conflicts. According to this report East Harerghe was one of the most critically affected areas in the country and it suggested that in Alemaya *wereda* alone 10,000 people were affected for these and other reasons. However, it has not been reported that production in the PA was affected, although the enumerators in the household survey did have problems doing their work due to the local security situation.

## Social composition

The community of Adele Keke is part of the simple agricultural society of the Harar plateau where rules of tradition have a central place in day-to-day life. The community is formed of two ethnic groups, the Oromo and the Amhara. The former are the majority (more than 95%). While they are governed by Islamic rules and traditions they also, though covertly, worship their ancestors and *sheiks*, their religious fathers. The Amhara have been assimilated to the Oromo way of life apart from their religion (Orthodox Christianity) and language (Amharic). All of the Amhara are bilingual while the few Oromo who attended government schools can speak Amharic. Amharic is reserved for the family circle while Oromiffa is used in the daily life of the villagers as a whole.

Friendship and cooperation (excluding marriage) cut across ethnic boundaries. *Afosha* (*idir*), *wadaja* (communal prayer), sharecropping, and labour parties such as *guza*, *marro*, *ganamme*/*farakke* are performed irrespective of ethnic considerations. *Chat* chewing and male cloth wraps are Oromo traditions adopted by Amhara. The two ethnic groups have been cohabiting peacefully for a long time: the PA has not been affected by ethnic conflicts as in other parts of the country. Community members who leave the PA for migration or conscription are peacefully reintegrated when they come back. Some of the returnees are now cultivating land given to them by relatives or neighbours.

## The Seasonal Calendar

Table 1 shows the key features of the seasonal year in Adele Keke. Notable features are that the busiest harvesting month is October, when it is coldest; people eat rice and pasta in September, October and November (the months of weddings); people eat meat and chicken during the month of *Ramadan* (any month since it rotates); the hungry season is June, July and August; women borrow from shopkeepers in June and July; men borrow from moneylenders in July and August; people get malaria in September and October.

## The Farming World and Beyond

### Land

The folk conception of land is that it belongs to the creator God; yet people are not surprised to pay land tax. Before 1975 there were two land tenure systems. State land was distributed to tenants through agents (*garada*). One *garada* was given five *shibeta* (one *shibeta* = 20 *kindi*; one hectare = six *kindi*). The *garada* distributed four *shibeta* to tenants under him while he used one himself. Tenants paid 32.16 *birr* for one *shibeta*. Landlords and landladies rented their land on various terms to tenants and serfs.

The 1975 Land Proclamation gave land to the tiller who paid tax on his holdings. In 1975 every peasant household paid seven *birr*. In 1976, land distribution committees were formed, in accordance with government decrees, to reallocate land on the basis of head counts of family members. Two hectares of land were given per head; every household had to pay 20 *birr*. Now 20 *birr* is still paid by every household regardless of the amount of land held.

Mainly as a result of that equitable distribution, there are no landless families or households in the PA today. Sons who want to marry and start families are apportioned land from their parents' holdings. The son must also pay the 20 *birr* rent levied on every peasant, so tax may be paid twice for the same amount of land. Except for share-cropping and unacknowledged backdoor leasing new families do not usually get sufficient land. One *kindi* of land can be rented for up to 100 *birr* for one year. As land cannot be sold or bought, one cannot raise the issue of the price of land in the PA or the area in general. Widows are the only women who own any land in the PA.

There is land shortage due to over-population and some hard-working farmers go as far as Kersa (15 km) to rent land. The growing practices of intercropping and *chat* production are systematic strategies to alleviate the problem of land scarcity. Also, farmers cannot afford to raise many livestock due to shortage of grazing land.

Land disputes in the PA take two forms. Boundary disputes are considered by community elders in collaboration with the chairman of the PA. The *fird shengo*, the legal organ of the PA, is not involved and if presented with such a case, will refer it to community elders. If one of the parties to the dispute refuses to yield to the verdict the of elders, the person will be fined by the *fird shengo* for not accepting the ruling of the elders. In such cases there is no appeal. Age alone does not provide the status of eldership; it must be accompanied by a good knowledge of history, wit, intuition, and good oratorical skills.

The other form of dispute involves rows over mutual dealings between parties. These may involve share-cropping or other forms of voluntary agreement. The PA regards these as contractual disputes, and they can be solved by *fird shengo*, if the parties prefer a formal mode of litigation. In both forms of dispute elders have the most influence. Though the elders could not and do not want to interfere with the decisions of the PA, they can solicit plaintiffs to reconsider the issue before them.

### Livestock

Since the PA does not have much grazing land and there is a shortage of other animal feed, animal husbandry is a marginal activity. Cattle are the most common animals and the majority of households keep at least one ox or cow are kept for traction, sale and milk products. About 25% of the households own four to six heads of cattle, sheep or goats. A majority have 2 animals but about one third have none. Some farmers own donkeys. There are no mules or horses in the area because no-one, they say, needs them. Many households keep chickens. Chickens, milk and milk products are predominantly produced for sale, though people put milk in *hojja* (tea made of coffee husks). About 7-10% of the farmers in the PA own bee-hives and all these are of good economic standing in the PA. Since most houses are not compartmentalised, animals are kept with human beings.

Livestock are accumulated as a means of savings and investment. The total size of the animal population in the PA is dwindling. The epidemic of anthrax (*utallo*) that broke out in 1981 killed more than 60% of the animal population of the time. The *wereda* Agricultural Office tried to provide vaccinations but the drugs arrived after many of the animals were infected. The farmers believe the epidemic was contained with the help of a local medicine produced by an old man in the area. Another smaller epidemic broke out in 1985 killing 10 percent of the animal population. The *wereda* Agricultural Office intervened in time. Now the MoA provides a vaccination programme and cross-breeding of cattle through artificial insemination.

Many people had to sell their animals due to drought in 1985 and this year (1994). At the time of the research people did not have enough stored food, and the plants in the field were not ripe, so they were forced to sell their animals at cheap prices. During the 1992/93 production year the production of animals was profitable compared with the previous 10 years. In the year after the dissolution of Producers' Cooperatives farmers bought and kept additional animals as they could graze farm-margins and field weeds from their farms that had been under the rule of the P.C. The rains were also good that year. Thus they sold their animals at good prices. The price of a well-tended ox could rise to well over 1,500 *birr*.

### Crop Management

The main crops are sorghum, maize and *chat*. Apart from *chat*, which is perennial, maize and sorghum are cultivated only during the *meher* season. Barley and wheat are the two main graincrops grown in the *belg* season and farmers also cultivate potatoes for sale. Like *chat*, a certain amount of potato is consumed at home. Crops such as field peas, fenugreek, and sweet potatoes are grown on a smaller scale.

The farmers are used to practising diversified crop production so that the failure of one crop is balanced by yields from other crops. Due to land scarcity more than 90% of the land has been intercropped. This is encouraged by MoA extension workers and no land was mono-cropped in the 1993/94 agricultural year. Sorghum, maize, field peas, sugar beet and *chat* are the most frequently intercropped crops. However, the cultivation of grain crops is decreasing as farmers move into lucrative *chat* production. The farmers say this is a strategy to alleviate the problem of land shortage. The net return from *chat* is at least three times greater than that of grain crops.

Farmers sow traditional seeds and improved varieties of wheat, maize, onions and some other crops. The seeds are sold to them by the *wereda* Agricultural Office and recently by individual merchants.

Crop diseases are caused by *rammo* (stalk borer), *wag* (blights), and *deima* (*ouziz*). Blight is a fungal disease caused by excessive humidity which can affect any crop. *Deima* is caused by shortage of rain; usually it hits sorghum when it is near fruition. Frost may affect all crops in October.

Unlike the peasants of neighbouring Awaday and Alemaya, Adele Keke farmers do not irrigate their crops. They depend entirely on rain and produce and sell *chat* only during the major rainy season. However, at this time *chat* is harvested everywhere and its price tends to go down, so the Adele Keke farmers do not obtain enough income from their main cash crop and tend to live a relatively poor life. Some hard-working farmers who have good land retain water by constructing terraces or *daga* and use it to moisten the soil around the *chat* trees. These few farmers can sell their *chat* at high prices during the dry season.

Due to lack of rain, farmers did not cultivate any *belg* crops in 1994. Previously they have produced barley and some maize in this season. The harvests, however, have never been plenty; this is the minor rainy season of the area.

### Farm Labour

#### Household

Individuals are assigned to different tasks according to sex and age. Men are responsible for agricultural work, construction of houses, mending fences, digging water wells and pit granaries. All activities requiring muscular strength are performed by men including collecting, threshing and transporting crops to granaries. Cooking and childcare are the exclusive responsibilities of women. For the past twenty years women have helped their husbands in light farm activities and in transporting crops to threshing grounds. This is a change in their role. In general, sons help their fathers while daughters assist their mothers in performing light household activities. Both sons and daughters can serve as shepherds.

More than half of the agricultural labour force of the PA is supplied by family labour; the rest is performed by work groups, interlinkages and wage labour.

#### Work groups

There are three forms of work group: *ganamme*, *guza*, and *marro*. *Ganamme* usually involves young people performing light reciprocal agricultural activities during the mornings. *Marro* is similar except that it lasts the whole day. *Guza* is a non-reciprocal work group. An individual can choose whether to offer his labour when another requests it. The caller provides food, *chat*, and *hojja* to the volunteers. These are also served to *ganamme* and *marro*, although the amount is minimal and the providers do not feel obliged to provide as they do for *guza*. *Dimisha* (bride labour) is an exceptional form of group labour mobilised for the parents of the bride by the prospective husband. It is similar to *Guza*. The groom requests the free labour of his friends to serve his in-laws. Though *guza* and *dimisha* are not, prima facie, reciprocal, they both induce a feeling of indebtedness on the part of the mobiliser. He will, thus, respond positively to the others if they demand his labour similarly.

#### Interlinkages

Households are interlinked in various ways for mutual benefit or cooperation. Land can be exchanged for labour, though this has no fixed rules and no local term; partners reach agreements by themselves. Usually the old, the weak, and the widowed allocate all or part of their land to someone with the capacity to cultivate. Labour is sometimes exchanged for oxen; this is cooperation rather than a business-like transaction. Usually it takes place between kin, friends or neighbours.

A man with no oxen may demand the help of one who possesses oxen; the two cultivate their land in turn (*ida'ama*: "additional"). This takes place infrequently. Some poor farmers exchange their labour for crops particularly when there is acute shortage of food in the society. Again this is rare. It may be effected through mobilising *guza*. Some without animals exchange their labour for oxen. In share-cropping arrangements, the one who does not own the land is responsible for providing seeds and all the labour required to cultivate. The two share the harvest equally. Such practices have become more frequent in the PA recently due to shortages of land and plough oxen. Kin or lineage members are preferred in such arrangements, though this is not necessary. Muscular strength and good farming skills are taken into consideration when a partner is chosen. The local term for share-cropping is *shart'a.*

#### Wage work

Wage labour has a history of at least a century in the area. Labourers come from the community and from neighbouring PAs. People who supplement their livings by selling their labour for cash are those who lead a destitute life, due mainly to land shortage, and lack of good *chat* orchards and dependable heads of animals.

Farmers hire labourers for various reasons which include physical disability, health reasons, old age and the need to plant and harvest at times when family labour is insufficient. Farmers are always in a hurry to plant before the rain fails, to harvest before damage by sun, rain, animal destruction, or theft and to catch good prices in the market. Though it is accepted that selling one's labour is a sign of extreme impoverishment, it is not looked down upon by all standards. Widows chiefly depend on wage labour.

A labourer who does not require food provision is paid up to 10 *birr* for one day's work which is nearly seven hours. Those provided with food and shelter are paid 5 *birr* for similar work. Labourers who work under contract are paid from 300 to 400 *birr* for one year and provided with shelter and food. However, this is not a common phenomenon in the PA.

### Technology

Farming technology is still simple. Farmers use oxen-pulled ploughs, sickles, *dongora* (a ploughshare with a wooden handle) and a hand tool called *hakafa* (a crooked hand shovel). Cutting implements include *mencha* (a sickle-like implement), *qotto* (big axe), and *softu* (small axe). Some rich farmers in the neighbouring PAs of Alemaya *wereda* use water pumps and cultivate irrigated *chat*. This is not practised in Adele Keke, though a few dig wells to irrigate their *chat* orchards manually. The use of tractors is another big change in the farming system. Adele Keke farmers can hire a tractor for 70 *birr* an hour. The new Service Cooperative has one tractor which non-members can hire; the rest come from Alemaya and Awaday.

In many areas crops are stored in traditional granaries made from bamboo sticks smeared with wet dung and pits dug in the yard of the homestead. The pit is made by excavating a conical hole 6 or 7 feet deep and 5 to 7 feet in diameter at the base, 2 to 3 feet at the opening. Only the pit method is used in Adele Keke. Up to 20% of the stored crop is believed to be damaged by weevils.

People and donkeys carry grain to the stores; virtually nothing is lost between the field and storage bin. Fuel and wood are transported either by people or donkeys. If they are brought from urban centres, passenger vehicles can be hired.

The PA is linked to the towns of Dire Dawa, Dangago, Alemaya, and Harar by a main road. Commuters are charged 1 *birr* from Adele Keke to Dangago, Alemaya and Adele Kambo. The fee is 2 *birr* to Awaday and 4 *birr* to Harar and Dire Dawa. It is 4 kilometres to Dangago (40 minutes’ walk) and 7 to Alemaya.

### Innovations

These include new crop varieties such as *muyra* sorghum (about 1931), shorter wheat (1970s), bigger potatoes (1970's), *goboni* (haricot bean), *Chercher* sorghum (1972), *Shewaye* maize (about 1973), and *Bukkuri* maize. Forages of various kinds are now being introduced by the *Wereda* Agricultural Office. Other innovations include tree planting, terracing, fertiliser (c.1971); cross breeding (of local and Holstein cows), vaccination (of cows and oxen), tractors (c.1972), and modern ploughing equipment.

| *Innovations Considered Important by a PA Group* |
| --- |
| 1. Short wheat variety: introduced by the Ministry of Agriculture in the 1970's. It has a higher yield than other varieties and does not require much labour when threshing. It was advocated and demonstrated by the Ministry of Agriculture. All the villagers adopted it since it was successful. |
| 2. Big potato variety: this is larger in size than the other varieties and takes less time to grow. Farmers from the PA bought it from neighbouring villages and planted it. Many people started cultivating it because it was successful and there was no one who did not adopt it. However it requires a good deal of rain; when rain is short it does not yield as much. |
| 3. Fertiliser was introduced about 1971 by the Ministry of Agriculture (EPID) since the fertility of the soil had declined because of the cultivation of sorghum every year. Two farmers tried it first with much success. About 100 people then adopted the use of fertiliser. Some farmers who did not think it would be successful did not use it at first but started using the innovation later after proving its success on others' fields. Prices at the beginning were lower and people were encouraged to buy it. But later on, the price went up so that many peasants cannot afford to use it any more. |
| 4. *Shewaye* maize is white, with large seeds and a high yield compared to the traditional variety. It was proposed and demonstrated by the MoA in 1973. Although it was successful, only about 80 people adopted it. This variety is more vulnerable to weevils than the traditional variety and the bread made from it does not have a good taste or flavour. However people have continued using it. |
| 5. Tractors: a tractor was introduced in 1964 by a farmer who used it to cultivate his farm and hired it out for farmers, charging 7 *birr* for one hour's service. Following the first man, about four farmers bought tractors. Many farmers did not make use of them because the payment was not affordable. The tractors were confiscated by the former government to be used on the State Farms. |
| 6. Modern terracing was introduced in 1972 in order to prevent soil erosion. Measures were proposed and implemented by the Soil Conservation Department of the Ministry of Agriculture. These were successful both on the mountains and the farmland. Many people adopted this technology to get food as this was done under the Food for Work Programme. People thought that in marshy or flood plains these measures would retain too much water which could affect the plants. Hence, in these areas they preferred to construct drainage ditches to modern terracing. Modern terraces were constructed mainly in areas where they were demanded and thus they met the needs of the farmers. As this was done under the Food for Work Programme, many people did not work properly in order to work longer and get higher payments. In areas the programme did not reach farmers have constructed terraces by themselves. |

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### Common Property Resources

There are four types of land: cultivated, forest (on the hill sides and mountains), grazing and marshland. The farmers identify four types of soil on the basis of colour, texture, and productivity. *Ashewa* is a sandy soil suitable for the production of high quality *chat*; *kefara* is a reddish soil suitable for sorghum; *rare* (black soil) can be cultivable or marshy uncultivated land; and *badda* is a black soil with a very fine texture. *Rare* is also the term used for a wide perennial grazing land in the area.

Grazing lands are small and overgrazed. The terracing programme carried out by the Food for Work Programme on the mountains which were formerly used as grazing lands exacerbated the problem as the areas were protected until three years ago. For the last three years, however, households who live near the mountains have used them. Everyone in the PA has equal rights of access to grazing land, to the water pipe installed by the government, and to three pipes provided by SIDA. "Human Appeal" installed wells and hand pumps in 4 villages which people from other villages cannot use since the villagers contributed money and labour towards their construction. Poor villagers who did not contribute have access to them. They are commonly managed. There are problems of theft in the area, but informants said this phenomenon is not common in the PA.

### Environment

The mountains and hills have been eroded by rains. On the hill tops the soil is poor and stony, as there are no forests to create humus, and the rains have washed much of the surface soil down to the valleys. Villagers say that three years ago the vegetation of the area was in a good condition. The mountains were covered by plants and shrubs of various kinds jointly planted and protected by FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA). Now, except for some eucalyptus, cactus, and other naturally growing trees and undergrowth, the area is depleted of vegetation. The trees were cleared illegally during the momentary instability in the area during the transfer of power to the Transitional Government (1991). The wild vegetation of the area is now being protected by the MoA and the Peasant Association (PA). There are no afforestation or reforestation programmes.

Some farmers are making terraces to protect the soil and some are trying to revegetate the soil by planting trees and shrubs of various species; however it seems this is of no avail. A large portion of the green vegetation in the area has been cleared exacerbating the soil erosion. Afforestation is very slow and the ecological imbalance cannot be rapidly alleviated. The fertility of the soil has declined severely and the peasants are forced to use modern fertilisers (Dap and Urea) and organic fertiliser. They do not practise crop rotation. They are being encouraged by the MoA to plant legumes to restore the soil fertility.

### Off-farm Activities

#### Within the Community

Crop and animal production are not well supplemented by off-farm activities. Some sell their labour to those who can pay for it. About eight households in the community are shopkeepers in addition to farming and animal breeding. There are no leather workers, carpenters, potters, weavers or the like in the PA.

Members of the new Service Cooperative are supplementing their living by renting the flour mill and tractor services. They are planning to establish a workshop for the production and maintenance of farm implements. There are very few blacksmiths in the PA. People do not use brokers to sell *chat* but take and sell their own harvest in Dire Dawa and Awaday and other markets in the area.

#### Migration

This is not a common phenomenon in the PA or the area at large and only occurs in and extreme regional or national crisis (like the drought of 1985). Then strong men go to nearby urban centres to work as daily labourers. They send money back to their family. Very few people migrate to urban centres either for education or work.

## The Reproductive Domain

### Household Management

#### Tasks

Organising tasks, cleaning, washing, cooking, fetching water, collecting firewood, selling agricultural produce, budgeting are the main tasks involved in household management. The time spent on them is difficult to calculate. Budgeting is another aspect of household management. The wife has the right to spend as much as 20 *birr* without consulting her husband.

#### Technology

Women either use traditional hearths or home-made improved hearths which save labour and fuel. The improved hearths are also healthier as they have a chimney that draws smoke out of the house. They are made with the help of assistant Home Economists from the *Wereda* Agricultural Office. Women use mortars to pound grain crops. They cook for each meal so no food is stored; everything cooked is served immediately.

The main source of lighting in the area is kerosene. For a brief period in the past there was electricity from the generator of the former Service Cooperative. Kerosene lamps (*masho*) are used by some wealthy households. People buy kerosene and paraffin oil from the urban centres. Dried cow dung, bought and collected firewood (from forest land), and the foliage of trees and the stalks of plants are used for cooking. They are also burned for heat during the coldest months of the year.

#### Water

In general water supply is not a problem though it diminishes during the dry season. There are 8 pipes and 10 temporary water reservoirs called *haro*. The villagers have a much better pure water supply than the residents of the town of Harar.

#### Sanitation

The villagers do not care much for sanitation. Only some wealthy farmers have dug latrines. They were introduced by the Ministry of Agriculture. People wash some parts of their body as an act of ablution before they perform the Islamic prayer called *salat.*

### Children

#### Fertility

Fertility among the Oromo is said to be high: on average a woman will give birth to six children before the advent of menopause. Infertile women can stay with their husbands but the husband can marry another wife. Male infertility is detected with the help of government hospitals. In such cases the wife can abandon or divorce her husband. The problem in both respects can be solved through modern medication or by the help of traditional herbalists.

Home economics agents employed by the *Wereda* Agricultural Office advise women in the PA on food, birth-spacing, taking contraceptive capsules, breast-feeding, child care, and house compartmentalisation. Some med said that women's attitudes towards contraceptives are negative, whereas their husbands are interested in reducing childbirth. The fieldworker thought it unlikely that any woman uses contraceptives.

#### Childbirth and Childcare

People are fond of children and value them as permanent assets. Sons are preferred because they add to the total population of the lineage. The Mother and Child Care Programme provides vaccinations to mothers and children every year. There is no special care provided either in pregnancy or after birth. Women are expected to perform all household activities two weeks after childbirth. But those who have good helpers can rest for up to two months. During labour, pregnant women are helped by traditional midwives. When these cannot help, the women are taken to Alemaya clinic or to Government hospitals in Harar.

#### Socialisation

Very few children in each family go to school. Child socialisation and non-school education is shared among parents, siblings, close relatives and friends. Children are expected to behave strictly according to the community's code which includes respecting elders and accepting their advice, respecting parents and abstaining from juvenile delinquency, theft and the like. Violation of these norms can result in punishment of various kinds.

The qualities which are desirable in women are, among others, good hospitality, hard work, kindness, cleverness and dexterity. Living economically, being dextrous, and participating in farm work in addition to housework, are the qualities of a good wife. Good women make decorated baskets and *safi* (grass trays). The women believe people either can be born with these qualities or they can learn them. They say they can teach them and the girls can also learn them from the community. Telling lies and quarrelling are undesirable qualities in women. .

The qualities which men consider desirable in men are patience, courtesy and kindness. They say people are born with these qualities. They cannot learn them, though they can avoid bad characters through learning. They may also improve these good qualities through learning, although the qualities cannot be taught. Not respecting elders and not accepting what they are told to do are undesirable in boys. Offending others, for example by insulting them, and ignorance, for example the inability to distinguish the good from the bad and being impatient, are regarded as undesirable in men and boys.

A healthy, strong, hard-working and timely person makes a successful farmer. A successful farmer's particular skills include making *daga*, so that the water does not flow out of the farm, and farm equipment. Knowing the type and amount of fertiliser to use are also required to be a good farmer.

The local conception of intelligence involves good memory, quick understanding and grasping of new events, skilful use of agricultural techniques, finding solutions to problems and good oratory. Local experts include those who try to protect the soil from erosion using terracing and those who build houses without any training using stones and cutting implements called *mencha*, knives and others. There are women experts who act as mid-wives. It is the knowledge they receive through apprenticeship to their parents or neighbours that qualify them to be experts.

Modern education is regarded as a source of intelligence, but on the whole the people do not have a constructive attitude towards education. They think that it disturbs identity and the traditional way of life by introducing alien concepts and practices. Knowledge of the Koran is considered a good criterion of intelligence.

#### Education

##### *Formal education*

There is a primary school (up to 5th grade) and seven small traditional Koran schools in the PA. There are about 15 students in each Koran school. They teach the Arabic alphabet, mathematics and spiritual songs. There are 30 students in the primary school. Parents have to pay 3.50 *birr* as a book service charge and 2 *birr* for sports, and for writing materials. The curriculum includes mathematics, science, English, music, sports, geography, Oromiffa, and arts (drawing). Oromiffa is the medium of instruction. There are five teachers in the school including the director.

Due to negligence and a low understanding of the value of education only very few (not more than eight students) have been to secondary schools. In this academic year two students who went to the Alemaya secondary school sat for the Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate exam.

If they decide to send anyone to school, parents decide which child or children should go according to interest and intelligence. Children who are not intelligent are kept at home to perform agricultural activities and look after animals. Presently there are only three school leavers in the PA. Up to eight students have taken up agriculture after reaching 8th grade. One student went to Addis Ababa University from this PA some 10 years ago. He is now a government employee in Addis Ababa. Informants estimated that 2 percent of boys in the community are at primary school and 1 percent of them (i.e.6 or 7 boys) are at secondary school.

*School attendance among the Household Survey Sample*

(includes all adults and children)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Frequency | Percent |
| Currently attending school | 15 | 2.5 |
| Has attended school | 47 | 7.8 |
| Never attended school | 541 | 89.7 |
| Total | 603 | 100 |

A group in the community agreed that being literate and numerate are very important. For example being able to calculate is important when buying and selling goods in the market; a person who forgets something in a taxi, can retrieve it if he can note the number plate; and a person who can read can enter a hotel without asking others if it is a hotel, etc.

The most respected social skills are knowing and teaching the Koran, knowing the community's culture and rules, abiding by these rules, and loyalty and leadership.

*Training*

There are some people in the PA who received trained at the Agarfa Multipurpose Farmers' Training Centre, provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and *Menschen fur Menschen*. They were trained in veterinary skills and farm implements production but are currently farming and do not practise their skills

### Health

When people fall sick, they try first to cure themselves through local means and methods using leaves, herbs and the like. When these are not effective they go to modern health centres - clinics or hospitals. In 1985, along with the famine, there was an epidemic of diarrhoea. It was contained by medical teams deployed by the government. The disease, however, killed about 40 individuals. During the same time there was also a minor epidemic of meningitis in the PA, which did not kill anyone.

A group of men ranked disease problems as follows: malaria, "lung cancer", gastritis, amoeba, diarrhoea, parasites, toothache, kidney problems, hepatitis, heart attack, earache, sight problems, severe headache, and venereal diseases.

A group of women ranked disease problems as follows: "lung cancer", diarrhoea, malaria, hepatitis, and inability to give birth.

The common child diseases include meningitis, whooping cough, measles, diarrhoea, TB, polio, anaemia, and internal parasites. Two groups (one of men and one of women) were asked about the causes and treatments of diseases.

*Malaria*: the prevalence of mosquitoes is the cause of malaria. It can be prevented by burning olive wood to get rid of the mosquitoes. Treatments include tablets from a clinic or a hospital; touching the back of the body with a heated metal implement and eating the tail of a sheep to induce vomiting. This is according to the men.

According to the women, malaria can be prevented by burning the leaves of eucalyptus as the smoke drives the mosquitoes away. If they get malaria they visit clinics, hospitals, or touch the back of the body with a hot metal.

"*Lung cancer*" (perhaps meaning bronchitis or TB): the causes of the lung disease, according to a group of men, is exposure to cold and accident (being hit by a car, stone or other). The disease can be prevented by avoiding contact with peoples affected by this disease. Once they become ill they touch the back of the body with a hot rod of metal, or go to the clinic or the hospital. The women said the cause was cold but it could be prevented by avoiding using cutlery used by someone with the illness and wearing proper clothes against the cold.

*Gastritis*: this disease according to men is caused by anger, serious hunger, and eating rotten food. To prevent the disease one must eat proper food on time. This disease can be treated by avoiding spicy food, drinking milk and visiting clinics or hospitals.

*Amoeba* is caused by drinking contaminated water and eating poorly cooked tomatoes and salad. The disease can be prevented by drinking clean water and boiled milk. It can be prevented by taking traditional medicines, drinking linseed and visiting clinics or hospitals.

*Diarrhoea* results from lack of good hygiene according to the men's group. The best way to prevent it is to use toilets, and keep the surroundings clean. Treatment will include eating rice for temporary relief, and then visit the clinic or hospital. According to the women it is caused by drinking contaminated water and could be prevented by drinking clean water. Treatment includes traditional medicine, visiting clinics and hospitals.

*"Liver cancer"* (perhaps hepatitis): according to the women the cause of this is not known and there is no prevention. If someone has the disease they touch the body with hot metal, drink traditional medicine to make them vomit, and if it is not cured, go to the hospital.

*Inability to give birth*: the cause is not known and there is no prevention. Treatment includes massaging the stomach and drinking the medicine of witchcraft and/or going to the hospital.

A women's group described the children's diseases as follows:

*Meningitis*: the cause is not known and there is no prevention; treatment is found at the hospital or clinic.

*Tiktik* (perhaps whooping cough): the cause is not known but it can be prevented by eating rabbit's meat. Treatment includes drinking donkey's milk and going to the hospital or clinic.

*Measles*: the cause is not known and there is no prevention. Treatment includes massaging the child's body with butter, sprinkling perfume and putting *arritti* on the body. If this fails they go to the clinic or hospital.

*TB*: the cause is not known but it can be prevented by wearing warm clothing. Treatment involves going to the clinic or hospital.

Drugs available in store during the time of the fieldwork visit include chloroquine capsules and promothozine tablets both in tins and infusions in bags. The health centre provides: TTC, Ampicillin capsules, and chloroquine. Preventive programmes include a latrine construction programme. A typical visit to the health centre costs 10 *birr*.

There are traditional clinics and traditional mid-wives who assist in deliveries.

### Consumption

#### Food and Other Day-to-Day Goods

Sweet potatoes and wheat flour bought from the market are used as emergency food in the area. The fruits and berries of wild foods such as cactus, *tat'aisa*, *gora*, *agamsa*, *shimbir*, *koli*, and *booroori* are also eaten during severe famine. Under normal conditions people eat the same kind of food. The husband eats before the others; the children will follow while the wife eats after she has fed the family. They eat from different plates except that children may sometimes join their father.

#### Saving and Investment

As most of the people are leading a subsistence mode of life, savings and substantial investments are not affordable, though livestock husbandry and *chat* orchards can be regarded as practices of saving and investment. Membership of *qubi* (*equb*), though not frequent, is also a minor form of saving.

#### Housing

There are two types of housing in the PA: the circular thatched *tukul* and the rectangular tin-roofed house. The walls of both are made of wood, sorghum stalks, stems of *chat* trees and mud. Most of the houses are not compartmentalised and the same house is used for sleeping, cooking, dining and keeping animals. The biggest houses in the community have up to three rooms. These are the houses of wealthy people. Almost three-quarters of the houses in the PA are tin-roofed. It costs about 5000 to 6000 *birr* to build a tin-roofed house whereas the cost of constructing a thatched house is estimated at from 800 up to 1,000 *birr*. If it is well constructed and protected a tin-roofed house can last for more than 30 years.

#### Household Assets

The following is a list of assets one can find in a wealthy home:

-wooden or iron bed

-trays

-*mushama* (a decorated cloth)

-cups

-tape recorder

-bee hives

-radio set

-bags and boxes

-mattress

-modern plates

-*masho* (kerosene lamp)

-various objects of decoration

-water barrel

-thermos flask

-plastic containers

The following is a list of assets one would find in a poor home:

-skin mats

-wooden plates

-kettle

-gourds

-cooking pans

#### Local Services

There are 8 shops in the PA. Four are big and well supplied while the rest are very small. The nearest drug shop is in Alemaya.

The Agricultural Extension Agent visits 36 contact farmers in the PA. He visits them in their fields twice a month on a Training and Visit Programme. The rest are called follower farmers who, except for a little advice by the agent, are expected to copy contact farmers. There are 30-35 follower farmers under one contact farmer. New technologies are first introduced to, and tried by, contact farmers. Later the follower farmers will take up the innovation.

There is no *kaleecha* or equivalent in the PA. There are traditional herbalists and broken bones are set by traditional doctors from neighbouring areas. There are many traditional birth attendants in the PA all of whom are women. There are also sheiks and *kabiras* (religious men lower in status than sheiks) who can heal the sick. They can also harm others through their magic spells.

## Local Institutions and Organisations

### Households

The term for a household is *wara*. Sometimes it may also mean extended or compound families to identify a group as against others. In this case the term does not coincide with a definition based on eating together although it strongly coincides with one including farming together, sleeping under one roof and sharing a budget. In most cases members of one elementary family form a household. Except for death and migration people usually live together without parting. Guests may join a household for a brief span of time and help it in the performance of its activities, but they are not given household membership. Migrant members of the household are not regarded as its members but they are respected and remembered as members of the family.

Adoption is not a common phenomenon in the area except when a father or mother or both die and children become orphans and members of the agnatic lineage have the responsibility to look after them. Levirate has, to some extent, alleviated the problem of orphanage.

The issues of what and when to plant, mobilisation of labour, use of fertilisers, and other crucial farm management decisions are taken by the husband who is also the head of household. Every member of a family has use rights in land, houses, livestock and farm equipment, but when it comes to the question of selling or exchanging property then the husband has the final say. The wife may express an opinion while children have virtually no say in these matters. The man also has rights in the person and labour of his wife and children until they marry. All income and assets are commonly owned except that the husband has the upper hand over them.

There is a set division of labour within the household. Men alone are responsible for the production of crops. Women are exclusively responsible for household activities (cooking, cleaning, and marketing). The selling of *chat* is mainly the duty of women. Children under 15 serve as cow-boys and shepherds. Women and children do light agricultural work such as weeding. Women milk animals, while tending animals' broken limbs and getting medicines for sick animals are men's tasks.

The husband is responsible for the provision of food, constructing a house (usually prepared before marriage), school fees, clothing, investment goods (farm equipment, fertiliser), health expenditure and household furniture. The woman, assisted by her children, is responsible for fetching water, and collecting firewood and dung.

Grown-up children are responsible for cultivating parents' fields, especially if they are old. Married children must look after their parents during old age.

### Marriage

Most households are monogamous although it has been estimated that about 10% of married men have more than one wife. Residence is patrilocal.

There are four kinds of marriage in the area. The first is *chebsa* which involves the unexpected arrival of the would-be-groom, his friends and some elders at the house of the parents of the girl. They refuse to leave unless the girl is given to them. The second is the one that takes place according to the normal formal procedure - elders requesting first, winning the consent of the girl's parents and fixing the wedding date. The third is marriage by *buty* which involves the abduction of the girl by the man and his friends. The fourth is *galte*. This is extremely rare and involves the woman voluntarily entering the house of the man. Girls usually marry between 15 and 18 while boys marry between 18 and 21.

A young man who intends to marry will always be on the lookout for a young girl he thinks will make a good wife. When he comes across one he informs his parents. The father then gets together with community elders and (carrying a substantial amount of *chat*) will go to the parents of the girl to ask for their consent. If they win the consent of the girl's parents, the other steps for the marriage will follow.

The parents of the man will send 50 kilograms of flour and two loads of firewood to the parents of the girl. Elders will go with sugar, tobacco, and coffee husks. On a scheduled day a betrothal agreement will be forged by the parties to the marriage. This agreement is called *gudunfa*. There will be a minor ceremony (some feasting, chewing of *chat* and communal prayer) in honour of this agreement. At this agreement it will be publicly declared that the girl henceforth will be the fiancée of the man. At this time the prospective husband, through community elders, gives his fiancée 300 *birr* for clothing. The mother of the man, together with her friends who contribute 5 *birr* each and a certain amount of milk, give the mother of the girl the collected amount. The mother of the man is also required to give 100 *birr* to the mother of the bride after eating the feast prepared on the occasion of the agreement. The latter will not receive them if the amount is less than that figure. The gift is called *affera*.

After the above procedure, the man and the girl are free to visit each other. The man also mobilises a work party called *dimisha* for the parents of the girl to perform, usually agricultural work. If the man does not marry the girl within one year of the agreement, he has to give her 100 *birr* for clothes. They call this *wan addegna*. In addition to this, if there is anyone who marries from among her relatives or friends, she will ask him for what they call *gumata* in order to present it as a gift for the one who marries. The amount given is 100 *birr*.

On the day of the marriage, which is agreed upon mutually, the bridegroom, his best men and community elders will go to the house of the girl carrying one quintal of maize, two loads of firewood, five litres of edible oil, a certain amount of salt and 100 *birr* as a gift to the parents of the bride. During the marriage ceremony a formal agreement ratifying the marriage will be made. The dish served at the marriage ceremony is usually porridge; some rich families also serve macaroni and spaghetti. The feast is accompanied by traditional and modern songs, the chewing of *chat* and communal prayers.

On that same day, the groom together with his best men, relatives and community elders take the bride to the residence of his parents. Here also there will be a similar feast that can last up to three days with decreasing pomp and enthusiasm. When the ceremony is over the newly married reside in the house the groom has constructed as a permanent residence. A two week honeymoon period may follow. Sometimes they use the term *aruza* to refer to this period. Then the couple start up their married life. Here it is important to bear in mind that the bridewealth (*gabbara*) which used to be given some ten years ago is no longer provided for reasons which they could not explain well.

### Divorce

Marriage is a highly respected institution among the people of Adele Keke and divorce seldom takes place. For example, barrenness on the part of the woman does not usually lead to divorce as the man can take another woman in addition to the former wife. When divorce takes place the woman will be given one cow or ox (which is her *mahri*) and 200 *birr* which is called *nafaka*.

When divorce does take place grown-up children remain with their fathers while babies and children less than five or six will go with their mothers who usually go to live with her parents. She can remarry if she wants and can find a husband. Except for the property she takes as her *mahri* and *nafaka* all the rest is the exclusive property of the husband. Of course, she can also take properties given to her by her parents, relatives or friends.

### Inheritance

There are no elaborate rules of inheritance in this society. When a husband dies his property is not apportioned. If he is survived by grown-up children the eldest serves as the head of household cultivating the land and feeding his mother and his siblings. When he starts up his own family he takes his share (the share is equitable except that married daughters receive nothing). His juniors take his position in the mother's house. When everybody is married the children leave a certain amount to their mother and help her with the cultivation until her death, provided that she does not take a man as a husband. When a man with no children dies his property is left to his widow. When a man who has no wife and children dies, his property is inherited by his parents, siblings, paternal relatives or clansmen in order of priority.

### Kinship

Kinship entails certain economic and social obligations among the people. Generally speaking, a man is obliged to help the relations of his father's lineage while there are no such obligations towards one's maternal relations. Kinship is the governing principle in residential patterns but its roles in social organisation and structural relations in the society is less strong except in the redress of injury, payment of bridewealth and in times of life crises. Work parties, *wodaja*, friendship, and voluntary associations like *equb* are more organised along common understanding and interest than kinship principles.

### Lineages and Clans

The social organisation is a segmentary patrilineal system. Members are organised and inter-related by lineage segments called *gosa*. Lineages have special roles in marriage and inheritance. If a man from a certain lineage cannot offer bridewealth his lineage members will cover the expenses for him. Injuries are often redressed along lineage lines. If a man does not have children to inherit his property it will be divided among his close lineage members. The *gosa* is a mutual aid association and members help each other in time of need. They raise funds when one of their members loses property or is sick and they give him a proper funeral when he dies. The *gosa* is also interested in creating a healthy and friendly atmosphere among its members and mostly settle disputes among themselves although they are aware they can appeal to a superior government agency when necessary. The impact of the lineage on local politics and the local legal system is not strong. Peasant associations handle most of these matters.

Members of a lineage will help one another paying blood-prices (*gooma*) and in times of disaster and misfortune. Burials, mourning and marriages are some of the ritual obligations binding lineage members. Though these obligations are usually observed by corporate groups they also concern the rest in the lineage to a lesser degree; however they are not based on individualism.

There are different clans in the PA. In *ganda* Tabia, for example, there are nine clans: *Tulama* (the major one), *Kaco*, *Dirammu*, *Nunnu*, *Abbay*, *Qallu*, *Jarso*, *Witchiro*, and *Aniyya*. Clans are divided into lineages or sub-clans called *Ibidda*. All, they say, are the descendants of *Afran Qallo* - which is a major clan according to informants' explanation. For instance, if we take the clan called *Kaco Sadihi*, we find three sub-clans, vis, *Jarsa Kaco*, *Gato*, and *Bukkubure*. Whereas the clan is endogamous these sub-clans are exogamous. A man from *Jarsa Kaco* sub-clan can marry a woman either from *Gato* or *Bukkuburre* sub-clan whereas he cannot marry from his own sub-clan. If a man from *Kaco Sadihi* clan kills a man from the clan of *Tulama*, the three sub-clans of *Kaco Sadihi* will join together to pay blood price or to defend themselves if need be. However, if a man from *Jarsa Kaco* sub-clan kills a man from *Gato* (both being the sub-clans of *Kaco Sadihi*), members of *Jarsa Kaco* will join together against *Gato* either to pay blood price or to defend themselves. Their clan organisation follows the principle of a segmentary lineage system. It is an obligation for members of a clan to attend marriages and funerals together. However, since members of a clan are in most cases dispersed in different places there are many individuals who do not know their clan members. Yet, when they discover that they are clan members they act like relatives.

### Age Grading, Life Cycle Changes and Rites of Passage

The *gada* system is not important either politically or ritually. It is also not important in any other way. Marriage is seen as an important rite of passage for women. The use of *chat* serves as a rite of passage for the men since they are allowed to chew *chat* only when they become strong and big enough to perform agricultural activities and attend social gatherings or issues concerning communal life. These rites do not involve expenditures.

### Friendship Contracts

These used to be a feature of Gurage and Harari society. There is nothing similar in the PA here.

### Markets

There are no weights and measures laws except in the case of *chat*. Nobody polices the market and it is not worth complaining to anyone.

### Credit and Social Security

People insure themselves and their household members against ordinary crises through mutual help and co-operation. They help one another with labour and finance. If a man or woman from a given village falls sick, the community will fund him or her to go to a health centre if he or she cannot afford it. If a house burns down they will re-erect it together. Crop failure is made up for by what they have saved in previous years. The government and NGOs usually intervene in crises that affect the community as a whole.

In times of personal crisis, the villagers help the person concerned. For example, when somebody's house is burnt down, the villagers cooperate and build a new house for him. And when a peasant loses a farm animal, the villagers help him buy another by contributing money. Kin also help in times of crisis. These can be the woman's or the man's relatives, like brothers, uncles, fathers, etc, who may live in the PA, Dire Dawa, Harar or neighbouring PAs. They also get help from friends and neighbours.

The objectives of *afosha* are mutual aid among members of a certain locality in times of happiness and sorrow. It is similar to *idir*.

### Community Decision‑making

Community decisions are made by both the PA and elders. But the elders have more power in decision-making related to marriages, land, etc. Disputes within households and between families are resolved by elders and neighbours. Local law breakers are punished by the PA. If it is a question of theft, the PA arrests or obliges him pay a fine. If it is a serious crime, the PA transfers the case to the *wereda*. *Sheiks* know and teach God's words.

In the old days, if a person killed another person intentionally, the elders would make him pay up to 15,000 *birr*. But if it was not intentional, they made him pay up to 5000 *birr*. This punishment is called *guma*. However, *guma* does not operate now in this PA.

### Local Organisations

Local organisations include the *afosha* and the three forms of work group discussed earlier. Projects such as constructing houses and digging water wells are collectively done. Mending the houses of the weak and old can also be done in this manner. Taxes are decided and collected by the peasant association.

A group from the community ranked the local organisations in order of usefulness as follows:

1. Peasant Association

2. *Idir*

3. *Equb*

4. Women's Association

5. Youth Association

They did not include the work groups in their list of organisations.

## Beliefs and Values

### Land

People are not buried on the land they farmed. Burial sites of ancestors are not important for ritual or other reasons. Neither are they regarded as sacred.

### Religion

The local religions are Islam and Christianity. But the number of Christians is very few. Islam has significant effect on people's lives. The Muslims fast for a month each year during *Ramedan*. They also fast for additional six days which is known as *Shewala*. Most of the Muslims abide by these rules. Those who do not fast during the fasting season are not considered as "human beings" by the people. The Sheiks also fast for three days during *Id Alada*. Muslims do not work on Fridays. People also do not work for three days during *Id as Arafa*. They also do not work on the day of *Id Somena* which is the day they finish one month fasting. During the fasting season, people buy hats and gowns (dressed by Muslims) for their parents and grandparents.

### Explanations of Misfortune and Illness

When someone becomes ill or faces accidents, the people say, "this is what God decided should happen to that person". There are local "witch finders". They do different things. Mostly, they give "medicine" for a woman (man) who has sexual problems. People also believe them to give solutions for a person who is not loved by his wife or her husband. They also give medicine for children who are sick. There are no professional rainmakers.

Some say they do not believe in sorcery; neither do they believe in witchcraft. However, some people believe that madness can be attributed to an act of sorcery. They do not believe in spirits or their ancestors except that they sometimes invoke the names of their immediate ancestors when they come across problems. However, they organize the communal prayer called *wadaya* at least once a year for the souls of dead parents.

### Community Values

Rituals of the communal prayer called *wadaya* and that of the various occasions of *chat*-chewing are very important in the society.

The people were willing to answer all questions and the fieldworker expects them to have given accurate responses to questions in the household survey except for those concerning political beliefs and attitudes. When he ventured to ask such questions all informants told me that they knew nothing. Some openly told me that they do not want to entertain such questions

They think that the economic survey is meant to improve their life.

### Political Beliefs and Attitudes

Elders have big power in a household (as well as in the society). They have the right to order their children or grandchildren to do whatever they want. Parents can order their children to give whatever they have to the poor. They can eat and drink whatever they like in their children's houses.

## The Community

### Community Organisation

Inter-household relationships are weak except in matters of labour. Every household is an independent economic unit, though close kin have easy access to the labour and property of one another. Neighbours also help each other in times of need: both happiness and sorrow. They may also lend one another petty cash and other items to solve immediate problems.

The community is, it can be said, tight-knit and orderly. There is strong social interaction between households in their day to day life. Communal *chat*-chewing practices, attending births, marriages and funerals are also important fields of social interaction. As the PA is large there are 28 villages in it. People tend to mix; hardly a day passes for a man or woman in one village without them visiting at least one or two neighbouring villages.

### Social Conflict

There are no conflicts between groups, only between individuals. There is no ethnic or religious conflict although there are some signs of conflict based on gender. The men generally tend to have low opinions of the women; this attitude can sometimes cause conflict but this never takes place between groups, but rather between a wife and a husband.

### Poverty and Wealth

The wealthiest people in the community are those who have *chat* plantations, those who have a good number of livestock, or those who practice trading in addition to farming. The source of their wealth is land on which they plant *chat* and crops like sorghum and maize.

The poorest people in the community are those who do not have fertile land or only a very small amount and hence *chat* plantations. They are often widows, those who have many children and/or are old and sick

### Social Mobility

By virtue of inheritance, the children of wealthy people tend to be wealthy while those of the poor in most instances tend to be poor. Nevertheless, the child of a poor farmer can become wealthy by engaging in trading activities, usually in contraband goods or by saving cash earned through wage labour, and investing this in agriculture or trading. Members of the community think that elementary education does not make success easier, since the off-farm income comes from trading which requires strength, good running and being a good bargainer.

According to one respondent there is little downward mobility from the wealthiest category. This is because rich farmers get enough money and with it they can buy and use modern farm inputs and hire external labour as a result of which they get better harvests. Another said that downward mobility from wealthy to middle-ranking happens slowly as a result of expenditure on daily life and more expensive goods and failure to invest in wealth-creating ways. According to one respondent the main reasons for becoming poor are having a smaller size of land, bearing more and more children, and failure to work hard. Another respondent said that people became poorer if they have more children, there was death or serious illness in the household, or they lost land through a dispute.

One respondent said that there has been upward mobility as a result of the dismantling of the producer cooperative and the return of previously confiscated land, and because the end of the duty of serving on the farms of cooperative appointees released farmers to take care of their own farms in all their working time. Another said upward mobility was very infrequent because in the area there is no market place for the farmers to sell their products so that they have to travel far which is expensive in terms of transportation costs and taxes. Also for a long period of time there was a shortage of rainfall leading to a decline in the harvest. He also said there has been upward mobility in the middle categories since these farmers can give loans to others in the months of June and July when the farmers have finished their stocks, and get it back at harvest time when crops are very cheap. They store the crops and sell them when they become expensive. Another respondent said there was little upward mobility because there is too little land and rainfall for them to produce enough to feed for their households.

Households frequently move between the middle categories, mainly downward. The main reason for this is that men in this category tend to get married to two or more wives as a result of which they incur more expenses for wedding ceremonies, dowry, setting up a new household and more children.

### Status

Inheritance and personal achievement are the main routes to wealth and thus status. *Sheiks* are accorded high status for their Koranic knowledge. Knowing the community's culture and rules and abiding by these, loyalty, and leadership are the most respected social skills. Occupation, religious piety, and maleness are bases of status. Other bases of status include age, possessing irrigated farms, and personal achievement in agriculture which brings in a good harvest income. There are a few blacksmiths who are despised. Luxury goods such as radio sets, watches and tape recorders are seen as status symbols but not more than fertile land or a good quality *chat* orchard.

### Social Stratification

Wealth, power and status are all associated. People with these qualities are regarded by others as being superior and treated with deference. Differences in wealth and access to resources can create inequality. Wealth is measured in terms of landholding and the number of animals possessed. Age is another element in status. People who used to be *garada* and *damina* (local chiefs of the Imperial regime) still hold relatively wide and fertile land.

One observer said that *sheiks*, *kabiras* and those who have gone to government schools form different strata though the distinction is not that sharp. *Sheiks* and *Kabiras* are treated deferentially by virtue of their religious authority. This, however, should not be taken to mean that they necessarily have economic superiority over the others.

Those who have gone to government schools, can read and write and are numerate and non-literate orators are those elected to government office in the PA and other community offices in the society. From what some respondents suggest there is every reason to suspect that responsibilities are sometimes abused for personal gain which in turn increases status.

As is the case in all communities different respondents had different views of the local elites some of which are described here. Local elites have forgotten their responsibilities and are pursuing their own interests (like taking bribes). They are representatives of parties and at the level of the *kebele* they are elected by communities. They do not seem to be getting wealthier. The government appoints or elects a member of its own party. There is no conflict or factions. There are two kinds of elite. Those who hold clan office are followed by the community - they are getting wealthier. The chairman of the PA is a political appointee - he too is getting wealthier. The local elites are named as three particular people, one of whom is a *sheik*. They maintain their positions by moving throughout the community and by organising the people through religious, political, and moral instructions.

### Dissent

While one report was that there have not been any signs of political dissent in the area in the last 10 years another said that occasional attacks by guerillas have affected the society very much leading to instability. The security problem is between government forces and the rebels. Both attack civilians and the conflict claims lives and their possessions get looted. The security problems affected the research.

## Relationships with Other Communities and the Wider Society

### Villages and Regions

Relationships with other communities are not based on lineage ties. They are based on friendship, common understanding and common interest. The spatial distribution of households forms both scattered and dispersed villages. Generally there are two bases for settlement, cultivation and kinship. Settlements based on cultivation are situated in the midst of crop fields in order to have the crops within easy reach. More often, however, settlements consist of houses occupied by people who are related, either closely or more distantly. Such settlements are often scattered. Villagisation affected this pattern.

### Relations with Wider Ethiopia

Though the people of the PA do not mention that they have traditional enemies and though they live peacefully with Amharas in the PA, they have the feeling that they were incorporated in to the Ethiopian Empire by Menelik II. They also feel that they were oppressed by the Amhara ruling class. However they consider themselves Ethiopian and, it seemed, they have a positive attitude toward the country. When they make contacts with other parts of the country they do these with an air of Ethiopianness.

### Effects of Government Policies

Villagisation uprooted many people and caused material loss as people had to build new homes. There were also social consequences as people had to re-orient themselves to a new social environment. Some have now abandoned the new villages to return to their former homesteads.

The fieldworker found it hard to detect the effects of recent government policies (eg. devaluation and ending marketing boards) on the economy of the local community. The people too are not willing to respond to such questions. However, there are some signs that there are price increases on some goods and services.

Reasons given why the community is better off now than it was in 1990/91 included: absence of forced contributions; the end of conscription and the hated Mengistu regime; no AMC quotas; no forced labour; return of land taken by the cooperative; less tax; the end of villagisation; economic, political and social liberalisation; and end to the hated cooperative; better weather conditions than five years ago; economic growth in the region; and no ethnic division in the community.

One respondent said there had been no change. The community is very hospitable and even though the current regime has tried to create factions the community would not accept the idea. However, this does not mean that they do not support their party. Another argued there has been no change: economic growth is offset by no stability and peace in the region.

Reasons given why the community is worse off included the destruction of economic structures and looting; an increase in unemployment, lawlessness, ethnic division and poverty; and no unity among nations - no love of country.

It has been suggested that the government is stopping the representatives or chiefs of local ethnic groups form becoming organised; it imprisons them if they are found doing so. Economic policies cannot get accepted so long as the society is deprived of peace and stability; there is still fear and suspicion. There is conflict between the government and rebels. Another view is that people have accepted the new policy even though it is not yet put into practice.

Some say the majority support the present regime and regionalisation. One reason is that the Oromo region is big and they are happy that it is called Oromia. Another view is that the advocates are members of political parties who are benefitting as a result. And another that the community's view in this region is not different from that in the rest of the country's; they know it is a strategy of "divide and rule". Another view is that they are very pleased about regionalisation because they know that all the natural resources in their region belong to them. It also has brought affection for freedom of speech and human rights.

Some know a lot about the Constitution. They said that it will be good for the community if the person they want elected is chosen. Another view is that they know nothing about the Constitution and accept and approve whatever they are told, fearing the consequence if they try to oppose or criticize. They go promptly to a meeting, approve whatever is said and come back as soon as possible. The region is administered by two forces: when the community is called for a meeting by government officials in the daytime, the rebels forces will come at night and may attack people who went to the meeting. Another view is that the Constitution is not acceptable to the community because opposition parties did not participate in writing it.

Many have understood the meaning of democracy and think it is a crucial matter. Another view is that they do not know about democracy as no-one has taught them. Some feel that the government is contradicting the idea because nothing is seen in practice. In fact, the community thinks democracy means the right to scold others. One view is that they do not understand the concept well and there is some misunderstanding of one's own rights and the rights of others; since their consciousness is low they think it is the right of doing what they want and forget their obligations.

### Government Activities in the Community

Projects such as constructing houses, roads, water-wells etc are collectively done. Mending the houses of the old and weak may also be done in this manner.

Taxes are decided and collected by the Peasant Association. Some of the activities performed by government ranked in the order of importance by a community group are: construction and running of health clinics; water pipes; schools; fertiliser; credit to buy oxen; mill service; the tree plantation and reforestation programme; construction and maintenance of roads; pesticides; and the introduction of improved seeds.

There is a cooperative established by a few people with their own money and money borrowed from the World Bank. Everyone from the village does not have equal rights of access to this cooperative. Many people are not members and the users of it are mainly its members. It gives credit services and shares its profit only to its members. It also gives milling and tractor services to everyone at the same rate of payment.

There is still a service cooperative. Half of its resources have been ransacked. Its office is being used by the PA as an office and the MoA as an office and residence. The rest has been taken by the Agricultural and Industrial Bank because of its debt. Now AIDB has lent it to the new SC. The role of agricultural extension officers should be mentioned in the control and eradication of pests. The massive swarms of locusts that infested the area a year ago was controlled through their efforts.

### NGO Activities in the Community

The following are assistance provided by non-governmental and UN organisations.

In 1966/7 wheat (*kinche*) was given as food aid one or two times. The other food aid programmes included aid by UNICEF in 1979, when grain, milk, butter and flour were handed out and food distributed by the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission in 1985 when the donor was believed to be USA. Three water wells were sunk by SIDA 1981. But these wells are not operational now. Three more water wells were sunk by SIDA in 1985 and are still being used by the communities.

A food-for-work programme was started in 1971 by the FAO (Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations) and the Ministry of Agriculture when people worked on soil and water conservation projects. Other joint programmes include the Fourth Livestock Development Project by the World Bank and the government, which started in 1981; and starting in 1986, Human Appeal constructed four water wells together with the inhabitants. The inhabitants covered about 17% of the total cost of the project.

A group in the community ranked these activities in order of their usefulness as follows:

1. Soil and water conservation by FAO

2. Food aid by UNICEF and other organisations

3. Water wells (by SIDA)

4. Water wells by Human Appeal

5. Livestock Resources and Development Project (World Bank)

### Future

The shortage of land is going to be a major problem because of the growth in population. For example if one peasant has five sons and shares his few holdings among all he will go begging at the end. The only way to solve this is by introducing high quality farm inputs. There is not much migration although there is some to the towns. The people do not want the system of land allocation to change (i.e. no return to cooperatives); they want it just as it is now. One view is that if land is reallocated there will be bloodshed because some have invested in orchard crops like *chat*. Another is that land cannot be reallocated as it was in 1975 since there is no excess land. However, some elders are suggesting that land should be reallocated according to the number of household members.

Some people claim that aid is not reaching the needy and they are affected very much by current policies; some sort of support should be provided for the poor. For example when the community is affected by security problems and people cannot move from place to place it affects the poor more.

Suggested development projects include modern farm implements and inputs and credit. Infrastructure should be developed.

## Glossary

*Arritti:* An aromatic medicinal herb.

*Birr*: The currency of Ethiopia (9 birr= approximately £1)

*Chat: Catha edulis*. A bushy plant whose leaves contain mild narcotics. Its leaves are chewed.

*Derg*: The name of the military government that ruled Ethiopia from the revolution until 1991; Amharic for committee.

*Equb*: A rotating savings and credit association.

*Idir:* A burial society.

*Kallicha:* A witch or spiritual leader.

*Kebele:* A political boundary marking a village, an association of villages or an urban dweller’s association.

*Meher*: The main rainy season - in most places from June to mid-September. Crops sown during this period are harvested from October to December.

*Tukul:* Round hut with a thatched roof.

*Wodaja:* Religious ritual.

*Wereda:* An administrative unit in the old administrative divisions until 1991.

## Acronyms

AMC: Agricultural Marketing Corporation

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organisation

MoA: Ministry of Agriculture

PA: Peasant Association

RRC: Relief and Rehabilitation Commission

SC: Service Cooperative

SIDA: Swedish International Development Agency