# Ethiopian Village Studies: Gara Godo, Bolosso Sore Wereda, Wolayitta, SNNP

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## Locating the community in space and time

### Geography and population

Gara Godo is one of 43 Peasant Associations located in Bolosso *Wereda* of Wolayitta *Awraja* in Sidamo province. *Gara* means wild pig and *godo* means chasing. Long ago the residents hunted and killed wild pigs which troubled the area. According to the current demarcation, Wolayitta belongs to the North Omo zone of the Southern Ethiopia administrative region. Wolayitta is perhaps, the most densely populated region of the country. In 1988 its mean population density was 222 persons per square kilometre which is far higher than the national average of 40 persons per square kilometre. According to Dessalegn the population density of Bolosso *wereda* is 400 persons per square kilometre. It is estimated that there are between approximately 1750 households at the site with an average size of 7.9. About 420 of these households are female-headed. Gara Godo PA is larger than the surrounding PAs in the *wereda*. It contains 4 zones: Hago zone, Godo zone, Tokisa zone and Chala zone.

Pressure on land and population density and consequent agricultural practices, and complex traditional institutions make Wolayitta unique in the country. The PA is full of huts which can accommodate at least 6 household members. Bolosso is the most densely populated *wereda* in Wolayitta and Gara Godo is the second most densely populated PA in Bolosso, next to Hangada PA. The PA is very densely populated and a household might own as little as ½ *timad* of land, some having only a garden. The nearest town is Areka which is 11 km east of Gara Godo. The general quality of land is *lem* with brown coloured soil. The population is made up almost exclusively of Wolayitta and is culturally homogenous, although religious and clan distinctions exist and sometimes play a part in the life of the community. Gara Godo is at 1,730m above sea-level and is classified as *woyna dega*.

### Climate

Gara Godo lies in the *weyna dega* (middle altitude) climatic zone, which is the most important zone for crop cultivation. It has good soil and a long growing season. There is some rain throughout the year apart from February and March. Above medium rain falls in June, July and August, medium rain in April and May and September, October and November. A little rain falls in December and January. There are four strong wooden bridges for people and animals on the way to Areka town over the seasonal rivers. Had it not been for these bridges the PA would be cut off from the town. There is no extreme heat or cold.

### Infrastructure

There is an 11 km dirt track (all-weather) road to Areka town. There is a primary school on the site and a junior high school in Areka. There is a government health clinic at the site. The nearest hospital is 45km in Soddo town.

There is a market in Gara Godo held on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday (the largest) from 4.00/5.00 until 8.00 in the evening. The nearest large market is at Areka; this is the nearest livestock and wholesale grain market. It is held weekly. There are marketing problems and people sometimes sell their livestock at depressed prices. The PA was a member of a Service Cooperative which had a shop until it was looted and destroyed in 1991 by the inhabitants themselves.

### Production

Gara Godo is part of the *enset* agro-ecology where *enset* and other root crops are important elements of household production. Cereals are also grown. A limited number of farmers grow *tef*. Most farmers rely predominantly on *belg* crops like maize and farmers in the area often tend to equate the term *belg* with *meher*. Wolayitta is one of the most vulnerable regions of Ethiopia. The main underlying conditions leading to vulnerability seem to be severe land shortage, a confined agricultural system, climate, and the social and political history of the country. The area of Gara Godo is food deficit both in terms of crops and livestock.

This year's (1993/4) *meher* harvest was the worst in the last five years, due to the failure of the rains to come on time. There was also a shortage of money to buy fertiliser. The previous *belg* was the worst compared to the previous five years because the rains came late. Currently the site is drought-affected and the people are suffering from different diseases.

### Social composition

Wolayitta society is composed of more than 130 clans and a few "caste" groups. All speak the same language and share the same customs. Most clans do not have a distinctive geographical location but live interspersed with people from other clans. Traditionally Wolayitta society is stratified. The hierarchy goes from top to bottom as follows: the royal clan *kawonnata* ("children of the king"), free landlords (*goqa*), free peasants or commoners, slaves, *masha or maylia*, *chinasha*, and *degela*.

99% of the population in the village are Wolayitta. The remainder are a mixture of Amhara, Kembata, Hadiya, Sidama and Gurage. In October 1993 there was an outbreak of ethnic conflict between the Wolayitta and the Kembata people on the border between Shewa and Wolayitta. This conflict is said to have existed for about 200 years but no-one has moved out of the area because of it. People say that those who were moved as part of the *Derg* resettlement programme are now affected by ethnic conflict.

The main language spoken at the site is "*Wolaytigna*". In some areas of the *wereda* "*Kembategna*" is spoken. Amharic is only spoken by people who have been to school. The dominant religion at the site is Orthodox Christianity. Before the establishment of the TGE in 1991 there were some internal conflicts between some religious sects. Since then these conflicts appear to have cooled down.

## History

Before 1894 the Wolayitta had a centralized political system headed by the *Kawo (king).* The "crumpling" the independent state of Wolayitta into "greater Ethiopia" by Menelik in 1894 was effected through a bloody war in which Menelik himself participated in person to reverse the defeats of several earlier expeditions against Wolayitta. The consequences of Wolayitta's final defeat was devastating in all aspects: socially, economically and politically. The defeat left the indelible mark of "incorporation" on the Wolayitta. Specifically, the subsequent "politico-military" administration is said to have laid the foundation of the "complete ruin of the country for the fear that the inhabitants will rebel again".

Between 1923-28 the battle of Maichew occurred in which *Fitawrari* Gebre Giorgis of Wolayitta took part. In 1927 the battle of Gudella occurred: *Fitawrari* Gebre Giorgis of Wolayitta fought with *Kegn Azmatch* Weraqo of Hadiya known as Gudella by some people. The Wolayittas won the war helped from the south by Gamo people. *Fitawrari* Gebre Giorgis took part in this war after returning from Maichew. Between 1928-33 a number of gravel roads were constructed connecting Wolayitta to Addis Ababa, Wolayitta to Timbaro, Wolayitta to Hosa'na, Wolayitta to Arba Minch and then to Bulki in Gamu Gofa. In addition, during this period slavery was abolished, eating on the streets (outside one's home) started, land was given to the landless, taxation in the form of crops was started, and a lot of houses were built.

In Gara Godo in the early 1910's the Dubbo Catholic Mission school was constructed and started giving clinical services. In the late 1910's America's Ottona hospital was built. In 1923 Dejach Ligaba Beyene school was built. Between 1947 and 1950 tenancy was stopped and teaching started in the villages in huts for the population, unlike earlier where only families of the chief had access to education. In the early 1950's the hut schools were renovated. In the 1950s churches were constructed. The town of Areka was established in 1959 and Areka primary school was started in 1962.

Between 1971 and 1975 the Wolayitta Agricultural Development Unit (WADU) became operational. Wadu was financed by the World Bank and operated until 1984. Its main task was to promote the comprehensive development of Wolayitta and the chief element of the programme was the improvement of agricultural production through a variety of extension and support services. The project was involved in a lot of activities including the construction of a warehouse (for food storage) and a gathering hall, and the establishment of a coffee mill. It provided farm inputs such as fertilisers, seeds, oxen and cash through its credit scheme. It also had a coffee nursery and plantation. Conservation was encouraged through bund building, gully control and the rehabilitation of vulnerable soils, which included large scale afforestation. Livestock breeding and control were also included. Farmers supplied *tef* based on their quota and sold hides and skins and crops to WADU every year. WADU sold the crop later when prices soared. WADU also provided various goods such as sugar, salt, soap, rubber shoes, clothing, blankets, umbrellas, and farm equipment, in their shops. By 1980 more than half the population of Wolayitta was participating in WADU's programme.

WADU is said to have shown considerable achievements in the areas of land conservation, promotion of modern inputs, and road building. However, it failed to achieve its main objectives which were raising agricultural production and increased food security. WADU was closed in 1984 on the grounds of this failure. According to the local view, however, the closing of WADU was connected with the chauvinism of the ruling class which thought enough had been done for Wolayitta. Whatever the case may be WADU had a great impact on Wolayitta society. Some people believe this has been negative, creating dependency on inorganic fertilisers.

In 1972 Admancho primary school became operational. In 1976, Gara Godo, Gudicho, and Balsa primary schools were started. Between 1976 and 1990 WADU continued functioning by changing its name into the Admancho Service Cooperative. In addition to its previous services, it started cross breeding cows and oxen. Between 1979 and 1988 Producer Cooperatives were started. In 1986 Admancho clinic became operational but it was destroyed in 1990. Later in 1993 Gara Godo clinic became operational.

The post-revolution political system of the country seems to have worsened the socio-economic crises of the area. The land reform of 1975, and the subsequent policies of the military government profoundly exacerbated the vulnerability of the economy by striking at the root of the system of the production. The land reform destroyed the economic and political power of the landed class and transformed the rural community into a society consisting almost exclusively of a class of self-labouring peasants. Some of the policies involved were periodic re-allotment of land at the initial stage, villagisation and producers' cooperatives. There was villagisation at the site in 1979 which was done forcibly. These policies were resented by the people and created uncertainty and apprehension. Added to these were very high rates of state exactions, which represented more than a third of annual income, and grain requisitioning by the government which had to be delivered by the farmers whether they obtained any harvest or not. Since 1991 there has been a substantial movement of people from the villages back to their former homes.

The pressure on the Wolayitta people continued to mount without let-up until, by the close of 1985, it had reached explosive levels. There were here and there violent acts of resistance against party and government agents. In one incident in 1980, a large group of people protesting against the enclosure of the communal land for the benefit of cooperatives in north central Wolayitta angrily beat up several rural agents.

The years 1983-88 were traumatic for the people in the region for they were subjected to one unprecedented crisis after another in which anywhere between 3000 to 5000 lost their lives. This tragedy was preceded by a crop disease which attacked the *enset* plant, followed by the drought. The combination of these led to famine in the area before most other parts of the country: the so called "green famine". The famine was the worst tragedy for most people but was the only one of its kind in nearly a century. In its history Wolayitta has suffered few famines but, due to high population density and congested living space epidemics such as meningitis, cholera and malaria have occurred with great frequency.

The end of the *Derg* meant only a change of PA officials. There is great resentment of the PA structure but there has been no transfer of power to the elders.

## The seasonal calendar

Notable features are the very wide range of different foods eaten, "the very hungry season" from February through May; the need for credit in March to be repaid with interest in May; and that some men migrate between July and October. Malaria occurs between September and December.

## The farming economy

### Land

An average family divides the land at its disposal. First, there is the *karya* (front yard), which is covered with grass and usually has a few trees on it. The front yard has both economic and social significance. Animals are tethered here to graze. It is here that neighbours and relatives meet to discuss matters of importance and to carry out customary functions such as funerals, weddings and other festivals. Traditionally a household's prosperity is measured by the size of its front yard; a well-to-do household will often have a big front yard, while those with small ones tend to be newly established households (*wodela keta*) or households that have been poor from the beginning. Secondly, there is the *darincha* (garden plot) immediately next to the homestead. This is where spices and herbs are planted. Next to the garden plot is the coffee plot, which is followed by the *utta gadea* (*enset* plot). Sometimes coffee and *enset* are inter-cropped. Finally there is *shoqa*, the main farm land, where cereal crops are grown.

Before the revolution land was acquired through inheritance and public purchase. Though holdings were small about half of the people had land of their own. The remaining half were landless and tenants. There were four big landlords at the site. After the revolution land was distributed to tenants of the former four big landlords who kept the land they had previously cultivated as tenants, and to some landless people

The average land holding since the 1910's has been half a hectare. However the largest size was two hectares up to 1975, then only one hectare. Size holdings ranged from large (5-6 *timad*), medium (3-4 *timad*), and small (1-2 *timad*). A *timad* is approximately equal to ¼ hectare. Up to 1975 land was purchased, inherited, and access obtained through crop-sharing arrangements, tenancy and *rist*. From 1975 onwards, access to land was through inheritance, PA allocation and share-cropping. There was a Producers' Cooperative in the village which had reached the *melba* stage. There was no controversy about the amount of land former PC members got after the PC was disbanded because all members took plots they formerly had. There are differences in farm size between former PC members and non-PC members. PC members had small-sized plots next to their homes, the remaining land being owned by the PC. After PCs were disbanded non-PC members who remained with their holdings were by far in a better position than former PC members. Land rental for cash is widely practised in the area: for cultivation of 1 *timad* the annual rent is 50 *birr*. Other forms of land rental are on *wolled-aged* and contract terms. Although selling land is illegal in the country the practice seems to be common and has increased. Very small pieces of land - about a quarter of a *timad* - cost from 700 to 1,000 *birr* depending on the quality and other conditions such as the physical and social proximity of the buyer and seller. Land adjacent to the buyer's land is more expensive. In selling land priority is given to kin.

Since there is no unused land at present, children are given land from the family plot which has led to the diminution in size of holdings. There are still households which are landless as there was no redistribution of land. About a quarter of households are thought to be landless. The PA says the landless are those who are not registered with the PA (though they may obtain land from their family). In 1979 there were 1,200 registered (and therefore taxed) households in the PA. This had grown to over 2000 by the mid-1980s and it is expected that since then there has been a great increase. Many farmers feel that their landholding is too small. Differences in landholding size between households can reach as much as 5 *timad*. The minimum size holding can be as small as ¼ *timad* and a few farmers have holdings of 6 *timad*. After May 1991 land formerly owned by the Producers' Cooperative was given to disbanded ex-Derg soldiers. Women are not entitled to inherit land from their parents, nor did the 1975 land reform in Wolayitta include women in the redistribution of land. Widowed women can manage land on their own and some are registered in the PA, but divorced women do not have any right to land.

In cases of land dispute people go to the elders, PA officials, or courts, usually in that order. However, they may go to church leaders if both disputants belong to the same church.

The inadequacy of the traditional soil regeneration mechanisms and the limited use of chemical fertilisers indicates the vulnerability of the economy which is based on subsistence farming. The acute shortage of land (minuscule holdings) leads to intensive and continuous cultivation which in turn leads to soil depletion and decreases in productivity. At present, the farming system is more vulnerable because of smaller average holdings than before, increased high pressure on land, and static or declining crop yield for most farmers. Most farmers use organic fertiliser to enrich the soil, and practice mulching to reduce soil erosion. However, organic fertiliser, especially manure, is very scarce because of low ownership of livestock.

The vulnerability of the farming system created an increased need for chemical fertilisers to improve soil fertility. The use of fertilisers was popularized by WADU in the early 1970s. Since then many households have used fertilisers in a number of occasions. But the dramatic price increases since WADU days have made farmers unable to afford it on a regular basis. Those who purchase on credit often default on payment. This has led to the vicious circle of indebtedness and poor yield.

People have private land used solely for grazing. There is no form of communal grazing. Grazing on private land mostly involves tethering with a son looking after the cattle.

### Livestock

The main livestock in the region are cattle, sheep (predominantly in the highlands), goats (predominantly in the lowlands), mules, horses and donkeys. Peasants in this region are said to have gone half way to the integration of crop cultivation with animal husbandry. Livestock are a source of draught power, manure, food and cash income. Cows are reared mainly for their milk which is mostly consumed at home, and butter, which is mostly sold. Wolayitta butter is widely known for its quality and is one of the major sources of cash income. Oxen are valued mainly as draught animals. Sheep and goats are sold in any cases of emergency. Bull fattening and marketing is a common practice in the area. Donkeys and mules are used for transporting goods and humans respectively. The horse is a symbol of status and prestige. Horses in Wolayitta are rarely used as beasts of burden and only occasionally as a means of human mobility. They are kept primarily for ceremonial occasions of which funerals are the most important. The ritualistic horse play on such occasions displays the status of the deceased and his family.

Very often the responsibility of livestock keeping falls on women. Livestock management involves keeping animals in the house for safe keeping, for shelter, and protection against flies and insects, provision of shade in grazing areas, good quality feed such as crop residues and grass, mineral licks and careful human attention.

There has been a great change in livestock ownership, mainly due to the devastating livestock epidemic which killed more than half of the livestock of the area. Due to the almost continuous famine since 1985 most people sold their remaining cattle and have been unable to replace them because of the unprecedented rise in the price of livestock and the collapse of their economic power. Livestock ownership is very unevenly distributed. A majority of households are livestock poor while a few have more than a dozen heads of cattle. Almost all households have chickens while about half of the population own cattle. However, there are numerous ways of acquiring cattle for use by poor households of which the most common are joint-rearing and share-rearing. Both men and women resort to these practices if they have no livestock and for women it is a source of an independent income. Joint-rearing involves two people (men or women) buying a cow or heifer, caring for it in turn, and sharing the manure, milk and milk products and calves equally. In the case of share-rearing, a poor man or woman rent a female animal (usually a cow) from a well-to-do neighbour; raise it and share the offspring, milk and milk products. The manure will be used by the person who raises the cow. A complicated share-rearing arrangement for male animals involves purchasing a male calf on credit, raising it and then selling it at a good price. The poor partner will then pay his debt and hand over some percentage of his gains to the owner of the animal. A peasant who has one ox will team with another in similar circumstances in order to plough.

Sheep are owned by about half of households. A few people have goats which number about 500 at the site. Donkeys, horses and mules are owned by few people; horses and mules are status symbols. Diseases and shortages of feed and water are serious livestock production constraints in the area.

Vaccination for cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys and horses started in 1967, and has been repeated yearly thereafter. The common livestock diseases include *abasenga* and *ahera* mainly affecting cattle, *gendi* mainly affecting horses, mules and donkeys, and *bisbilah* affecting goats. Goats suffering from this disease tend to lie on their back and kick their legs about. The symptom for *ahera* is that the sick animal develops a thorn-like growth on its tongue and on the inside parts of its lips.

There are fewer livestock than there were 20 - 30 years ago because of the shortage of grazing land and the increase in poverty and animal disease. Households use manure for fertiliser. Households with livestock earn income by selling animal products but this is not on a significant scale.

People keep their livestock in their houses. However, households that have tin-roofed modern houses usually have a separate house for the livestock.

### Crop management

The main cereal crops grown in Gara Godo are maize, *tef*, and sorghum. Root crops include *enset*, sweet potato, *boyna* (taro), *boye* (yam), Wolayitta potato (Coleus Edulis) and Irish potato (Solanum Tuberosum). Pulses grown are beans, field peas, cowpeas, and soya beans. Farmers sell 90-100% of the grain they produce and rely for their subsistence on the pulses and root crops they grow and/or purchased maize and cheaper sources of food. Coffee is grown both for home consumption and sale. *Chat* and tobacco are also grown. Tree crops include lemons, oranges, avocados, mangos, bananas, *gesho,* and eucalyptus. Although *enset* is still grown, its importance is declining due to its vulnerability to diseases and the attitude of the younger generation. The younger generation incline to growing *tef* as it sells for a higher price and *enset* production and processing is time-consuming and tiresome. The importance of banana production is increasing and it is widely planted. Banana is useful for families with large families during hunger. The close combination of cereals with root crops has great importance as a means for security in the region. *Tef* and pulses are often marketed whereas all the other crops are consumed. In general root crops are preferred since they require less labour, can grow under a variety of environmental conditions, and give a higher yield per unit of land compared to most of the grain crops.

Farm land is worked intensively all year round since there is a severe shortage of land. As a result very few farmers practice fallowing. Crop rotation is practised often without taking concern for soil regeneration. Cereals are often rotated with root crops, although some occasionally with pulses as part of the rotation cycle. This might have a lot to do with the food requirements of the household. People say that crop disease is one of their major problems. Coffee berry disease and diseases affecting *enset* are among the major factors in the recent economic decline of the PA and Wolayitta in general.

Red *tef* was grown in the 1910's for animal feed and later people learned from the Amharas to use it for food. The production of red *tef* declined because of the introduction of white *tef* which gets a higher price and *bunigne tef* which is an early maturing variety. Maize has been cultivated widely in Wolayitta as a staple crop.

The Wolayitta potato (long and thin) was very useful, but its production declined because of its vulnerability to pests. The Damot potato has a round shape and was introduced from Damot mountain by some people in the 1940's. The Damot was then replaced by a new variety of potato called the "Asmara" potato. The soil is suitable for the Asmara potato and it is grown widely in the area.

Black soyabeans used to be intercropped widely in the area until the red one was introduced by WADU. The red bean is an earlier variety, more preferred and sells for a higher price. Black beans were said to cause stomach pains sometimes when eaten.

Cassava used to be one of the most important crops grown. The production and usefulness of cassava started to decline during the WADU project; the time when fertilisers and oxen were introduced. These made the people lazy. Since cassava production requires a lot of hoeing, and is tiresome, and occupies the field for the whole year the farmers started cultivating crops which grow in a shorter period.

Different varieties of sweet potatoes were grown in the region. It was first introduced from "Humbo" in the early 1900's. This was later replaced by the *yeferenje* sweet potato during the WADU project. This was preferred over the old varieties for the bigger tuber size and larger leaves. This was, however replaced by the "Kenyan" potato that multiplied highly. It was first introduced by the producer cooperative. The major problem with this variety was that it cannot be stored for a long time and is attacked by diseases. Farmers have now started growing both the Kenyan and the bigger Wolayitta type side by side. In Gara Godo sorghum used to be a very important crop. It was abandoned because of bird attack.

Coffee was one of the most important crops in the region until 1972. However, its production declined and the coffee trees started drying up due to coffee disease. New seedlings could not grow due to the soil. Farmers also uprooted the surviving coffee trees and planted maize and *tef* in protest against supplying coffee beans to the Agricultural Marketing Corporation which demanded a certain quota be supplied by each farmer at a cheap rate.

Pumpkin and *gommen* are the crops grown for relish. The production of pumpkin is going down because of the larger space it occupies, and because it is attacked by wild animals and birds. The importance of *gesho* (hops) has diminished because of Christianity.

The two distinctive elements of the agricultural system in the area are the practice of intensive farming on the one hand and combining cereal and root crops on the other. The intensive agriculture involves sequential cropping i.e., the harvesting of one is followed by the planting of another on the same plot and repeated working of the land. While intensive farming exposes the land to wind and water erosion since the soil has been made soft by repeated year-round cultivation, it also provides extended plant cover reducing soil loss.

Some households earn income from the sale of *gesho*, eucalyptus, *enset* products, banana and coffee. Fertilisers are available and sold by private traders for the price of 144 *birr* per quintal.

 The most common local measures in the area are:

 *keretit* approx = 50Kg

 *kuna* approx = 20Kg

 *tassa* approx = half a Kg

 *chinet* approx = 100Kg

 *kil* approx = half a litre

 *insira* approx = 20 litres

 *birchiko* approx = a third of a litre

There are some conventional measurements which are so inconsistent they cannot be given approximation in metric units. These are

 *esir* for butter and cheese (may be 200 to 500 gm)

 *medeb* for spices, vegetables, tree crops, and products like *enset*

This year's *belg* season is not bad, they say, although last year's *meher* was not good because of untimely and insufficient rain. Good years are connected with good rain leading to good harvests and low prices. They say they have not seen an especially good year since the advent of the *Derg.*

### Farm Labour

#### Household labour

Major tasks in the household are farming, caring for livestock, house management, and marketing. Farming is almost exclusively men's work while house management is that of women. Women are also engaged in marketing activities and the responsibility for looking after animals is by and large theirs. Very small boys tend cattle, while those in the next age group may help their fathers with weeding. Boys also fetch water, collect firewood, and cut grass to feed the cattle. After about 14 or 15 they perform all the activities which their fathers do. Girls help their mothers with house management and marketing.

Women's work includes wood gathering, waterfetching, planting and harvesting, *enset* processing, marketing (buying and selling), livestock caring, house work, childbearing and rearing, spinning and basket making. The most important contribution of women is in livestock breeding. Women are more responsible than men for taking care of cattle as well as managing the dairy products and the income from it. Women occasionally participate in ploughing and harvesting, but never in weeding. Purchase of supplies from the market and sale of farm and other produce are predominantly carried out by women and cooking is solely a woman's activity.

In many areas women are not responsible for fetching firewood. Their responsibility for fetching water depends on environmental factors: the women in lowland areas are more responsible than those in the highlands.

Boys mainly go to school, and look after livestock, assist in gathering firewood, planting, hoeing and harvesting when they are not at school.

Girls participate in the activities their mothers do. These include baby-sitting, fetching wood, fetching water, transporting *tef* to the storage, tending livestock, participating in the processing of *enset*, planting, and housework.

#### Work groups

In 1910 about 75% of labour was provided in workgroups. This declined to about 45% in 1967, 30% in 1977. Now it is about 20%. There are 3 labour-sharing or labour exchange arrangements: *dagua* (*debo*), *madoa* and *zayia*. *Dagua* is an arrangement whereby a man or woman requests the labour of from 20 to 30 people to help with heavy tasks beyond the capacity of the household. For men such tasks include housebuilding, harvesting, ground preparation and the likes. *Dagua* for women are less frequent and mostly take place around *Meskel* when several *enset* have to be decorticated. The one who requests the labour prepares food and drink. Participants tend to be relatives, friends or neighbours who come out of friendship. *Madoa* ("help") is a kind of *dagua* which is not requested by the one who needs help but by another individual (usually in-laws or intimate friends). *Zayia* is a form of small-scale cooperation between a few people who work for each other in turn. *Dagua* and *madoa* are not as frequent as before because of the expense of preparing food and drinks.

Other labour-sharing agreements include:

1) Oxen for oxen performed according to strict rotation on a mutual basis.

2) Labour plus oxen for both performed by rotation depending on obligation

3) Labour for food and drinks - rotation

There is also *limena* (begging): a few people are asked to work on a smaller plot of land. Drinks and food will be served but not much.

Women's involvement in agricultural labour is very limited. In exceptional cases widows or unmarried women may help out in weeding and other light work. However, many women are active in gardening around the house. They plant medical herbs, coffee spices, and flavoured plants which they use for processing milk. Men's work includes land preparation (ploughing and hoeing), planting and harvesting of all the crops.

Decision-making in the household rests equally between husband and wife. The pressure to make common decisions in the household is generated from the social and economic crisis and environmental threats which have threatened the society for decades. The scarcity of land, for example, often forced (and still forces) husbands to operate as share-croppers and the wives to search for supplementary sources of income such as petty trade. Women in well-to-do households are only marginally involved in trade.

The major holidays observed in the area are *Meskel*, St Michael's Day, St Gebriel's Day, St Mary the Virgin's Day, and *Gollo* (a traditional holiday on the first Wednesday of every *T'equemt*). On the eve (the Tuesday) a *demera* (bonfire erected 10-15 days before) is lit, and the people eat raw meat and drink local liquors. Traditional belief has it that "On the Eve a spirit roams the territory of Wolayitta and weighs every person and blesses him if he finds him weighty and kills him if not."

#### Interlinkages

*Kota* ("share") is a common term for the quite widespread arrangements interlinking households in need either of land, labour, oxen, seeds, or even good health. Poor households who possess land but have no farm assets such as oxen, seeds and fertiliser, rent out their land on a *kota* basis. The harvest is shared equally between the user and the owner after the costs of inputs has been taken out. A person with land and capital will rent out land if short of labour.

The quite common practice of co-rearing and share-rearing livestock is also known as *kota*. *Kota* arrangements are a means of subsistence for many households. They tend to be mainly based on calculation of advantages. teaming up of oxen as a strategy to cope with scarcity of draught animals is also a common practice that interlinks households.

#### Wage work

Wage labour never used to be a common practice (not more than 1%) in the region as working for someone is considered a taboo. Recently, because of the drought, more people have been doing wage labour at the site. Those who work for wages are members of poor households who do not have any or enough land. They work on the farms of relatively better-off farmers and are paid in cash or kind. Women labourers help with harvesting *enset* and are usually paid in kind. Theoretically men can earn 15 *birr* for weeding or harvesting 1 *timad* and 10 *birr* as a farm servant. However it was reported that only 2% households employed anyone for these tasks in the last 12 months. Wages may also be paid in kind. Wage labour is looked down on and only performed if there are no alternatives. Working for others as a means of subsistence is an overt sign of poverty and loss of social esteem in the Wolayittan context.

### Technology

The use of hoe and plough started during the early 1910's. The *shodra* (for digging) was used before the introduction of the spade in the 1930's. The hoe culture declined during the 1930's and plough culture gained popularity. Today villagers use hand tools to till their land when it is too small to be ploughed or if they are too poor to afford oxen.

There are two kinds of storage bin: a large one made of twigs and wood and kept outside the house, and a small round wicker container resembling a beehive which is kept in the house. The harvest for many is small and may not need to be stored in the outside bin. What is kept in the house is fairly well protected and there is very little loss involved. The wicker is sealed with mud or cow dung to protect crops from mice.

Since the farm plot is often close to the homestead losses in transporting the harvest are minimal. Occasionally the harvest may not need to be taken home to be stored but may be consumed while still on the farm. This is especially the case in bad years when the crop is poor and consumed as *tiya*, while it is still fresh on the plant.

The PA is linked to Areka, the capital of the *wereda*, and the nearest town, by a roundabout road involving a drive of 30 minutes. Vehicle transport is not known or needed in the PA. The centre of the PA is about 2½ hours walk from the town.

### Common property resources

These include very small amounts of grazing land and a few springs and rivers. Everyone in the community has equal rights of access to all three. There is no regulated use. Communal land diminished due to villagisation, cooperatives, and *idget irsha*, (a development farm), which is the property of the PA. In some places, at present the farm is distributed to ex-soldiers. There was a Service Co-operative until 1991. It provided products like salt, sugar, spaghetti, macaroni, soap, clothes, rubber shoes, nails, corrugated iron sheets, fertilisers, variety seeds, crossbreed oxen, farm equipment, (spades, hoes, ploughs) hens, and blankets. The SC also used to buy coffee from the inhabitants when prices were low and sell it when prices went up and it distributed the profit to the inhabitants. In 1991 the SC was looted by the local representatives of the SC and the inhabitants. A new service co-operative was established in 1993 but it is still not giving services and the goods allotted to this PA in the form of quotas are being distributed in Areka - the nearby town.

### Environment

In 1910 about 75% of the land was covered with trees. This had declined to about 25% by 1928 and 15% by 1940. By 1967 only 3% of land was covered by trees but then intensive tree planting began so that now about 7% of the land has tree cover. Eucalyptus trees were grown only by the local chiefs as hedges or fences at the beginning of the 1900s. However, since the 1940's it is widely grown by everybody. Even people with smaller plots allot space for eucalyptus plantation. There is an afforestation project run by Redd Barna which has a nursery. The project has the following objectives:

1. to fight recurrent droughts through afforestation

2. to demonstrate to farmers the value of newly introduced seeds

3. to produce tree crop seedlings

The land has lost fertility over the last 20 - 30 years; then it was very very fertile, but now they have to use fertiliser. About 15% of the land in the PA is now non-functional due to erosion and loss of fertility. However, though the area is characterised by a farming system of intense ploughing, erosion is not as acute as might be expected. This is because the year-round cultivation provides extensive plant cover reducing the soil loss to erosion. Farmers use contour ploughing, check dams, mulching and ridges to check erosion. However, because of intensive farming the fertility of the soil has declined to the extent that one cannot expect a good harvest without the use of fertiliser. In addition to their skyrocketing prices inorganic fertilisers are not available in the required amounts. People use organic fertiliser such as animal dung but this has also become a scarce resource due to the diminution of livestock ownership in the area.

## Off-farm activities

### Within the community

Off farm activities include (men) trading, weaving, carpentry, blacksmithing, and (women) spinning, making baskets, and pottery. Wage labour has tended to increase, while trade, particularly long-distance trade, has shown a great decline. Women are more engaged in petty trade than men. Their involvement has a long history and has tended to increase while that of men has tended to decrease. Women spend their income on the family, largely to improve the food intake of the family and children's clothes. They may or may not hand over the income to their husbands. The lower the resource base of the house the greater women's involvement in marketing grain vegetables, home-made food (wheat bread, cooked potato and yam, *injera*) and drinks (*haraqea - areke*, *parso - borde*, *qaribo*, *tella*) dairy products, poultry, firewood, basketry, cotton, coffee and spices, and small animals. Men market grain, poultry, baskets, animal feed and licks, firewood, dairy products, coffee and spices, and small and large animals.

Food for work is practised throughout the year. Pottery, blacksmithing and tanning are despised crafts and are left to small "outcast" groups who live in many parts of Wolayitta. People who practise these crafts, known locally as *chinasa*, *wogacheha*, and *degala* respectively, are looked down on. They earn their livings mainly from these crafts into which they are born. They were not entitled to own land until the *Derg's* revolution. The *chinasa* are circumcisers and mourners as well.

### Migration

In earlier days the Wolayitta used to migrate seasonally to several agro-industrial estates and enterprises and large-scale farms in the Rift Valley adjacent to their area. However, these opportunities are not so easily available today, although young males still migrate seeking temporary employment: to Awassa, Wonji and Metehara. Also men (especially the young) migrate to the Awash valley to harvest cotton and maize. in the months of April to June. They return in September and October. The pay is 1.90 *birr* daily and the chance of getting employment is very high.

Migration for long distance trade, which was a common activity in Wolayitta in earlier days, is said to have shown a great decline in recent times. The reasons given are that "trade at present is not lucrative because items traded in earlier days are now found everywhere and the same price in all places" and the *Derg*'s pricing policies. Also farming activities require much more attention than they did before so there are fewer slack times. This is because of the diminution in plot size and climatic changes. Also the decline in the production of items which used to be traded, such as livestock, *bulukoa* (local blankets), and cereal crops, may be a factor. The Wolayitta area has also been affected by "agrarian involution"; the diminution of peasant production has the effect of making peasants turn inwards so they concentrate their efforts on subsistence rather than producing for exchange.

## The reproductive domain

### Household management

#### Tasks

Women are solely responsible for cooking.

#### Technology

The people used to use dungcakes and forest wood for fuel but now they mainly use eucalyptus trees and kerosene. Kerosene lamps are the main source of lighting. Dung cakes are used as fuel in the dry season. There is now a shortage of wood for fuel and construction.

#### Water

The main sources of drinking water are river, spring, and well water in that order of priority. There are two rivers: the *Shapa* in the Chala zone on the Hadiya boundary and the *Gamo* in Tokisa zone. The springs are found in Godo and Chala zones. Some households have wells of their own. There is no piped water.

### Producing and raising children

#### Fertility

Having as many children as possible is highly valued by Wolayitta for children are considered as a form of security for old age.

#### Childbirth and childcare

The majority of households in Wolayitta are overcrowded which makes disease (especially that of children) quite serious. Nevertheless, the special custom of giving priority to children makes children in Wolayitta less vulnerable compared to the other parts of the country.

#### Socialisation

According to a group of men in the community the qualities considered desirable in men include being a hard worker, helping his family in farm work, being involved in trading, making farm equipment for himself rather than buying it, respecting his parents and elders, being self-sufficient (does not borrow money or beg from others), honest, brave and serious. Many learn from their surroundings, especially from their parents, and others are born with these qualities. The boys are taught the art of ploughing during off-school times by giving them a small hoe so that they hoe the land and they are shown how to yoke the oxen. They are sent to school and trained to trade successfully by controlling the time spent travelling to and from the market and the profit made so that it is not wasted. They are told to respect all elders.

The most undesirable characteristics in men or boys are stealing, not respecting elders, not obeying parents, and wasting one's valuable time drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes with bad people.

A successful farmer owns a larger farm, grazing land, oxen and farm equipment. He is a hard worker and engages in mixed farming. A successful farmer ploughs his land and harvests at the right time, practices crop rotation, uses modern inputs like fertilisers, and improved seeds, and uses different ploughs for different crops.

Thatching and furniture-making are the most respected skills in the area.

It was agreed by the group that it is important to read write and do sums in order to be able to serve as a cashier of *equb*, *idir*, and other organisations. Those will also be entrusted with money from friends who are illiterate. Many who cannot read and write blame their parents for not sending them to school. The most respected social skills are being able to mediate when people have disagreements and truthfulness. Most of those who have these abilities are elected as administrators and secretaries of *idir* and *kebele*.

At school children learn alphabets and numbers at the beginning. Then they learn to read and write Amharic and English, Maths, Science, Geography, handicrafts, drawing, and sports. There is no church school this year.

In the early days, they learn to read *Ge'ez*, the Amharic alphabet, and deaconism. Adults learn priesthood. What a boy learns at primary school is useful as he learns agriculture theory and practice and so can plough plant and harvest at the right time. He will be familiar with the use of improved seeds, and fertilisers. He can put into practice the lessons learnt from experts (e.g. development agents from the Ministry of Agriculture). He also uses his produce properly. It might also lead to earnings from off-farm work such as writing applications for illiterate people and preparing contracts regarding, for instance, commerce. An educated man may also be elected as a chairman or secretary of the PA. He may also be good at trading.

The length of time spent at school may have a negative impact in that a child who stays longer at school turns away from farm work and becomes lazier. It is therefore better to leave school at a lower stage in order not to forget farm work and not to become lazy.

A group of women listed desirable qualities as follows: respecting parents, being good at cooking, and well-trained in knitting and making baskets. People can learn those qualities from parents, friends in the village and from school, or they can be born with them. Undesirable characteristics include to be rude, not to respect parents, to insult other people, and not to know how to prepare food, knit and make baskets.

A successful farmer's wife is respectful to her husband, and his friends, prepares food in time before the husband leaves for work, provides various feed for the oxen, and is hospitable to her friends and her husband's friends. A successful farmer's wife is engaged in trading and then buys her family food and clothing. In her spare time she does spinning, knitting, and she makes baskets in order to sell some of the products and use the rest at home. She is also good at brewing local drinks such as *tella* and *borde* and preparing traditional foods like *bachira*, *mucho* and *foshamo*. It is important to read, write and do sums in order to join the church choir, and to be elected as secretaries of women's *idir*, to receive messages, to read and write letters and to trade. Respected qualities include being a persuasive speaker and a leader in funeral songs (crying).

The women's group said schooling is useful because she will be able to keep herself, her children and her surroundings clean. Some are trained in preaching religious matters and thus serve the church. Schooling makes it easier to earn off-farm income in that she can serve as a waitress in hotels and bars, as a shop assistant, and also may become a nursery or primary school teacher. For women, the longer a girl stays at school the better. She becomes a better cook, learns more handicrafts, becomes more sociable, pays attention to cleanliness, her attitude improves, and she improves herself in many ways.

#### Formal education

There is a primary school in the community; it has 259 pupils in years 1 - 6. There are 8 teachers; all have 12th grade + 1 year training except for 1 who just has 12th grade. There is no shortage of classrooms (11), but there is a shortage of tables (3), chairs (7), and books. There is no shortage of chalk, pencils/pens, or paper. The secondary school is 13 km from the site in Areka. It has 1671 pupils in years 7 - 12 and 50 teachers. 9 teachers have a BA, 22 have diplomas, 4 have 12 + 1 (1st year university graduate) and 15 have TTI (12 + 1). There is no shortage of classrooms (40) but there are shortages of tables (15), chairs (30) - not including students' desks, blackboards (14), books, chalk, pencils/pens, and paper.

Over 22% of the school age children in Wolayitta (higher than the national average for rural areas of Ethiopia) are attending school. Many people wish their children to attend school. The people are aware of the value of education and are willing to invest in the future of their children. This wish and willingness might be due to their awareness of the economic predicament of the area. It is believed that about 75% of boys and 10% of girls of the community are at primary school and 50% boys and 5% girls at secondary school.

### Health

According to a health specialist the most common diseases in the site are malaria and elephantiasis. Both of these diseases cause death and have serious effects on productivity. Cattle bile from cattle and *gesho* leaves are widely used by the inhabitants for the treatment of malaria. There is a health clinic in the PA but it has no doctor or nurse. It is open 24 hours a day and has a regular supply of antibiotics, malaria drugs, and polio and measles vaccines. The Redd Barna Project occasionally provides medical supplies to the Centre. A course of antibiotics costs 10 *birr* and malaria drugs cost 3.5 *birr*. The buildings are well-maintained and there is equipment to sterilize needles. There is cooling storage (without backup) and a minimum supply of bandages and compresses. The most frequent illnesses seen at the clinic, in order of frequency, are: malaria; intestinal parasites; other respiratory illnesses; skin infections; eye infections; gastric infections; tracheal infections; ear infections. The nearest maternity clinic, doctor, nurse and pharmacy are 13 km away. The nearest hospital is 43 km and it costs 3 *birr* to get there.

A group of women ranked diseases as problems as follows: yellow fever; rheumatism; malaria; *gergeda*; eye problems; toothache; diarrhoea; headache; cough; *wugat*; amoeba; gastritis.

A group of men ranked diseases as problems as follows: yellow fever; diarrhoea; tuberculosis; eye problems; toothache; malaria; common cold; gastritis; cough; hepatitis; amoeba; asthma; and anaemia.

A group of women ranked children's diseases as problems as follows: tonsils; gum problems; eye problems; stomach-ache; fever; diarrhoea; measles; *yewof*; cough; and tetanus.

Both groups were asked to explain the causes, prevention and treatment of the diseases they had listed and these are some of their answers:

*Tonsillitis*: The women's group describing children's diseases said that the cause of tonsillitis is not cutting it. Tonsillitis can be treated by cutting the tonsils; chewing green leaves like ginger, cardamom and spitting the remainder; drinking juice from banana leaves; and visiting the clinic and health centre.

*Gum problems*: The group thought gum disease is always there until the child grows teeth. There is no prevention. Treatment varies from rubbing the gum with salt, with cloves of garlic, and rubbing it with fingers.

*Toothache*: is caused from a growth in the neck such as goitre; from eating some animal parts such as tongue which is regarded as taboo by that particular family but not the community. This can be prevented by not eating taboo animal parts. Toothache can be treated by chewing a green leaf called *aldamia*, treating the affected tooth with hot metal, removing the affected tooth, and visiting the clinic, health centre, or hospital if it does not get better.

*Eye problems*: According to the group describing children's diseases, the cause of the eye problem is touching one's eyes with dirty fingers and they believe it could be prevented by keeping both the mother's and the baby's body as well as their clothing clean. Once the child has developed eye problems they will be treated by pouring milk from the mother's breasts, washing the face with soap, and if it does not get better visiting the health clinic or health centre. A group of women said the cause of eye problems is exposure to dusty situations and it can be prevented by avoiding dusty places. Treatment is by washing the face with an extract of a variety of herbs (known as *yemitch medhanit*) and removing hair from under the eyelid. If it does not get better the person visits the clinic, health centre and ultimately hospital. According to a group of men interviewed eye problems are hereditary or people get it by walking outside in the open air after having eaten spicy food, or from looking at shining materials and sunrays. Nothing can be done to prevent it. The problem is treated with herb extract (commonly known as *yemitch medhanit*), washing the face with the extract and keeping the water in an area where there is sunlight. If the water becomes red the face has to be washed again. The face is washed with the herbal medicine only for up to three times.

*Stomachache*: The main cause of stomach-ache in babies, according to the women's group describing children's diseases, is when another person stares at the mother's breasts while she is breast feeding the baby. This can be prevented by not exposing one's breast while breast feeding the child and by washing breasts with soap before feeding. Treatment varies from boiling green leaves and drinking it with butter, boiling onions and drinking it with butter, and boiling bishop's weeds and drinking it with butter.

*Fever*: Fever in children is caused accidentally due to lack of proper care by the caregiver and can be prevented if she takes great care when she is looking after the child. The child with the fever is treated by covering with blankets and put on a *sefed* (basket) and moved to and fro in the open air. If the baby does not get better they visit a *wegesha* a local health technician who usually adjusts dislocated limbs, and finally they go to the clinic.

*Yellow fever*: The women's group said the cause of yellow fever is not known and cannot be prevented. Treatment is sought by visiting the health centre and if it does not get better visit the hospital. According to the men, yellow fever is caused by exhaustion from a lot of work and from hunger and malnutrition. They cannot do anything to prevent it. Treatment for yellow fever includes eating onions with various spices and herbs and with butter. Patients are forced to visit the clinic and then the hospital if they do not get better.

*Tuberculosis*: TB is a hereditary disease and can also be caused by smelling the corpse of a man dying from TB and sharing eating and drinking equipment with an infected person. It can be prevented by not marrying a person whose family is infected with TB, not sharing eating and drinking equipment with an infected person, and not approaching the corpse of a person infected with TB. Treatment includes drinking eggs with milk and coffee, eating liver, drinking lamb's blood and if no improvement visiting the clinic, health centre or hospital.

*Rheumatism*: The cause is catching cold by going out of the house early in the morning. It cannot be prevented. It can be treated by eating garlic with cottage cheese, spending sometime by the fireside warming, and smoking tobacco.

*Malaria*: This is caused by not cleaning kitchen equipment and living in swampy areas which are conducive for mosquito breeding. Malaria can be prevented by avoiding drinking water from rivers and only drinking from springs and draining the water from swampy areas. Treatment includes drinking herbs (juice made from Ethiopian cabbage), eating garlic, butter and pepper, drinking bile, and if it does not get better visiting the clinic.

*Gergeda*: The cause of *gergeda* is hereditary and cannot be prevented. Treatment is drinking juice extracted from cactus mixed with *Kosso* (Hagonis antholminthica), and drinking juice from green leaves.

*Diarrhoea* results from eating spicy food after being malnourished. There is nothing to be done to prevent it. Treatment includes drinking juice extracted from the roots and leaves of green plants. If it does not improve the patient will visit a health clinic, health centre or ultimately the hospital.

### Consumption

#### Food and other day-to-day goods

People consume a range of items throughout the year (see calendar in the Appendix). These include *kocho*, cassava, yam, sweet potato, potato, soya beans, horsebeans, chickpeas, cowpeas, cheese, bananas, meat, milk, butter, eggs, coffee, oranges, chickens, *kita* (maize), porridge (*tef*), *injera*, barley porridge, and sorghum. Root crops are the emergency crops and serve to insure peasants against a poor cereal harvest or crop failure. They also provide food security during the lean months and help to bridge the gap between one harvest and another.

The hungry season is found between February and May. It is worst in *Magabit* and the community say many people die. They eat famine foods - both plant and animal. Some of these have disappeared. Since 1983 the Gara Godo site has been one of the areas most affected by famine and drought.

Everyone in the household eats the same kind of food at the same time, except that special attention is given to children. Eating from the same plate is a tradition although distinctions may sometimes be made based on age.

#### Saving and investment

The major obligations that claim resources are three: impositions of the State; customary obligations to secure survival and maintain standing in the community; and household obligations.

#### Housing

Houses are typically made of wood, *enset* leaves, mud, and corrugated iron or thatch. Wood and galvanised iron usually come from the market and the rest from the garden. Traditionally they are partitioned into at least three parts: *qoloha* (inner part); *aqoha* (for livestock), and *wuigea* (living room). Larger houses may have up to five parts. Modern tin-roofed houses have at least five rooms. The houses of wealthy people are bigger and, if they are sufficiently wealthy, tin-roofed. A considerable number of houses in Gara Godo are tin-roofed. However, almost all are at least 20 years old. One informant said that all tin-roofed houses were built before the coming of the *Derg*; since then no-one has been able to afford one.

Building an average house costs at least 1000 *birr*. Tin-roofed houses costs more than 4000 *birr*. Good traditional houses last more than 25 years, with some maintenance. Good tin-roofed houses may last 40 to 50 years.

#### Household assets

Assets found in a wealthy house may include a radio, wooden bed, metal bed, mattress, special *galba* or *erfanea* (softened leather which is an alternative to a mattress), modern utensils for cooking and eating, (arm) chair, stool, bench, table and the like. Assets found in a poor home may include a wooden (stick) bed, poor *galba*, traditional cooking utensils, stool, and *shidha* (long traditional seat, without legs, made of *enset* leaves.

#### Local services

The PA has one relatively large market near the PA office. In the market place there is 1 kiosk which stocks everything that a kiosk stocks in towns. There is clinic at Gara Goda marketplace, built by Redd Barna, and run by the Ministry of Health. It has three rooms: a dispensary, an examination room, and a delivery room.

There are three traditional doctors for bone-setting (*heelancha*), herbalists and birth attendants. There are also rainmakers (*maraqoa*). The rain-man (*irawa* = "father of rain") always charges a fee for his service. It is said that in the last decade or so more and more peasants have turned to rain diviners to obtain environmental foreknowledge which they then use to plan cropping and harvesting strategies to minimize their losses. The rain diviner not only foretells rain but is also believed to have the power to make or prevent it. Thus he is approached not only by farmers but also by traders, especially women who sell *parso* (*borde*). Such drinks will not have buyers if it rains and therefore sellers must have fore knowledge of rain or must have it prevented by the *maraqoa*. The latter thus has permanent (informal) "taxes" on market days from these women. The fieldworker encountered a hot discussion among the members of the PA as to the efficiency or the spiritual power of the *maraqoa*. Even so the practice is still going on. Ethnically the *maraqoa* are not Wolayitta; they are Hadiya.

## Local institutions and organisations

### Households

*Ketta* ("house") and *ketta assa* ("men of the house) are the local terms for house and household. Membership of a household is expressed by (i) eating together in the sense that all members are taken into consideration when a meal is prepared (ii) intra-household divisions of labour (iii) living under one roof and (iv) sharing the resources of the household. The household in Wolayitta is a biological, production, consumption and cultural unit. It has to pass through certain developmental stages known as *wodalla keetta* (young household) and *dalga keetta* (established household). The Wolayitta household is patrilocal. Members of a monogamous household eat together, share the workload and participate in household decision-making. Although eating together is common in Wolayitta, special attention is given to children.

Adoption is common in Wolayitta. It is usually within kin groups and is practised when the one who adopts has no children of his or her own, when the household of the adopted are too poor to care for their children, or when the adoptive children are orphans.

### Marriage

All Wolayitta clans are exogamous while caste groups are endogamous. Marriage is one of the most important means of establishing relations between clans. The domain of mate selection is predetermined by rule exogamy. Members say that the determination based on social strata is now being undermined but close observation suggests this is not the case. The social strata are (i) royal clans (*kawo nata*) (ii) free landlords (iii) free peasants (iv) slaves and (v) caste groups. Marrying into a socially prohibited class entails great social disapproval and repercussions. Currently the role of religion in choice of mate is increasing.

Polygyny is common in Wolayitta and seems to have been on the increase in the last two decades. It is practised both by the relatively well-to-do and those who are not involved in trade or other income-generating activities and are therefore relatively poor. One informant suggested that now it is increasingly common among the poor.

The process of marriage involves elaborate, extensive and expensive ritual ceremonies marked by stages, the most notable of which are *qomoa lamia, bulacha* and *aife gatua*. *Qomoa lamia* ("the exchange of clans") is the stage where the clans of both prospective spouses (i) formally approve the marriage proposal and (ii) begin the network of formal relationships. Neither spouse participates in the ceremony and no gift or bridewealth is involved at this stage. *Bulacha* ("big feast") is the wedding ceremony that formally unites the spouses. A big feast with lots of eating, drinking and dancing is prepared at the houses of both parties. Bridewealth, dowry and various personal gifts are exchanged at this stage. *Aife getua* ("eye joining") is the ritual ceremony where the spouses are introduced for the first time to each other's relatives. The ceremony symbolizes (i) the actualisation of the union of the 2 *qomoa* and (ii) the incorporation of each spouse into the kin of the other. *Aife getua* is similar to *mels* or *qililqil* in Amhara society.

Bridewealth and dowry are said to be almost equivalent in quantity and value (i.e. there is equal exchange of goods between the 2 groups). The amount varies according to the social and economic status of the groups involved. 300 and 1000 *birr* have been suggested as lower and upper limits. For a first marriage if the bridegroom is self-supporting, parents do not provide anything. But if he has no wealth, parents have to buy clothes for the bridegroom and an overcoat, a ring and cash (100 to 300 *birr*) for her father. Parents also give blankets, *gabi* and a wrist watch to the bride's father and *bulko* to the bride's mother. The father also builds the house for the couple and the mother gives kitchen utensils. One observer estimated that the cost of a wedding was 300-500 *birr* and the dowry 750 to 1000 *birr*. (This may be an ideal wedding).

The bride's father buys cloth for his daughter and gives her a blanket, and tanned animal skin (*kurbet*) on which they sit or sleep, a kettle and lots of cups. Her mother gives her baskets, kitchen equipment, and a heifer. They also give *gabi* and a suit for the bridegroom. During the marriage sisters, nieces, and cousins give her cloth and kitchen utensils.

The newly-wed more often tend to have their own house adjacent to that of the bridegroom's father. This house is usually for sleeping purposes only. They eat and spend the day with the bridegroom's parents lasting for up to three years and sometimes more. But if the bride does not continue to have good relationship with the bridegroom's parents, they start to live in their house sooner.

### Divorce

Ideally divorce is difficult in Wolayitta because of the cultural stigma it embodies and its violation of the teachings of the Protestant churches which are prevalent in Wolayitta. Despite this, however, informants in Gara Godo complain of recent increasing instability in marriage. Though frequent divorce has many processes; it is not as simple as the going or sending away of the wife. She or he first refers the complaints to the elders. Divorce occurs only when all possibilities of reconciliation are exhausted.

When separation or divorce does happen, the one who seeks the divorce has to pay up to 300 *birr* to the partner. The wife usually is disadvantaged. The husband says he does not want to divorce her while he is mistreating her such as beating her, refusing to buy clothes and so on. The woman then files for divorce and pays between 100-300 *birr*. The man gets the money and the divorce he wanted. The children will remain with the father except for the one suckling who will stay with the mother until breast-feeding stops. A woman can claim rights in land only if (i) the divorce is caused by the guilt of the husband (ii) she has children and (iii) she does not marry again.

When the man remarries the parents do not provide anything to him. But they provide the new bride and her parents everything (as in the first marriage). A divorced woman can only marry a divorced man without any ceremony or gift.

A widow would marry her late husband's younger brother if he had a younger brother or marry an older brother if he did not have a younger brother. She can also choose between them. If she does not want to marry any of the brothers, she has to hand over her children to his parents and go to her parents and remarry somebody else.

### Inheritance

Tradition places a high value on the birth of boys mainly because of the custom of inheritance (women do not inherit land even now). In the old days, there were cases where female infanticide was practised. In those days women were excluded from inheritance and those who fathered only daughters were considered childless, and their property was confiscated by the state at their death. Women do not inherit land even at present. Land is inherited by male children equally. If there is no male child in the family, female children can inherit. Women can get their share of land by going to court but they face ostracism from their families. The parents' house with the compound, farm equipment, father's cloth and furniture and mother's jewellery is inherited by the older son if he does not have his own. But if he owns a house he can pass it to the youngest brother. If there are no boys in the family, the daughters sell the property and share it equally. Livestock is also inherited by sons and they may give a cow or a heifer to their sisters if they are kind. Daughters can inherit mother's cloth and kitchen utensils when the mother dies. However, married ones are forced to bring maize and cash when their parents die, for the funeral ceremony.

### Kinship

Kinship ties were the basic underlying principles of Wolayitta social organisation and have been strengthened more than ever before. There are strong and pervasive social and economic obligations both to the father's and mother's kin. These include, among others, sharing cultural responsibilities connected with funerals. Economic obligations include helping and supporting each other and borrowing and lending in times of need. Generally kinship is valued for its social insurance.

Currently, kinship organisations are one of the most important insurance institutions and receives the highest share of the investment in tradition. Sharing in Wolayitta is with blood relations rather than with other households. Moreover, when it becomes difficult to find access to resources many households resort to their kin and their friends for credit. Thus, if kin could not give food or cash in the form of a gift, often they would give a loan.

The major functions of kinship in Wolayitta include the regulation of marriage, and of inheritance, the maintenance of access to labour and to credit (through migration), and to establish social security.

### Lineage and clan

Funerary rituals are where the status not only of individuals, but also that of lineage, is demonstrated. All lineage members therefore are responsible for upgrading funerals in their lineage.

Though economic decisions are informed by socio-cultural values, people are not tied exclusively to this or that form of relation. In practice relations are more flexible and opportunistic. They make use of kinship, lineage, friendship and neighbourhood. Their relations may be market or non-market oriented depending on their needs and the benefits involved on each particular occasion.

Lineages are linked together in clans but these do not form corporate groups. Clan members live interspersed amongst each other.

### Age grading, life cycle changes and rites of passage

There is no wide organisation based on age. However, seniority is important in social and political relationships. The *Gada* system is not universal in Ethiopia. It belongs to the Oromo, though it was adopted by some Cushitic people like the Sidama and the Konso. It is unknown by the Omotic Wolayitta who have a long history of a centralized political system. However, some say that the traditional Wolayitta political system is the hybrid of the centralized system of the Northerners and the *gada* of the Oromo.

Circumcision is an important rite of passage for boys and girls. It may take place between the ages of 8 and 12. It must take place before marriage. The rites involve the formation of new, fictive, kinship ties of "eye-parenting": an "eye-father" for a boy and an "eye-mother" for a girl. The rite involves ceremonial and feasting. The relationship thus created is an important and lasting one involving reciprocal gift-giving and responsibilities.

### Friendship contracts

Though there is not an elaborately institutionalized friendship bond like that of the Gurage, friendship is highly valued in Wolayitta. It consists of helping and borrowing from each other at times of need, visiting each other, and labour exchange.

There are *mehber*, religious organisations with 10 to 20 members who get together to drink and eat on certain saint's days. Another form of *mehber* is the *yemeskel tekemach* which consists of 4 to 10 people who contribute 1 *birr* a week each, starting late *Meskerem* until *T'ir*. The members then buy a young bull with the money collected which is cared for by someone who may or may not be a member of the *mehber*. In *Sene* another bull is bought and fattened with the proceeds from the sale of the previous young bull. The fattened bull will be ready for slaughter during the *Meskel* festival.

### Markets

The Wolayitta area is said to have had a very long history of markets. Markets in Wolayitta have "chains" and "hierarchies" that resemble those in West African markets. Gara Godo PA has one relatively big market that attracts people from distant places. Prices are settled by bargaining. There are no special weights and measures laws. The market is effectively policed by the PA.

### Credit and social security

Religious "movements" (the proliferation and pervasive influence of the Protestant and Catholic religions) tend to create a "sub-culture" and a new social security system based on religious affirmation. This is true particularly of the voluntary associations *idir*, *equb*, and *mehber* which have the ultimate purpose of social security.

There is a wide variety of voluntary organisations in Wolayitta, all of which are at present active and thriving. In essence there are mutual support networks without which no household would be viable. *Idir* is a universal institution to which virtually all households belong. On the surface, the *idir* is a burial society, the traditional organisation which provides support to households in times of death and funerals like in the other parts of Ethiopia. However, at a closer look, the *idir* in Wolayitta is a multipurpose body. The foremost function of the *idir* is mutual exchange of labour to help households meet their needs during heavy work schedules such as land development, house and other construction. This function of the *idir* as a work group is locally known as *daguwa* when it is on a small scale and *zayia* when it is on a large scale. In addition, *idir* members will also assist households that are unable to cultivate their lands due to old age, widowhood, or physical disabilities. If such families cannot find alternative ways of using their land, *idir* members will cultivate it for a share of the harvest. *Idir* are common at the site. One *idir* usually consists of 40-80 members and each member contributes 20 cents per month. *Idir* members get support during times of mourning and contributions of two glasses of maize, a bundle of firewood, fetching water, making coffee and provision of materials such as dishes, trays, plastic drinking glasses etc for mourners.

*Idir* also provides its members with credit services; needy households have access to the savings of their *idir* and small loans are offered to them without interest. Another service is medical insurance. *Idir* members transport the sick to a health centre or traditional healer and pay for medical expenses if the patient cannot afford them. The *idir* thus constitutes a primary form of self-reliance in which the people consciously strive to build their community's capabilities to sustain its members. It serves as an alternative to state-run services.

*Shufowa* (*equb*) is a traditional rotative credit scheme which involves cash or material produce, often butter. The *shufowa* of butter involves only women. This is because women have exclusive responsibility for the management of livestock products. At the site there are a number of *equb* where 10 to 30 members contribute in the range of 2 to 4 *birr* twice a month. This acts as a local bank without interest payments.

Traditionally, membership of *shufoa* (*equb*) and *idilea* (*idir*) was based on kinship, friendship or neighbourhood. The recent competition between religious groups is tending to change this situation. That is, if a person belongs to a certain church or religious group, this belonginess has to be shown in all aspects of life including day-to-day activities and social interactions. This creates a new sense of community. Members of a church must help each other and they must show their membership and devotion to the church by not participating in the ways of life of people outside that church, especially the Orthodox or "traditional" people. People belonging to each of the religious groups (various Protestant sects, the Catholic and Orthodox churches, the traditional) tend to form distinct *equb*, *idir*, and *mehber*. *Mehber*, which were originally the association of Orthodox Christians, is now being adopted by both Protestants and Catholics. In Gara Godo most people belong to 1 or more *equb* and all belong to at least 1 *idir*. All the church groups have their respective *mehber*.

While *equb* may be differentiated by wealth this is not the case for *idir*. In many cases *equb* are not differentiated by wealth because in Wolayitta they do not require equal contributions. A member may contribute different amounts at different times depending on his capacity and may be repaid the amount he contributed.

Borrowing from others is a very common practice in Wolayitta. People borrow from relatives, friends, neighbours and from their *idir*. The amount borrowed depends on the capacity of the borrower to repay. There are also various moneylenders who charge interest at various rates.

Women's groups are special traditional organisations of women, which primarily involve work sharing or labour exchange arrangements.

If a person's house burns down, the villagers erect a new one for him by contributing building materials. They also supply him with furniture. But if he is self-supporting, they only contribute with the labour. If a person's healthy animal dies, villagers share the meat and give money to the owner to replace the animal. But if the animal dies of disease or if it is stolen, he does not get any assistance from the villagers. However, they allow him to use their oxen on his land. They also get assistance from kin, friends, neighbours and local organisations.

In 1986 (EC?) 75% of households in the village received credit of 78 *birr* from the Ministry of Agriculture for production purposes. The interest rate charged was 0.25c per month and collateral was needed. If someone wants a cash loan for production purposes they can approach a rich household. The amount of typical loans is 90 - 180 *birr*, usually to be paid back within a year; the interest rate charged for a year would be 100% and the person would have to have collateral. Loans like this would not be made for consumption purposes.

### Community decision-making

The PA, the primary organisation of the peasantry, and the lowest unit of the state administration, is the most active political institution. Though it is severely resented (because of its dual personality and corruptions in the past) many acknowledge that the PA is indispensable.

Community decisions are usually made by *derechima* (elders). They are not a defined set of people but a label attached to individuals who are esteemed in the community. Some decisions are also made by the PA. The elders decide for example on matters of disagreements and misunderstanding and *telfia* (kidnapping a woman for marriage). The PA decides on matters of theft and burglary. Disputes within and between households are resolved by local elders. Thieves can be fined up to 1000 *birr* or imprisoned for three months. Cases of murder goes to the *Wereda* or higher court. Decision-making by elders is now becoming more formalized through the institution of *idir* which has already become more formalized with an elected body of officials and, in some cases, written records of its activities and decisions.

The local experts are the local health experts known as *Wegesha* who adjust dislocated limbs, midwives, and those engaged in thatching roofs, producing farm implements; and traditional healers. It is their talent that qualifies them to be experts.

Taxes are collected in the PA though some households acknowledged to be poor are exempt. The amount of payment depends on the estimation of income level. Some complain of favouritism. They try to conceal their wealth so as to be considered poor, or at least not to be considered wealthy.

### Redistributive mechanisms

There is no practice of sacrifice; it has been long forgotten, especially in Gara Godo PA. Funerary rituals, weddings and other occasions which involve expensive feasts (such as circumcisions and new births) can be viewed as redistributive mechanisms. They are occasions when food is distributed from "rich" to "poor" and occasions for manifesting one's social and economic status. It seems that there is now no other ritual redistributive mechanism involving feasts. In the past there were several such mechanisms of which *dalla* is the most remarkable. *Dalla* was a public rite held by a wealthy person who herd reached such magical numbers as hundreds, or thousands. Such a person held a great feast to mark the occasion.

The intricate mechanisms of *kota* arrangements and traditional systems of labour exchange can also be viewed as redistributive mechanisms. *Kota* arrangements are reciprocal relations based on mutual self-interest that bind the rich and the poor, the differentiation being land and livestock. Given the shortage of land and pasture in the area, for instance, an owner with more than 6 to 10 head of cattle has no choice but to redistribute his animals among peasants (often poor) who agree to cover their upkeep for certain benefits, such as manure, a share of the milk, dairy products or offspring.

### Local organisations

A group in the community described the development of local organisations as follows:

Going back to their ancestors (i.e. pre 1910) there were men and women's *idir* and *mehber* (women on St Mary's day and men on St Michael's and St Gabriel’s days) and *equb* (cash and butter for women, and cash for men). Between 1975 and 1991 there was a Peasant Association. Between 1979 and 1988 there was a Producers' Co-operative. Between 1979 and 1991 there were a Revolutionary Ethiopia Youth Association and Women's Association. In 1988 women formed a Saving and Credit Scheme: there are 4 groups in this scheme and every member contributes 10 cents per week. This money bears interest. Redd Barna offers to each group monetary aid on the basis of their capital growth. The prime mover of the scheme is Redd Barna. The group ranked the community organisations in order of usefulness as follows:

*idir*

PA

*equb*

Women's savings and credit schemes

*Mehber*

REYA (Youth Association)

REWA (Women's Association)

Producers' Co-operative

## Beliefs and Values

### Land

Traditionally there were *makanna*, common burial sites. At present these seem to be rare, perhaps due to the shrinkage of communal land. People are buried either on family *makanna* if that exists, the neighbourhood *makanna*, or on the land they farm. Those who belong to the Orthodox church are buried on church *makanna*. Burial sites of ancestors do not have any ritual importance now. However, they are protected and highly revered, perhaps as historical memorial monuments and because of emotional attachments to ancestors. Tradition demands high respect for all burial sites which are protected from animals; firewood collection is almost a taboo.

Land is highly valued but not regarded as sacred. Selling one's land or a portion of it has increased. When a person faces an acute problem (especially a health problem) he may be advised: "Is it not if your life is spared you will use your land?"

### Religion

The local religions are Ethiopian Orthodox, Protestant (Kalehiwot sect) Pentecost (*Meseret Hawariat*) *Mulu Wengel*, and the Catholic Mission. Islam is negligible. The main ones are Orthodox and Kalehiwot. The Orthodox is the oldest "modern" religion in Wolayitta. Its introduction goes back to at least Menelik's conquest of the area. Some argue that the Wolayitta area was Christianized in the 13th century by Tekle-Haimanot, Shewa's most famous saint and explain Menelik's conquest as guided by religious motives which have to do with restoring Christianity on the land where that most famous saint had preached.

Protestantism was introduced into the area in the early 1920s while the Catholic church has a history in Wolayitta of not less than 50 years. These two religions have been steadily progressing at the expense of the Orthodox church which has been shrinking. The fieldworker suggests there is no proper "traditional" religion in the area. The Wolayitta distinguish three categories with regard to religion: *crsana* (Christian Orthodox), *ammanoa* ("religious" referring to Protestants and Catholics) and *alamea* (secular or worldly, referring to people who belong to neither of the other groups). The "traditional" group are the *alamea*. It is the group that has lost its indigenous religious practices but has not been incorporated into the modern religious group.

### Explanations of misfortune and illness

Sorcery, witchcraft (*goromote*), evil eye, and ancestor worship are among the major traditional belief systems that are related to explanations of sickness and misfortune. The local explanation for illness and accidents vary. When a man becomes sick or dies he is believed to have been "eaten" by *goromote*. They are from caste groups, specifically the *chinasha* (potters). The remedy is to force a suspected *chinasha* to "forgive" the victim. If it is a mental illness or if it is a child who is ill, they say it is because of *assa aife* (evil eye). This is also associated with crop failure, animal diseases and similar misfortunes. The man with the evil eye (*higisha*) does not belong to a specific social group. There is no remedy for *assa aife*, although it can be minimized by not being exposed to the *higisha*.

Many illnesses and misfortunes are also associated with defiance of social rules or *gome*. *Gome* is a disease or misfortune associated with mistreating people, especially elders in the same descent group. When a man encounters misfortune he is believed to have been cursed by the elders because he has mistreated them. The remedy is to recall what he has done, or to go to a diviner who can tell him who he has mistreated, confess the truth in front of the *dere chima* (council of elders) and thereby try to obtain *marroa* (pardon).

If the sick person was strong and a hard worker previously, the cause could be attributed to malaria or cold.

Local witches tell the reasons why a person who works hard is not able to improve himself, who has stolen his money, or his livestock, and who he should marry. They can also tell why one's child died. There are rainmakers and it is believed they can make or stop rain. It is even believed they can control the amount of rain that falls. The peasants contribute 10 cents each whenever they want rain or sunshine. Traders also pay 20 cents or give a handful of crops on every market day so the rain will not come on that day.

### Community values

Among traditional beliefs ancestor worship, sorcery and witchcraft can be said to be on the verge of extinction whereas the evil eye and *gome* are still strongly believed in. The Wolayitta are receptive to new ideas; their traditional beliefs are very flexible. Therefore they do not have much difficulty in reconciling scientific idea with traditional ones.

People are willing to answer all questions and give accurate answers save those pertaining to politics. They either hesitate to answer political questions or give inaccurate answers. As they are facing hardship they believe the present survey has to do with planning aid.

## The Community

### Community organisation

PAs are stronger now that taxes and other special extra-contributions have been reduced or waived. PAs now have an elected committee. There are councils of elders in every village of the site who even go to the *Wereda* Council when the need arises.

The scarcity of means of livelihood and the consequent situation of poverty has made everyone highly dependent on the traditional cooperative institutions of their communities and led them to become highly involved in elaborate ties of social and economic interdependency. The reciprocal relations that are based on mutual self-interest bind all members of the community.

### Politics

One observer reported that the elected officials are born and brought up by the present government and its political practice so they work within their local party and in close relationship with the central government. Those who do not follow the EPRDF line are dismissed from office (the people review them every 3 months). Since the people approve of current policies they do not mind putting them into practice. The people strongly support the regionalisation programme but their demands for a zone of their own have not been met. Wolayita has always used its own language and culture. However, in the current reorganisation it has been lumped with Gofa, Gamo and Dawaro and its traditional administrative capital has been transferred from Sodo to Arba Minch. Because the Constitution was discussed and commented on by the rural population about three quarters of them know about it. They also know about the advantages of democracy thought they could not put it into practice. People believe that public opinion has no influence.

### Social conflict

One respondent said there are no major social conflicts but there may be some minor ones. There are people who condemn the bad conduct of officials because of their ethnic bias and miscarriages of justice which favour their acquaintances. Another said there are some security problems. Some members of the WPE army who were trained to butcher people and for other evil purposes and some *Derg* officials who could no longer suck the blood of the people have been creating problems. However, the people are defending themselves vigilantly.

There is competition between religious groups and this sometimes leads to conflicts. They have been mediated by political officials and resolved by an agreement that no-one will preach outside his church. There is no ethnically based conflict in Wolayitta.

### Poverty and wealth

The differentiation of households in Wolayitta is less marked than in some other areas. This is partly due to the general levelling of possessions and income by the land reform and partly due to family fragmentation. Land reform transformed rural Ethiopia into a society consisting almost exclusively of a class of self-labouring peasants and this is visible in Wolayitta which is almost wholly a land of micro-farmers and micro-enterprises. However, there are simpler forms of differentiation such as relatively bigger holdings of land, livestock ownership and additional income, labour availability and management strategies. Moderate differentiation exists between the relatively well-to-do, the middle and the poor peasants.

The wealthiest people in the community are those who have 1 or 2 pairs of oxen, land measuring 2 hectares or more, 10 or more heads of cattle, and some cash in hand (400-500 *birr*). The sources of their wealth are usury, speculation (involving the buying of coffee, *tef* and maize when prices are low and selling later when prices are higher) and cultivating other people's land under sharecropping arrangements. The middle peasant is someone with 1 ox or a pair of oxen, 1 hectare of land, and a few head of cattle, sheep and goats. The poor are those with no farm stock, no cattle, with perhaps 1 or 2 sheep or goats and very small landholdings. They often depend on others to farm their land. An observer said they are poor because they lack punctuality during work and/or do not use their produce properly (for example they sell crops while still in the field). They tend to have many children.

The poor tend to be exploited or are economically taken advantage of by others for a variety of reasons. Because they do not possess the necessary farm assets such as oxen, tools, seeds, or even good health, they rent out their land to others on *kota* arrangements, pawn it, or, more recently, sell it and work as a wage labourer on that same land. *Kota* is not exactly an equitable system. Though the harvest is shared equally the cost of inputs is taken out before the sharing is done. Often the user of the land inflates his costs in order to benefit himself.

Another observer reported that houses which are relatively wealthier have sufficient-size plots, oxen, the strength to plough, and at the same time are involved in trade. The richest households are often involved in sharecropping. Most of these households are headed by younger farmers with a tendency to get involved in different kinds of activities. The main characteristics of the poorest households in the community are being landless or owning very small plots of land, not owning oxen and other livestock, and being female heads of households. There is a feeling of inequality between the relatively rich and poor households.

### Social mobility

One respondent said that it is easy for the child of a poor person to become rich by looking after other people's cattle, by engaging in trading, by borrowing money from others on the basis of sharing the profit equally, using hired donkeys for commercial purposes and by cultivating other people's land by share cropping. However, the fieldworker argued that social mobility seems to be very little at best and totally absent at worst because the rich are those who are already established and can use their resources to ensure they stay that way.

### Status

Wealth, occupation, age, war services, charisma, political position, family and/or lineage: each or some combination of them serves as a basis for status in "traditional" as well as "modern" Wolayitta. Status is also determined by virtue of being born to superior or inferior clans. Theoretically people say that these bases for status are breaking down but it is easy to observe in practice that they are still important. However, recent developments also reveal the special significance attached to wealth as a basis for status and power. These are shown in people's attitudes towards rich and poor. The rich are respected, admired and also feared for the power they are believed to have acquired along with their personal wealth. The poor are sympathized with for the hardships they face, but they are never respected. They are looked down on and considered worthless because of their poverty. Poverty means being threatened with the loss of one's standing in the community.

One respondent said that the most respected people in the community are the rich ones and *kebele* officials. Many people respect the rich so that they might tend their cattle and be able to get some milk and butter after giving a certain amount of butter to the owner. They may be allowed to cultivate his land on share cropping and might also get credit from him. Many people respect officials in the hope their problems will be solved favourably. The poor also hope the officials would refrain from attacking or oppressing them by means of their official power.

Age, investment in tradition, and occupation are other ways of gaining status. The function of age as a basis for status is manifested in the binding principle of absolute seniority, the violation of which is considered to incur *gome*. *Gome* is a central cultural concept in the mechanisms of social control in Wolayitta. A particular rule of *gome* is giving special respect to elders in general and specially to those in descent line of one's parents and obeying the following orders of elders.

Wealth as a basis of status consists of physical assets such as land, livestock, and disposable household goods, human assets mainly labour and investment in tradition. The prosperous are viewed with respect tinged with envy. They are admired for having attained material security which is ranked above everything else, but also feared and resented for the power they are believed to have acquired along with personal wealth.

Power here means more influence over others, more of whom are drawn to them for a variety of economic reasons. The poor on the other hand elicit sympathies for their hardships but not respect. They are looked down upon and considered worthless because of their condition.

Investment in tradition is a significant basis for status since it is the means through which the rich display human or intangible wealth, a means through which they maintain their respected status in the community, and a channel through which they express their individuality. Its failure leads to the loss of respectable social status; to being a social outcast. Thus an individual's social standing is measured not only by his material possessions but also by his possessions of human assets, which is enhanced by investing in tradition. Over-investment in tradition which is a characteristic feature of households in Wolayitta is thus an attempt to deny poverty the ultimate victory, social humiliation.

Wolayitta's attitude towards the rich and the poor is significant since it shows the relation of wealth, prestige and power. It shows who the "big men" and entrepreneurs are. It also reveals the valuation of personal endowment as the main route to wealth or the way to escape from poverty. The way of dressing, having a tin-roofed house, and modern furniture, being educated and having one's children educated are urban status symbols which are becoming more important than the traditional ones. The growing practices of hiring, pawning and selling land and the expansion of the dependent wage labourer group can be taken as evidence of incipient "class formation" in the PA.

### Social stratification

One respondent said that those who take up public office are now elected and demoted by the local people. Their performance is regularly reviewed and so officials cannot use their positions for personal development. Another said that though there are no officials who receive bribes to warp justice there may be some who use their office to take advantage of public property and assets. Another said that the local elites are born locally and are elected by the people. Senior officials, (higher than *kebele* officials) have improved their lot very well using their position, usually by taking bribes and subdividing state lands, taking prime commercial land before anyone else. While there are some who become rich because of their power, there are others who are poor despite their power. Another said that some have benefitted from their office by renting out their oxen while their land was worked for them in return for their service. Some get a share of the crop by allowing individuals and organisations to cultivate extensive lands. Another said local officials do not get rich but district officials do. Another said local elites obtain some amount of local government property such as land, community forestry and other government properties. They do not account with receipts for all the income and expenditure they are in charge of.

### Dissent

For the majority of people collective relations are vital and few households would be viable without them. Over the years these relations have acquired a new purpose and a new meaning, becoming critical elements both in open and "hidden" forms of political struggle. Recent religious "revivalism" and the change in "emotive" forms of traditional institutions have been spreading through Wolayitta since the early 1980s. The Orthodox Church - the official religion of the old regime - is associated with northern domination in the minds of many and has been quiescent and languishing. Meanwhile the other, foreign-based churches have been spreading vigorously. It has been observed that the significance of revivalism is more to do with the search for community and collective strength than religious belief and can be seen as an indicator of growing political awareness.

There are bands of robbers but their numbers and activities are contained by vigilant people. They steal property and livestock at night and travellers are attacked and robbed in forests and the wilderness. One respondent said arrested criminals are released from police custody in a short time. The government's leniency towards such criminals has worsened the security problem.

## Relationships with Other Communities and the Wider Society

### Clans and lineages

Wolayitta society is composed of over 130 clans and 2 major tribes, *malla* and *dogala*. The basis for tribal division is not clear and at present it does not have any practical impact on any organisation of the society. Clanship is based on the common origin of the group. Wolayitta society is said to be formed from the migration of various groups of people to the area from various distant and nearby areas. Clans played an essential role in the social, economic and political life of the people in the pre-integration period. Social status, access to land, and recruitment to political positions were determined by clan membership. The practical significance of clans had diminished in the post-integration period. Though clans are still attributed strong theoretical significance they are less important in daily life. Their main function today is in the regulation of marriage.

### Villages and regions

The site, in absolute terms, is poorer than neighbouring villages. Homesteads are contiguous to one another. The whole rural area is densely settled and made up of strings of small hamlets and villages. The basis of relationships of a village to other communities is both social (friendship and lineage) and economic (trade, marketing, service cooperatives, labour exchange, livestock co-rearing).

### Relationships with wider Ethiopia

Traditional enemies of the Wolayitta are the Sidama, Arusi Oromo, Hadiya (who they call *Maraqo*) and the Kembata. The basis of the enmity is the "expansionist" policy pursued by the kings of Wolayitta. Most of Wolayitta's current *wereda* are said to have been settled by expelling these people. The process of expansion was halted by Menelik's conquest of the area in 1894. The expelled people are said to have guided and supported Menelik in the process of conquering Wolayitta. There is no overt sense of enmity at present. The people are politically highly conscious. They are proud of themselves as Wolayittas and at the same time consider themselves to be Ethiopians.

There has not been any war activity at the site. About 140 people were conscripted for the former regime's army. 120 soldiers have now returned about 90 of whom have been given land previously owned by the Producers' Cooperative. There are signs of unruliness among these ex-soldiers.

### Effects of government policies

One observer reported that people feel better now, as they are freed from some of the oppression and exploitation of the period up to 1991. However, their living conditions show no significant improvement; in fact due to population increase they feel more overcrowded. People are very happy that there is no more conscription. The Derg also robbed them of food, clothing, personal belongings and assets in the name of contributions to the war. There is also less land tax now.

One respondent said that people oppose the article in the Constitution which states that all lands should remain State land; they now feel apprehensive wondering if their land will be taken from them. Some people are worried that the regionalisation programme will cause age-old hostilities to flare up.

Farmers who grow coffee have benefitted from the increase in prices even if most farmers (who are subsistence farmers) lost their advantage.

### Government activities in the community

The RRC was active in the area during the drought years 1983-86. It established feeding centres in different sites. There is a MoA extension programme in Gara Godo implemented through one development agent and a woman home economics facilitator. The development agent teaches plant and livestock protection techniques to farmers as well as advising them on how to plant coffee seedlings in a profitable manner, how to graft aged coffee plants and demonstrating efficient ways of planting *enset* and banana. The women home economics facilitator deals with women and gives lessons on home arrangement, childcare, and sanitation and tries to encourage involvement in income-generating activities.

A group in the community ranked the activities in the area undertaken by government (in order of usefulness to the community) as follows:

spring

roads

5 nearby primary schools

fertiliser

pesticide

medical services to the population during epidemics

feeder roads

food for work

food aid

forestry

Other government activities not included in the ranking were:

Dejach Beyen Secondary school

Arba Minch hospital

improved seeds

In 1983 there was an epidemic of rinderpest and in 1993 an epidemic of anthrax. Vaccination was given by the Ministry of Agriculture and a preventive vaccination programme was launched for sheep and goats against PPR (Pestes des Petits Ruminants).

### NGO activities in the community

Around 1915 Dubbo Catholic Mission School and Clinical Services arrived and shortly after the American Ottona Hospital was constructed by the American Mission.

There was a serious crop failure in 1983 and 1984 which resulted in a famine. This was not a localized problem but affected other areas and regions as well. Many people and livestock died during this period. It was then that the Redd Barna Project set up feeding centres in Gara Godo to assist in feeding the hungry, providing medical care, clothes and supplementary grain flour to those who had recovered from the drought. In 1988 and 1989 there was a serious epidemic of meningitis in Gara Godo. The Redd Barna Project, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, intervened and constructed a clinic in the PA. Redd Barna has been involved in helping the community for a long time. According to local informants this has involved:

1984: Food aid and blankets and clothes were provided for those in need. The inhabitants were provided with cows on the basis of one cow to two families.

1985-89: Food for work was provided: bridge and feeder road construction and terracing and nursery activities.

Oxen or dairy cattle were provided to those people with no cattle and a lot of children.

Fertiliser and modern seeds were provided to the poor. Water wells were sunk and springs were cleared.

A vaccination service was given to the inhabitants (for example against meningitis in 1986)

They exhorted many people to be members of the producers' co-operative by paying their fees for them.

They encouraged the children of the poor to go to school by paying the school fees, providing writing materials and clothing.

A groups ranked the activities in order of usefulness to the community as follows:

 food for work

 the American Ottona Hospital

 the Dubbo Catholic Mission Clinical Services

 the Dubbo Catholic Mission School

 food aid

 the Admancho Clinic (1979)

 vaccination services

 wells sunk and springs cleared

 Balsa primary school

 oxen or dairy cattle provided

Redd Barna reports that it has been active since 1984 and has implemented it works in 3 phases:

Phase 1: Relief works (1984 and 1985)

Phase 2: Rehabilitation (1986)

Phase 3: Development (1987 to date). In times of drought relief food distribution is undertaken (eg April 1994)

### The future

There is a high degree of crowdedness because of the practice of having from 3 to 5 wives all with children. It is a community that believes in procreation and the people do not think about the future of their children and how they will be raising them. People should discuss the problem of land shortage and usage. People with more land object to the idea of redistribution while those with small holdings or no land welcome it. The people do not like the idea of resettlement since in the past those who the *Derg* resettled all died.

Farmers cannot get fertilisers due to their inability to repay their previous credit. This has exposed them to great difficulties and the government should consider their plight.

One respondent said that the only solution to the land problem was intensive cultivation which requires ownership of land by people. Aid discourages people from working even if it saves life. In the site area there are NGOs (such as Redd Barna) who have made people expect aid rather than work.

Proposals for the future development of the site include:

- redistributing land

- digging water wells to improve health

- provide a good health service

- establishing schools for primary education and adult literacy (expand current school up to 8th grade, add a secondary school)

- establishing a vocational training centre for the unemployed (eg in medical training, woodwork, metalwork and mechanics

- factories producing various goods

- maintaining peace and stability - give assistance to the new town being founded in the old marketplace

- upgrade footpaths so they can be used by vehicles

- provide credit for farmers and traders

- encourage saving

- encourage freedom of movement between all areas of Ethiopia

- establish a bigger marketplace

- extend the only road that links the locality to Areka, Damot Gale district and southern Shewa

- instruction in family planning

- electricity

## Glossary

*Awraja*: An administrative boundary before 1991.

*Belg:* A short rainy season usually occurring during February/March/April. The harvest from this season takes place in July and August.

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

*Borde:* Non-alcoholic beer.

*Bulko:* Quilt.

*Debo*: Communal working party in which labour is exchanged for food and drink.

*Derg:* The name of the military government that ruled Ethiopia from 1974-1991.

*Enset:* False banana. The roots and the inside of the trunk and branches are eaten often after being left to ferment in the ground.

*Fitawrari:* A military title.

*Gabi:* A shawl-like garment made of a double-layer of white cotton.

*Ge’ez:* The language of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church education and mass.

*Gendi:* A livestock disease.

*Gergeda:* A disease affecting women.

*Gesho:* A plant, the leaves of which are used to make beer.

*Gommen:* Spinach.

*Injera:* The Ethiopian flat bread.

*Kegn Azmach:* A military title.

*Kocho:* Emergency food derived from *enset*.

*Lem:* Fertile.

*Megabit:* March.

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

*Mels:* A snack food - usually roasted grain.

*Meskerem:* September.

*Qaribo:* A drink.

*Qiliqil*: A ceremony in which the families of the bride and groom meet a week after the wedding.

*Tef:* A millet-like cereal.

*Tella:* Home-made beer.

*Timad:* A measure of land.

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

*Weyna dega:* The temperate zone (Ethiopian intermediate altitude).

*Wugat:* A stabbing or piercing pain.

## Acronyms

EPRDF: Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front

MoA: Ministry of Agriculture

RRC: Relief and Rehabilitation Commission

TGE: Transitional Government of Ethiopia

TTI: Teacher’s Training Institute

WPE: Worker’s Party of Ethiopia