# Ethiopian Village Studies: Adado, Gedeo , SNNP

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## Locating the community in space and time

### Geography and population

Adado is located 386 km south of Addis Ababa in the Gedeo zone of Southern Ethiopia. The two nearest large towns are Bule at 10km and Dila at 25 km. Dila is situated directly on the important new Nairobi-Addis Ababa road and is quickly becoming the most important centre of the Gedeo zone. At the time of our survey the total population of the town was 2851; 1455 male and 1396 female.

The Gedeo (often referred to in the literature as Darasa) are today considered to be a culturally and linguistically distinct group and the area in which they predominate has recently been designated as a zone with immediate state administration in Dila. The total population of the Gedeo zone is 841,447 of which 453,099 are ethnically Gedeo. The average household size in Gedeo was 5.78, and given the above figures, the approximate number of households in Gedeo zone would be 145,579. The area of Gedeo zone covers about 5,890.2 km, of which 1/5 is inhabited by the Gedeo themselves. The population density of the region is said to be one of the highest in the country at 175 persons per square kilometre. But the population is not dense in the middle elevation zones (between 5000 and 8000 feet).

The Gedeo are bordered by the Sidama in the East, the Alaba in the North, the Burji in the West and the Guji in the South. All of these groups, and the Gedeo, belong to the Eastern Cushitic speaking people, who traditionally occupy the upper reaches of the Rift Valley escarpment to the east of Lake Abaya in northern Sidamo.

Following the eruption of the Ethiopian Revolution in 1974, and in accordance with Proclamation No. 31 of March 1975, 9 peasant associations have been established in the area collectively known as Adado. These peasant associations are:

1. Adado 6. Wochema

2. Kolisha and Kara 7. Dorro

3. Agemssa 8. Basura

4. Dakuwa Ashera 9. Oselle Mejoo

5. Hoticha

The research community, the Adado PA, is bounded by Basura in the North, Kolisha and Kara in the South, Hoticha in the Southwest, Dorro in the Northwest and Oselle and Mejoo in the West. The population of Adado is 100% Gedeo and shares the same system of beliefs, customs, and values. They are a distinct and homogeneous cultural and linguistic group. All the nine Adado PAs are brought under one Agricultural Service Cooperative. The Adado Agricultural Service Cooperative was established in 1978. One Agricultural Development Centre and one Agricultural Extension Agent serve the 9 Adado PAs.

Adado is larger than surrounding villages. In 1992 there were 365 households (20 female-headed). The male population was 877 and the female 926. There were about 100 households without land.

### Climate

The climate is considered to be moderate in Adado. Rainfall is not generally lacking in the region. The two major seasons are *meher* and *belg*. *Meher* which is the rainy and cold season ranges from *Sene* (June) to *Tikmet* (October). Although it is the time of the year when the area receives the greater amount of rainfall, the climate during this period is not terribly cold. The other major season, *belg*, stretches from *Yekatit* (February) to *Miazia* (April) and is a period in the year during which *belg* crops mainly maize are harvested. The climate of the area during this time is not generally cold. The rainy season in the area is not so severe as to cut off places from each other and prevent travel from one town to the next.

### Production

The area is characterised by lush vegetation that permits the growing of the subsistence crop *enset*. It is typically considered a "true forest" zone. Adado is located at around 7000 feet above sea level (it is a mountainous region). The ecology above 8000 feet is suitable for the cultivation of such highland crops as barley, *tef* and wheat. The local economy is based on the production of 2 main crops: *enset* and coffee. *Enset* is produced primarily for home consumption (10% is sold) and coffee is grown for mainly trading purposes (90% is sold). Other crops for consumption and trade include *chat*, sugarcane, maize, and barley. Adado is in a surplus area, but probably not a crop surplus area. The soil is *lem* (fertile) and the altitude *weyna dega* (low highland).

Barley was good this year (1993/4) while the worst *meher* in the last 5 years was 1990/91 because of too much rain. The best coffee harvest in recent years was in 1985.

### Social composition

The Gedeo are a homogeneous ethnic group speaking a language that has slight linguistic variations within the Gedeo zone. As oral tradition has it, the Gedeo trace their origin to a polygamous ancestor named Deressa. He is regarded as having fathered 7 sons, 3 by his senior wife and 4 by his junior wife. The sons were named *Hemba*, *Logoda*, *Bakaro*, *Darasha*, *Hanuma*, *Doba*, and *Gorgosha*. The 7 patrilineal exogamous clans of the Gedeo bear the names of these 7 sons of Deressa. Upon his death, the father, Deressa, divided Gedeoland among his seven sons. Each son received an equal share of the Gedeo territory. The basis of the social organisation of these clans lies in territorial divisions expressed in rituals, and an institutionally-focused *gada* system known as *hayuma*. More important than these divisions are the two major social categories, the *dalana* (senior) and the *balbana* (junior). While the former presides over the administration of local disputes, the latter assists the former. Authority rests on local councils consisting of local elders mainly men.

Connected with this kinship organisation, there has been a long standing traditional territorial structure called *Sasserogo*. Literally translated *Sasseroga* means three *Roga* which are named *Sobbho*, *Ributa*, and *Rikuta*. Three of them together had one *Aba Gada*. In traditional Gedeo, therefore, the *Gada* system used to be the main source of socio-political and ritual leadership. According to the Gedeo *Gada* tradition, all member of the leadership from the highest office of the *Aba Gada* down to the lowest office of *Hyiticha*, assumed and maintained leadership roles for a term of 8 years at a ceremony called *Balle*. Specific roles were attributed to particular clans or sub-clans as a result of which only a given clan or sub-clan contributed members from its ranks for the role of leadership while other clans or sub-clans performed duties associated with ritual, traditional medicine, etc. Accordingly, the *Aba Gada* used to be chosen from the senior clans of *Logoda* and *Hemba*.

This shows that the traditional Gedeo Gada institution was hierarchically organised. At the top of the Gada leadership was the *Aba Gada,* whose primary duties and functions were more ritual than political. Besides this, however, the *Aba Gada* dealt with inter-clan and inter-ethnic conflicts, settled disputes, and heard appeals. Supernatural powers, it was believed, were also bestowed upon the *Aba Gada*. As a result, he could bless the people so that they would have good harvests, peace, and happiness, or he could pronounce a curse on those whom he did not favour, in which case it was feared that they would be hit by misfortunes. This belief obliged the members of the community to abide by the instruction of the *Aba Gada* and remain faithful to the *Gada* in power.

Next in the hierarchy to the *Aba Gada* was the *Aba Roga*. Three *Roga* existed each one of which had one *Aba Roga* for itself. The *Aba Roga* was supported by assistants and advisors called *Hyiticha* represented from each individual clan and sub-clan. At the *Roga* level, the *Aba Roga* was the final hearer of appeals and organizer of ritual ceremonies. A case was referred to the *Aba Gada* only when it affected the entire Gedeo community or something unusual (*Mabaha*) took place. The third level of the hierarchy was the *Hyiticha*. Each clan had its own *Hyiticha* who acted as a basic judiciary body. While an individual acted as a chief *Hyiticha* there were numerous lower *Hyiticha* assisting him, drawn from the other clans and sub-clans. The major functions the *Hyiticha* dealt with included settling disputes between members of clans, marriage problems, land issues, theft, assault, etc.

In Adado there are people returned from other parts of the country. They are mostly members of the demobilised army numbering between 300 to 400 men. Some of these cultivate the plots of land which they had left in charge of their wives and brothers. A number of the others, however, eke out their living by tilling the land previously occupied by Agricultural Producers' Cooperatives and lately shared out to them when these cooperatives were dissolved. Other returnees to the PA include some who fled from the ethnic conflicts with the Guji in 1974.

## History

Before the 1890s the Gedeo society, like other neighbouring groups, had a communal form of social organisation (that focused on *Hayuma*) with an isolated but self-contained form of clan membership and identification. The system was essentially based upon territorial organisation where land was the decisive factor in the lives of the Gedeo people. Land was owned collectively, and decisions as to the allocation of new lands to households was made by the council of elders, which was organised in each village. These councils were responsible for holding communal assemblies in every village, and the sites where these assemblies were held in each village were called *Songo*. As well, these councils mediated disputes, declared wars on enemy incursions, and initiated, when necessary, wider tribal intergroup cooperation as well. In addition, there were two spiritual leaders, *Aba Gada* (father of *gada*) and his assistant, the *Jellaba*, who were primarily responsible for performing the ritual activities of the Gedeo people.

With the introduction of the "patron-client" (or *neftenya-gabbar*) relations in most of Gedeo toward the end of the nineteenth century, many of the traditional institutions of Gedeo were relegated to a *de facto* position, and instead a *neftenya* system was put into practice. In this arrangement the Gedeo people were alienated from ownership of land and their produce, and were made *gabbar* for new settlers, mainly soldiers. Every Gedeo peasant was put at the disposal of *neftenya*, and the latter were entitled to receive usufruct rights over land and corvee labour. Between the Gedeo peasants and the *neftenya* were local tribal chiefs who were appointed as *balabbat* and their subordinates, *korro*. These two groups were made responsible for mediating contacts between the Gedeo people and the northerners, organising labour activities of *qudad*, and ensuring that taxes levied on each family were paid and collected on time. These people were allowed to own land as *rist* (inalienable land rights) in return for the service they were rendering.

However, the above does not apply to the people of Adado PA since they successfully resisted takeover by the *neftenya* and managed to hold on to their land. There were no local landlords and after 1975 there was no change in land distribution.

As new settlers entered the Gedeoland as soldiers and civil servants, the pressure on land, and the demand for incorporating forested and hitherto unoccupied lands increased. This was further reinforced by the growing interest of settlers in coffee production as a cash crop. As coffee production expanded into downslope areas (which were formerly owned by Guji as grazing lands), the traditional importance of *enset* was reduced, due to the allocation of more cultivable lands for coffee production. The *enset*-based communal social organisation had to gradually give way to individually-based forms of social organisation, with the declining importance of the traditional *Hayuma* and other ritual leaders. The role of these members of Gedeo society as arbitrators, land distributors and ritual leaders gradually diminished, and was replaced by a local judiciary system, northern administrators, and in some cases *balabbat*. In fact, downslope cultivation of coffee and consequently, the expansion of coffee markets at local and regional levels, made the Gedeo people mobile and individualistic in their value orientation.

As the Gedeo society entered the twentieth century, with the *neftenya* and *gabbar* arrangement, three features of changes within Gedeo can be identified. Firstly, as already mentioned, Gedeo territory expanded in size, and most of the incorporation of new lands enlarged the subsistence basis of Gedeo population and encouraged the growing of coffee in downslope areas. Secondly, the influx of northern settlers following *dejazmach* Balcha's occupation of Gedeo in 1895 increased pressure on the traditionally based *enset* economy which had to be mitigated through mixed coffee/*enset* cultivation in lowland areas. And finally, the establishment of a military garrison around Agere Selam and other local military centres necessitated improvements in road facilities, and this in turn created connections between local and regional centres of coffee marketing. As the economic value of coffee increased through rising prices at national and international levels, Gedeo became more central to the Ethiopian economy, leading to changes in the lives of ordinary Gedeo; though most of the incomes accruing from the sale of coffee were appropriated by the class of *neftenya*, rather than by the Gedeo themselves.

Nevertheless, the greatest administrative pressure that brought about changes in the lives of the Gedeo was experienced during the 1920s when measurement of land through *qallad* (a rope or leather thong about 66-67 metres in length) was introduced by Balcha. The process of measuring land brought many hitherto unoccupied lands into the hands of the *neftenya*, and formerly forested areas which were under the control of the traditional authorities now came under the disposal of the *neftenya*. Thus, the ordinary Gedeo were forced to abandon their traditionally-inhabited areas of *enset* (as the new settlers claimed *rist* and *maderia* rights over measured lands), and eventually migrated toward the periphery in search of unoccupied and forested lands. This process of migration brought about assimilation of different clans, eliminated traditional no-man's zones and encouraged clearing of forested areas for the purposes of growing mixed coffee and *enset*. It also encouraged individualism, division of labour between upslope and downslope Gedeo cultivators, and above all it promoted secularisation (in the sense of modifying the traditional institutions to adapt to changing circumstances) of the traditional system of social organisation.

By the 1940s and 1950s the Gedeo intensified cultivation of coffee for cash production, and Gedeo's transition from *enset* cultivation to coffee increased the economic value of land. There arose the Gedeo's acute interest in the cultivation of more land for coffee, and this generated conflicts between the Gedeo and new settlers, as the latter struggled to bring new lands under their control. Therefore, from the early 1950s onwards, the challenge to the *gabbar-neftenya* relations was set, and intensified. This had to be resolved through the destruction of settlers' houses and property, government buildings and public property and through the abolition of the *gabbar* system which was undertaken by the 1975 land proclamation. The proclamation was so radical that it completely altered the landlord-tenancy relations and made the Gedeo free land holders. Since then, the Gedeo have become owners of their land, labour, and their produce, mainly coffee.

During the *Derg* period, the Gedeo, like any Ethiopian farmers, were affected by such agricultural policies as the quota system and controlled pricing mechanisms, which discouraged coffee growers from freely marketing their agricultural produce on local markets. Other government measures, such as villagisation, cooperativisation and recruitment of Gedeo for local militia and military services, became a disincentive to most of the development endeavour of the Gedeo people. Following the downfall of the *Derg* regime, the Gedeo have been treated as a psychologically, culturally and linguistically distinct group, in that Gedeo today is organised at the level of a zone with immediate state administration at Dila. Recently, the Transitional Government has increased the price of coffee (following the proclamation of the free market economy) at local, regional and national markets, and this measure is expected to motivate coffee growers, including the Gedeo people, to increase coffee production. An increase in the price of coffee would undoubtedly bring changes in the lives of the Gedeo people, and consequently improve their living conditions.

According to the community elders, Adado was the location where the first Gedeo clan settled in the distant past. Before its incorporation into the Ethiopian state, Gedeo society was administered by tribal chiefs. The earliest date remembered by a local elder was 1918, when a November epidemic killed thousands of people. Sometime between then and 1935 the following three events occurred: a desert locust destroyed crops, *enset*, coffee, barley and tobacco; a smallpox epidemic killed thousands of people; the *Goder Zemacha* campaign took place. Between 1935 and 1940 the Italian invasion meant exemption from taxes for local people. In 1941 *Yefano Zemacha* was the expansion of Amhara rule. Because local people were exempted from taxation during the Italian occupation, they were considered as traitors and evicted from their land by the Amharas. Between 1944 and 1959, after they had been evicted they organised to retain their land through court action and decided to withhold taxes from the new landlords. Finally, they managed to retain their land. However, their resistance was not welcomed by the government and the neighbouring landlords so they were deprived of the right to work outside the community. The community then became more densely populated as a result of people migrating out of fear of the intolerable feudal oppression in the surrounding area.

In 1959 the *Michile* War broke out. Although the war was not located in Adado itself, local people suffered when the *neftenya* passed through the community on the way to the war front. They looted property and killed a few people. The *neftenya* won the war, evicted native Gedeo and arrived again in Adado. But they appealed to the Emperor through their delegates and decided to resettle some of their family in Uraga and Shakiso. Around 1974, because of the total anarchy created by the people's uprising against the Emperor, those who had been resettled in Uraga and Shakiso were evicted again by the landlords of the area. Once again Adado was crowded by the influx of evicted Gedeo. Later, they resettled in Gedeo zone at Sumero, but this location was unsuitable for the settlers, so some of them returned to Adado and others went back to Uragu and Shakiso.

Following the March 1974 land proclamation, most rural areas in Ethiopia were organised under PAs. But the Gedeo were denied this opportunity because the landlord, who had been opposed to the proclamation, was garrisoned in their *wereda*. Later they sent some community members to be trained in how to organize a PA and implement the proclamation. After they had been trained they came back and told the community to register their families in order to get 10 hectares of land. Due to the land scarcity, all members of the community registered including infants and gestating foetuses. But instead of getting 10 hectares of land, the government levied tax per person and they started to pay 120 *birr* for the land they had instead of the 3 *birr* they had been paying, excluding other taxation obligation imposed by the government.

In 1976 when the war started in eastern and northern Ethiopia, the government conscripted the productive workforce of the community through the use of force. To mitigate this, they started under-age marriage. As a result, the following negative effects were felt in the community: a) population increase, b) deforestation as a result of increased wood demand to build houses for new brides, c) married women were then obliged to pay taxes when they were in fact still dependent upon their families, and d) due to this unbearable situation some of the community members committed suicide.

One of the problems encountered by the Adado farmers during the *Derg* regime was the forced collectivisation whereby, in 1980, the people were made members of Agricultural Producers' Cooperatives against their will. When they refused to become members, their land was expropriated from them and given away to others who consented. The PC reached the *malba* stage; it was abandoned in 1990). Forest areas were also reserved for the producers' cooperatives, in which case forest land belonging to the people unwilling to join the cooperatives was transferred to become cooperative land. Coffee quotas were also set and imposed on farmers and there were local militia who checked that the quotas were met by each farmer. Thus, the farmers were obliged to sell their coffee at prices lower than the coffee crop deserved. The other problem of farmers during the *Derg*'s time was the exorbitant land tax. Each farmer was required to pay up to 40 *birr* annually. Additional payments included those made toward the war effort, drought conditions, the local militia, etc. The land tax requirement did not take into account the problems the farmers suffered as a result of adverse conditions such as drought, crop disease, and so on. When a farmer failed to pay land tax due to these problems, his coffee and *enset* plants used to be sold by the PA leadership on the farm and the money was paid as land tax. When crops, mainly coffee, were stolen from the field, the non-cooperative members were mostly alleged to have stolen them and made to pay for what was lost. In addition, the cooperative members were highly favoured over the non-members as far as the provision of credit facilities, selected seed varieties, fertilisers, etc., were concerned.

There was no villagisation or resettlement at the site. About 100 men were conscripted for the army and about 70 demobilised soldiers have returned to the PA. Two EPRDF fighters have also returned; they have received no special treatment.

Following the downfall of the *Derg*, the quota system has been removed and farmers are now free to sell their coffee at market prices. There are no more forest areas enclosed by the state for producers' cooperatives, and the practice of evicting the farmers from their land holdings under the pretext of afforestation has been totally halted. Instead, seedlings are now distributed to each farmer so he can plant and take care of them on his own plots of lands. Land tax has also been reduced to some extent and the maximum amount a household head pays at the moment does not exceed 25 *birr*. As a result, favourable conditions for the regular payment of land tax have been created. For instance, the taxes for 1995 were not collected on time. However, the farmers settled their arrears on their own initiatives so that they could have land tenure security. There has been no land redistribution under the TGE.

During the time of the *Derg* there was what was called the *Kebele* Leadership Committee which represented the government at the local level. Some of the responsibilities entrusted to this committee were the collection of land taxes, the recruitment of national service conscripts, and monitoring the quota system. The traditional community leaders and elders did not play any role in such mainly political activities with their chief responsibilities being confined to conducting ritual ceremonies, arbitration and settlement of disputes, and performing other duties associated with the ritual and social life of the people. Pressures used to be brought to bear upon the local leaders with the ultimate aim of eroding their position and replacing them by the *Kebele* leadership. In 1984 people were forbidden to worship in Protestant churches and the church was turned into the PA office. The PA could force people to do many things during the *Derg*.

In the past there have been periods when the Adado people suffered considerable hardships. In 1967 the area was hit by severe frost which destroyed the crops, particularly coffee and *enset*. In 1968, 1974 and 1977 an epidemic caused great damage to the crop. This phenomena continues to be a serious problem and a major threat to high coffee yield. The years prior to 1967 are referred to by the local elders as a period of relative plenty and abundance.

## The seasonal calendar

There are fewer agricultural activities between April and September and during this time some men migrate temporarily to Shakiso to work in the goldmines. It is harder to get fuel between June and October. From October to April (inclusive) people eat cowpeas, horsebeans, barley, maize and meat in addition to *enset* and cabbage, but in the remaining months they eat only *enset* and cabbage. The hungry season is in September. Men need to borrow in May and June.

A respondent reported the following farming activities:

September sowing barley

October weeding beans

November weeding coffee and *enset*

December harvesting barley, beans, maize, coffee

January harvesting coffee, hoeing for maize

February *enset* planting, hoeing and planting of maize, weeding coffee

March  *enset* and maize planting

April planting coffee, *gesho* and eucalyptus trees

May weeding coffee, *enset* and *gesho*

June weeding coffee and *enset*

July sowing beans, weeding coffee and *enset*, planting coffee

August sowing barley, weeding maize

There are no clearly defined *meher* and *belg* seasons and the "*meher*" is not at the same time as the *meher* in other parts of the country. Sowing of the crops is started at an earlier period.

## The farm economy

### Land

There are 4 categories of land use practices in Gedeo: land used for annual and permanent crop production, grazing and fallow land, although there is no fallow land in Adado PA. The average arable land holding for annual crop production is 0.3 ha and for permanent crop production is 0.37 ha. 39% of the total cultivated area is used for annual crop production and 49% is used for permanent crop production. Most of the land devoted to annual crop production is used for the cultivation of cereals and pulses, while land for permanent crop production is used for *enset* and coffee.

The total area of Adado is about 800 hectares which are divided roughly into the following usages:

*Enset* 300 ha

Coffee 200 ha

Forested Land 120 ha

Housing and other uses 60 ha

Maize 50 ha

Sugarcane 20 ha

Grazing Land 20 ha

*Gesho* 15 ha

Horse Beans 10 ha

The average size of land holdings around 1920 was approximately 10 hectares. Gradually the average size diminished to very small plots. This is due to the obligation of the household head (male) to divide up his own land as each of his sons is married and requires land. Previously, they had access to land only through inheritance. After the *Michile* War of 1959 access to land was altered and today all of the following methods of acquiring land occur: inheritance, renting, purchasing, and share-cropping.

There is no man in Gedeo without a plot of land, called *tintto*, although it might be small and therefore insufficient to satisfy the needs of the family. In that case, such people are forced to sell their labour to those with more *tintto* or plots of land or move to towns such as Dila, Bule, or Wonago, where they earn their living as daily labourers.

When a son comes of age his father arranges with the family of the prospective bride the conditions for the marriage to take place. After the marriage has taken place, the bride and the groom spend together one year in the household of the groom's father. After that, the father of the groom builds a separate house for the couple so that they can start their own independent life. At this stage, the father also cuts out a piece of land (*tintto*) from his holding and gives it to the married son so he has a plot to cultivate and can earn a living for himself. The same thing is done equally for any other sons thus married. When the father dies, the eldest son takes over the responsibility of caring for the household. As far as the sharing of his property is concerned, whatever the deceased father possesses is equally distributed among his male children. Women have no share of the father's property when he dies. Neither are they given cultivable plots of land as they leave the household to reside with their husbands.

In Adado PA there are 21 women at the moment who own plots of land and pay land tax. These are all widows.

At one time everyone had equally-sized plots. But now there is uneven distribution of land. This change occurred due to population increase. Share-cropping is practised for the cultivation of *enset* and cereals, but, for coffee, farmers prefer to hire labourers. There is limited cash rental. There is no land for grazing and no *wolled aged* (use of land for collateral). If farmers are asked about the size of their landholding, most cannot tell it. However, they can tell how many plots they have. The land has lost some fertility.

### Livestock

The use of plough cultivation, which the growing of crops such as *tef* and wheat often entails, by the Gedeo people, is of relatively a recent origin. Average work-oxen holding in Gedeo are 0.19 and about 92% of the farmers do not have oxen at all, 6% have one ox, 1% have 2 oxen, 0.2% have three oxen and 1% have 4 or more oxen. Generally speaking, plough cultivation is not well adapted to the cultivation of *enset* because of the small size of household plots. Therefore, the local technology is dominated by hoe and digging-stick cultivation. In localities where such grains as maize, sorghum and barley grow (which are minor activities compared to *enset* and coffee) plough cultivation is used as a supplement to the traditional ways of cultivating *enset*.

The role of livestock, mainly cattle and sheep, in the economic life of Gedeo society is not as significant as that of the neighbouring Guji. Nevertheless, livestock also constitute important economic assets. This is especially true as the Gedeo have come into contact with the Guji through migration and trade. The Guji are important sources of livestock for the Gedeo. Gujis' livestock, mainly cattle, are purchased by Gedeo in exchange for *enset*. The introduction of food grain cultivation by settlers, and an expansion of downslope cultivation through the use of the iron plough, promoted the economic value of oxen. This has developed an interest among the Gedeo in raising and maintaining cattle as important sources of income. However, sheep are favoured above cattle because they can easily be restocked and they can easily be sold at local markets for the purposes of purchasing grain (in times of shortage) and for paying government taxes and other cash needs.

The size of livestock in Adado is very limited, as a result of which vaccination programmes and cross-breeding practices are not common in the PAs. However, individual household heads keep a small number of livestock in their houses which they buy from other people, mainly Guji. They feed them so as to fatten them, and sell them for slaughter as a means of income.

### Crop management

From at least the 1920's the following crops have been grown in Adado: *enset*, coffee, barley, cowbeans, tobacco, and linseed, although the last one was abandoned in 1983. Maize was introduced in 1935, wheat in 1955, and *chat* and sugarcane in 1953. Traditionally, the Gedeo are settled agriculturalists, growing mainly *enset*. This plant constitutes the principal staple food of the Gedeo people, and grows in the middle elevation zone where the temperature is moderate and where there is sufficient rainfall. In spite of the expansion of cultivable land toward downslope areas, the growing of highland food grains (such as *tef* and wheat) on a larger scale has not been possible because the land is not suitable for these crops. About 21% of Gedeo farmers are engaged in crop production, 78% in mixed farming and the remaining 1% practice livestock raising. The preparation of soils for the cultivation of crops starts in early January to February. The planting of *enset* occurs in March, April and May, and the harvesting season occurs between November and January. Depending on the availability of rains, which are by no means scarce, maize is sown in February through March, whereas barley is sown in late April through May, and *tef* is grown during the big rainy season, June through August. Maize is grown with *enset* by intercropping and the luxuriant leaves of *enset* serve as a manure for maize. In Adado the agricultural produce known as *meher* crops are sorghum, barley, wheat, horsebeans, cowpeas and *tef*, while what they call the *belg* crop is maize only. The produce of both *meher* and *belg* crops for this production year are expected to be better compared with the previous year. The Table demonstrates the contrast between the size of land cultivated for each crop type for this year and the preceding. The area cultivated for *belg* crop which is maize has also increased. For 1992/93 the figure was 48 hectares and for 1993/94 it is 55 hectares.

***Meher* crops**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Year | Crop Type | Area Cultivated (Hectares) |
| 1992/93 | Sorghum  Barley  Wheat  Beans  Peas  *Tef* | 20  12  10  25  8  10 |
| Total |  | 85 |
| 1993/94 | Sorghum  Barley  Wheat  Beans  Peas  *Tef* | 25  15  10  30  10  25 |
| Total |  | 105 |

Soil fertility began to decline around 1973 due to the unavailability of fallow land, the exhaustive tilling of the land and deforestation. Farmers are making an effort to counter this situation by using manure and other waste as fertilisers.

Coffee is the main cash crop of the area. Coffee ripens during the months of November, December and January and locally is called *luuollo (*"red coffee") at this stage of its growth. The coffee growers sell *luullo* to the Agricultural Service Cooperative of the area at an average price of 2 *birr* per kilo. The SC prepares and presents the coffee for the international market by means of its coffee processing and washing machines. During the last production year the Adado area has made available 259,000 kilos of processed coffee to the international market from 5 of its 9 peasant associations. A greater amount of coffee produce is also expected during the present coffee production season. In the months from February to May the coffee is left in the field to dry in which state it is picked and sold at the current price of 8 *birr* per kilo. The main buyers of this type of coffee, which is meant for local consumption, are the rich coffee businessmen in Dila town who possess coffee processing machines.

Different crop diseases strike the Adado area from time to time, affecting their harvest. A disease known in the locality as coffee cholera (technically known by experts as coffee berry disease, CBD) is one of the most serious and recurring problems responsible for coffee crop failure. This disease attacks the coffee beans, making them dry and hollow, and in the end virtually fruitless. Coffee beans thus attacked and made fruitless are locally called *koshe*.

There are two *enset* plant diseases known in the area as *woello* and *tette*. *Woello* causes the root of the plant to rot before it starts to mature. *Tette* prevents the growth of the stem by drying and stunting it. *Santo* (a disease of wheat and barley) hinders the proper growth of the crop and leaves it as a mere fruitless stalk. *Doma* (a disease attacking maize) also renders the crop utterly fruitless.

### Farm labour

#### Household labour

At the beginning of the period all farm labour was provided by the household members. If the family needed outside labour it would prepare *tella* for those assisting on the farm. This is called *kora*. There was no wage labour at the beginning of the period. Recently a very few people have employed wage labourers if they have more plots than they can manage, or if they are engaged in off-farm activities themselves.

The father carries out the tasks of planting and taking care of coffee, *enset*, and other cereal crops such as peas, beans, barley, etc., assisted by his sons in the process. The father and the male members of the community carry the coffee and crops to the local markets and nearby towns. The mother with the assistance of the daughters is largely responsible for the processing and preparation of the *enset* plant which is the major staple food of the Gedeo. The male members of the community are not involved in this activity which is considered as taboo for them. Other household chores like gathering wood and fetching water are taken care of by women. The women are also engaged in *enset* selling at the local market. The women use the money obtained from the sale of *enset* to buy the necessary commodities, mainly meat, for the family and are not expected to hand it over to their husbands. Women also collect coffee and mowed crops.

#### Work groups

At the time of the Italian occupation they introduced a work-sharing arrangement called *debo*. Two or more men would work together to plough, weed or harvest in one another's land in rotation. The traditional *debo* system was mainly effective in clearing forests during planting and harvesting. In such work groups men were responsible for clearing forests, planting and weeding, but women were mainly responsible for harvesting and gathering of crops. In fact, *debo* groups were used for cultivation of fields whereas household labour was sufficient for the cultivation of garden plants and *enset*. However, as cash production entered the Gedeo zone, and as the Gedeo moved into new settlements in the downslope areas, the role of these groups declined, more emphasis being placed on individual efforts rather than communal work.

In previous times, the Gedeo had a labour exchange arrangement known as *kora*. A man needing the help of others used to ask his son-in-law called *ballo* to organize a work party for him. The son-in-law approached his relatives and friends holding a matchet and green grass which symbolises mutual assistance in collective work and ask them to lend support to his father-in-law. The man on whose behalf the *kora* is organised called *Aba Kora*, kills a sheep, while his household brews local beer and bakes *worammo* which is a large-sised circular-shaped bread of *kotcho* for the occasion.

Nowadays, however, the work party which still continues as a tradition has changed its form and is called *gollo* (*wonfel)*. The man calling the *gollo* mobilises a small number of people for tasks such as farming, house building, etc, and the household prepares coffee and bread for the people involved. He similarly reciprocates when a relative or a friend is in need of collective labour.

#### Interlinkages

Someone with a certain amount of money buys young or small stock which he entrusts to those without any money. The person entrusted with the stock is expected to feed and properly take care of them until they grow fat and strong. When the stock are thus fattened and ready for sale, they are brought to the market where they are sold, and the profit is shared between the two parties.

Similarly, those with several plots of land enter into an arrangement with those having fewer plots so that the latter contribute their labour while the former provide seed in addition to the land. When the crops are in season, the harvest is equally shared between the two sides.

Such arrangements are not necessarily made with members of the same lineage or clan but with anyone agreeing to benefit from them.

#### Wage work

When people cannot support their families due to the small size of the land they cultivate they engage in wage labour for others. For collecting coffee (8am to 1pm) the payment is 2 *birr*. People are also paid 2 *birr* for weeding and hoeing coffee and *enset* between 7 and 9am.

### Technology

The farming technology used by the community is the iron hoe, digging stick and machete for weeding. The plough is used for land planted with grain. Different locally-made tools are used for *enset* processing. A sharp-edged metal tool locally called *sissa* is used to scrape off the stem of the plant in order to extract the edible part of it. A flat-surfaced plank of wood called *metta* is used as a support while scraping the stem. The root of the *enset* plant called *ametcho* is also consumable and an iron-tipped tool with a wooden handle called a *chekko* is used to crush it so that it is mixed with the scraped part of the stem to be eaten as food. The crushed root and scraped stem are mixed and left for two or more weeks so as to ferment during which time the women continue to stir it up with their hands. When it is finally ready, they wrap it up with *enset* leaves and carry it home themselves or on horseback depending upon the size and quantity.

Once it is brought home in this state it is further stirred a little on a flat plank and is crushed with a matchet-like tool called *habile* or *natto* so as to remove the root-like parts of the food. Finally, the *enset* is baked in different shapes and sizes on a clay or metal ovens called *mesha* at which stage it is ready for consumption. On the occasion of wedding and funeral ceremonies as well as other important rituals, they bake a circular-shaped bread of *enset* called *worammo* in a clay pot called a *mesha*.

Farmers or households with several plots of land (*tintto*) store their crops in a granary called *kercho*. This granary is usually used for storing cereal crops. A granary called *shakile* is used to store coffee in coffee-growing PAs. However, those with small landholdings keep their crops, coffee or otherwise in sacks. Crops are carried from the fields to the granary by human labour while they are sometimes taken to the market on horseback. Nevertheless, only a few households in the PA own horses and mules.

The nearest town to Adado is Sokitcha which is located at a distance of 5 km along the road from Dila to the *wereda* town of Bule. Bule is another town close to Adado and is found 13 km further away. People travel to these towns mostly on foot and it takes them 45 minutes to get to Sokitcha and one hour and half to Bule on average. The nearest big town, located 23 km away is Dila, and the usual means of travel available are small private Toyota cars.

### Innovations

The following crops have been introduced during the lifetime of the oldest members of the community: maize, beans, wheat, horsebeans, sugarcane, banana, and *chat*.

The most important innovation has been the introduction during the Italian Occupation of the iron as opposed to wooden hoe. Soon afterwards, local blacksmiths began making the items themselves as well as machetes. Everyone adopted these innovations.

Also during the Occupation the idea of planting crops in a row as opposed to randomly scattered was introduced and adopted by the local community. At first, some did not want to change the method of their forefathers but the advantages of easy weeding and harvesting soon meant this innovation was adopted by everyone.

At one time the ancestors of the local people used to take care of the naturally growing trees and the people used to believe that if they planted new trees they would go blind. Recently, around 1970, they began to plant trees because the tree cover had decreased dramatically. Some members of the community have taken up tree planting and managed to have a marginal effect in preventing deforestation and soil erosion. Some people did not participate because they did not understand the dangers of deforestation and soil erosion. Another positive effect has been the provision of firewood. *Debo*, a form of collective labour as mentioned above under labour, was an innovation of the local people. They farmed plots individually, but after the Italian Occupation their *enset* plants started to diminish and they faced famine. The elders of the community consulted and advised the community to farm collectively to survive the coming famine, and all agreed and as a result the community survived.

Finally, sugarcane and *chat* were introduced after the 1974 revolution. The people switched to these crops for two reasons: a) soil fertility was decreasing; b) they were not allowed to sell their main crop, coffee, as they wished and needed. A few members of the community initiated this activity and others followed as they saw that they could sell their produce without any fear. However, some people refused to plant these crops because they require more water to grow and this would be harmful to the main crop, *enset*. They recognize a long run negative effect on *enset* and the possibility of drought. Some farmers use canals and have privately-owned ponds. These did not exist 20-30 years ago.

In Adado PA 10 innovative farmers have been selected as "contact farmers" under each of whom 46 "follower farmers" are assigned. The names of these "contact farmers" are;

*Name of "Contact farmers" Number of "follower farmers"*

1. Ato Worassa Banta 46

2. " Jille Fosha 46

3. " Kurra Hirbayyo 46

4. " Osman Yasin 46

5. " Tegenno Diki 46

6. " Gemede Wongil 46

7. " Mamo Gelgo 46

8. " Woresa Terro 46

9. " Gedda Luku 46

10. " Tadese Shallo 46

The "contact farmers" were chosen on the basis of their abilities and inclinations to accept and adopt new and improved techniques of farming. The extension agent shows them, on the demonstration plots of the development centre or on their own plots of land, the improved methods of farming which they are supposed to pass on to fellow farmers.

### Common property resources

Water is the main common property resource and everyone has equal access. The service cooperative was formed by members who contributed 12 *birr*. All members have equal rights of access to the property owned by the service cooperative.

Major incidents of theft occur when coffee ripens. The thieves, mostly poor individuals, intrude into coffee fields and cut out the ripe coffee beans. Hence in the coffee season people stay out overnight watching over their fields. Similarly, *enset* left in the field until it is ready for consumption is exposed to theft, particularly if it is processed.

### Environment

Gedeoland is generally a food self-sufficient area, and the Ministry of Agriculture has classified Gedeo soil as one of the most fertile in the country. As already indicated, the abundance of *enset* and coffee has made the Gedeo people less vulnerable to such human caused and natural calamities as drought and famine, from which the rest of the nation has been suffering now and then.

The soil is generally fertile, and soil erosion is infrequent due to the wide practice of dry-stalling as a source of manure by the Gedeo people. Coffee and *enset* help to prevent soil erosion because they are semi-permanent crops and their wide leaf spread covers a relatively large area. A 1968 survey revealed that about 50% of the measured land in Gedeo zone was rated as fertile and semi-fertile.

At one time roughly 90% of the land was covered with trees as opposed to only about 10% today. At first, the community did not plant trees as they believed this might cause them to lose their sight. But now tree planting is practised. Forest lands that were seized and enclosed for cooperatives have now been returned to their respective owners along with trees planted in them. The law issued by the Transitional Government concerning cooperative forest lands decrees this to be implemented.

## Off-farm activities

### Within the community

At the beginning of the period there was no off-farm activity. Since 1935 people have engaged in trading activities by bringing in manufactured products and taking farm produce to and from the neighbouring towns. This trade activity is seasonal and most of the traders are farmers as well. Men sell cattle, sheep, grain and coffee (in bulk). During the coffee harvesting season they engage in general merchandising and selling *tella* or *araqi*. In addition blacksmiths producing knives and hoes began to operate.

Women have recently begun to engage in off-farm activities to help to support their families when farmland became scarce. They sell green coffee, *enset*, cabbage, and small amounts of (retail) coffee. They are also involved in brewing *tella*, distilling *araqi* and selling food.

### Migration

After the trading period is over those who engage in these activities go back to their main activity, farming, and those who have no land migrate to the gold mining *wereda* Shakiso.

With the growth of population land is becoming more and more scarce forcing a number of people to migrate to neighbouring territories, mainly to Guji (Kibre Mengist, Solomo), in search of land for cultivation. There, they clear forests and cultivate cereals like *tef* and maize. At long intervals, they return to their natal village to visit their parents and to take care of the coffee and *enset* plants they left behind.

An increasing number of the younger generation flock to the nearby Shakiso town in order to work as wage labourers at the government gold mine or to dig out gold by themselves in areas not being mined by the government. These ones also pay periodic visits to their families back in the village.

## The reproductive domain

### Household management

#### Technology

The main source of energy in the locality is firewood used for lighting the house, cooking food and as a means of heating. Wood and twigs are cut from individually-owned trees. Some households use blowlamps as a source of lighting but these are rare.

#### Water

The community reports no shortage of water at any time during the year. The water sources are 5 mountain springs which are located at between 15 and 45 minutes’ walk from the centre of the village. In addition to this, the other main sources of water are the two rivers, *Foldawi* and *Gellana,* which run throughout the year. People use river water in the dry season and turn to springs in the wet season as the river water gets muddy. Therefore, in Adado there is no shortage of water. The problem is to get clean water. Everyone has equal access to water.

#### Sanitation

There are no latrines in Adado and the people relieve themselves by going off into the nearby bushes.

### Producing and raising children

#### Fertility

The average fertility rate among the Adado people is 5 children per family. The Gedeo in general attach great importance to the value of fertility. As a result of this, family planning education and services which have been rendered by the local clinic for some years have not had a significant number of beneficiaries. According to the health assistant, even the small number of women who start receiving family planning services immediately stop using them and continue to have babies.

When a woman is found to be infertile the man calls for local elders preparing coffee, *enset* bread and local beer so that they might help him with the problem. The elders pray on her behalf consulting the *Kayo*. The elders will say *Kayo* will give her a child. *Kayo* is a kind of divination and interpretation of natural objects and events forecasting future success and failure, evil consequences and virtues. *Kayo* may be inferred from the songs of birds, the movement of animals encountered on the way, and so on. It is widely believed that such a practice often brings fertility to women enabling them to become pregnant and give birth to children. If such practices fail to bring about the desired result the man will be free to marry another wife so as to get children. The infertile woman for her part can stay with her husband if she so wishes or may marry another man. If, however, it is the man who turned out to be infertile he may keep on having his chances marrying a number of wives. Therefore, the Gedeo have no traditional or modern treatment for infertility other than consulting *Kayo*.

#### Pregnancy and childbirth

Among the Gedeo the births of both male and female babies are welcomed with equally joyful expressions of congratulations. As a result, a woman who has given birth passes a period of confinement for six months or up to a year in some cases, during which time she is relieved of all tasks and nourished with the best of food the family affords. All the household chores during this time are managed by the father. When the period of confinement is completed and the woman first leaves the house she goes about decorated with new clothing accompanied by relatives and is treated like a bride.

#### Socialisation

Qualities that are highly valued in men are self-sufficiency, ability to manage land effectively, and the ability to solve family and community problems peacefully. Men must also display respect to elders and be humble. These qualities are taught to people by the elders. Boys are taught by inviting them to listen when the elders discuss community problems and through oral orientation by respected community members.

The desirable qualities in women are shyness, respectfulness, skill in women's duties such as scraping and processing *enset* and the proper handling of her husband's wealth and resources. These skills are demonstrated to girls so that they may learn good behaviour and the necessary skills. For women also the ability to peacefully solve disputes within the family and outside is a respected quality.

Girls who do not accept and demonstrate what has been taught them are regarded as socially undesirable, as well as those who go out of their compound without family permission and those who have close friendships with boys.

#### Formal education

Both women and men considered that it is important to be literate and numerate. Men said that while the academic subjects learned in school may help you to be a better farmer, they will not help you to earn off-farm income. Twenty per cent of boys in the community attend primary school and 0.01% attend secondary school. Women said that schooling would help you be a better farmer's wife but it would not help you to earn off-farm income as there are virtually no job opportunities in the community. It makes no difference how many years one stays in school. They said that 8 per cent of girls in the community attend primary school, but only one girl attends high school.

Numbers attending the primary school vary through the year. One informant found 186 students (15 girls). In the previous year 3 boys attended the secondary school. The primary curriculum involves 11 academic subjects. The parents must pay book rent and expenses to run the school. The amount of money paid depends upon the ability of each individual to pay. In general, the Adado primary school functions far below its capacity due to poor school attendance. There is a Muslim school that was founded in 1975 by the Muslim community.

When a fieldworker visited the primary school he was told that there was a total of 235 pupils in the school (see Table). There are 9 teachers altogether: 2 have 12th grade+1 and 7 have 12th grade+\_. There is a shortage of classrooms, tables, chairs and blackboards, but not of school books. The average cost to a family involves 16 *birr* for pens, paper, etc, 3 *birr* for book rent, and 45 *birr* other expenses.

*Adado Primary School*

*year 1 year2 year3 year 4 year 5 year 6 Total*

Pupils 120 60 17 17 17 4 235

Teachers 9 6 6 6 6 7 9

Classes 2 1 1 1 1 1 7

source: field visit

Children must go to Bule for 7th and 8th grades. The high school is in Dila. There are many junior secondary school dropouts who have returned and taken up agricultural activities in the villages. A limited number who have managed to complete high school have been assigned to different positions in the zonal administration under conditions created by the national regional administrative structures.

*Dila High School*

*year 9 year 10 year 11 year 12 Total*

Pupils 849 543 487 367 2246

Teachers 23 23 16 16 78

Classes 10 8 7 6 31

source: field visit

Only one man from Adado PA is known to have graduated with a diploma from a health college and is at the moment working as a representative of the *Wereda* Health Office at Yirga Cheffe.

#### Training

Three farmers were sent to Agarfa Multi-purpose Farmers Training Centre in 1986 and received training in different areas of agriculture. Since their return to the PA, however, they have not effectively implemented the knowledge the acquired due to lack of follow-up. In those days, such opportunities were available only to members of Agricultural Producers' Cooperatives and no other farmers have been sent for training since then. One other farmer went to Holeta for training in bookkeeping and is now serves as the accountant of the service cooperative.

### Health

There are no very strong seasonal patterns in diseases.

The community has a health clinic which provides EPI (Expanded Programme of Immunisation) family planning, public health and medical treatment. The community members, however, could only identify the last aspect of the clinic's work. The drugs they have in store are antibiotics, anti-helminths, analgesics, anti-asthmatics, first aid, anti-septic, and anti-fungal drugs. A typical visit to the clinic costs 3 *birr.* The initial consulting fee is 2 *birr* for an adult and 1 *birr* for a child. There is no nurse or doctor. The clinic is open 24 hours a day. A full treatment of antibiotics costs 4.50 *birr* and malaria drugs cost 1.40 *birr*. The supply of drugs is irregular, although there is a regular supply of polio and measles vaccine. There is equipment to sterilise needles, cold storage with backup, and a minimum supply of bandages and sterile needles.

The nearest private doctor, pharmacy and hospital are in Dila. The initial consultancy fee at the hospital is 4.60 *birr*, while the doctor charges 5 *birr*.

There are also traditional medical practitioners in the community. The traditional doctor charges 1 *birr* as a matter of custom, while the Traditional Birth Attendant charges 3 *birr*. There are local injectors and illegal medical workers about 3 km from the village charging 15 *birr* for an adult and 7 *birr* for a child.

The following health problems were identified and ranked by men from most to least serious: typhoid, relapsing fever, tuberculosis, arthritis and cancer. They seek treatment for the first 3 in the local health clinic, while for arthritis they rely on traditional medicine and for cancer they do not know of any available treatment. When asked about the causes and preventions of these 5 diseases they claimed no knowledge with respect to typhoid, relapsing fever and cancer. In the case of TB they named the cold and "using TB infected material" and in the case of arthritis, the cold and heredity.

The women identified and ranked *butan* (a local form of sorcery) as the most serious health problem, followed by, diarrhoea, *banko* (a disease which causes some kind of mouth problems), *chinecha* (thought to be some kind of fungus), and *kerssa* (some kind of eye problem). Both sexes list a venereal disease (the men call it gonorrhoea and the women *arsho*) as the 6th most problematic disease. All the diseases listed by the women had some sort of association with sorcery, magic or social impropriety.

*Butan* is caused by something hidden (*tare*) on someone else's property for protection by a sorcerer. There is no method of prevention and the treatment involves confessing and begging pardon from the person who placed the *tare*. *Banko* is also caused by *tare* placed by the *Banko* clan when they are not given enough respect. There is no prevention except to respect the *Banko* clan and the treatment involves confessing and begging pardon of the *Banko* clan. Occasionally, help is also sought at the health clinic. *Chinecha* is considered to be caused by some form of evil eye or when rusted blades are used to cut/shave children's hair. The prevention is, therefore, not to use rusted blades and for treatment traditional practitioners had been known to put a liquid prepared from local leaves and roots on to the affected area. *Kerssa* is caused by the evil eye for which there is no prevention and treatment is sought from the local sorcerer. Finally, in the case of diarrhoea the women did not know the causes in young children, but in adults they named the eating of unripe cabbage as a major cause. They knew of no preventive measures and most often traditional treatment was sought which sometimes involved tying grass around the victims abdomen and taking him or her to the sorcerer.

Women surveyed listed and ranked the following top 5 children's diseases: measles, diarrhoea, typhoid, TB, and an undefined condition known as *keleto*. Causes and preventions were unknown for all except TB. In that case, they identified the cold and the use of an infected person's belongings as the cause. Measles used to be treated by seeking plants and roots and washing the victims in them. Diarrhoea is treated in the same fashion as mentioned by the women, though sometimes help is also sought from the health clinic. They knew of no treatment for typhoid. TB is treated at the hospital and *keleto* is treated at the hospital and health clinic.

### Consumption

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

There is a calendar in the Appendix showing food consumption by season. From May to September people rely on *enset* and cabbage. Compared to barley and peas, beans are considered to be emergency crops because they ripen fast in four months and can be consumed in their fresh stage before they become dry. *Enset*, better known as *kocho*, is the chief emergency staple food in the area. The husband and wife eat together from the same plate while the children have their meals separately.

A major famine struck the area in 1983 which made even *enset* scarce. This plant is usually drought resistant and available when other crops are in small supply. Prior to this calamity the price of a load of *kocho* (carried by a horse) used to be 10 *birr*. Since the 1983 famine, however, the price of *kocho* has continued to rise steadily and it now stands at 80 *birr* per load.

The only edible wild fruit known is *odea* which ripens once a year and is a favourite mostly of children.

#### Saving and investment

One of the strategies for handling crises quoted elsewhere is saving of cash which seems to be more common in Adado than elsewhere in rural Ethiopia.

The application of inputs such as fertilisers and insecticides is not very common among Gedeo farmers. Only 1% of loans taken from the Ministry of Agriculture in 1983/4 was spent on agricultural inputs and during the 1983/4 rainy season purchase of fertiliser by the Gedeo was one of the lowest for Sidamo region (Ministry of Agriculture, 1984).

#### Housing

In earlier times the average cost of building a thatched-roofed house ranged from 50 to 100 *birr*. At present, however, building the same type of house costs up to 500 *birr* due to the scarcity of wood. A house can last 10 years and if it is a well-built one may even last 15 years. A house thought to be big contains 3 rooms and is owned by those considered economically better off. The smallest house has 2 rooms and belongs to the poor. In Adado PA there are 25 tin-roofed houses.

#### Local services

The only shop available in Adado is the one run by the service cooperative and it mostly stocks blankets, sugar, salt, umbrellas, sickles, and stationery. In addition, there is a market day every two days in the week where people buy some of these consumption goods. It was built with the help of the elders and the *kebele*.

There is one government-owned clinic in the area.

One extension agent with a Diploma in Agriculture serves the farmers in the PAs. He divides the peasants into 8 groups 4 of them being visited every week. He provides technical advice to farmers on every phase of farming starting from land clearing to crop harvesting. Farmers who miss the visit of the extension worker are given extension service by contact farmers recruited from the farmers themselves and trained by the extension agent. A young man recently recruited from the community and trained at Agarfa Multi-purpose Peasant Training Centre for a month is now acting as a government employee assisting the extension agent.

In Adado there about 10 traditional bone setters locally known as *chelessa*. These people set the broken bones of both humans and animals. Traditional herbalists, also known as *chelessa,* number about 15 and prescribe different traditional medicines for various diseases. Traditional men and female birth attendants who are about 10 are serving the community at present. All of these are traditionally replaced, upon death, by their children who receive the profession from their parents through apprenticeship

## Local institutions and organisations

### Households

The Gedeo accord a primal importance to men's position in the society. Voices of men, mainly elders, are generally decisive in allocating household labour and in making other household decisions. Given the patrilineal nature of the Gedeo society the father is the sole authority figure of the household, and the norms governing the relations between a household head and the rest of family members are respect and domination. This is not, however, to say that women have a marginalised position in the household; rather they play an active part in growing and marketing *enset* and in processing and preparing food for members of the household.

Generally speaking, with the emergence of coffee as a cash crop, men have been responsible for the maintenance of coffee plants, while women are held responsible for the growing and maintenance of *enset*. The decision as to what to plant, when to plant and when to harvest is largely made by men.

### Marriage

Traditionally, the most important characteristic of marriage has been clan exogamy. In the Gedeo system men were encouraged to be polygynous, though this would depend upon a man's wealth and local prestige. When a man has more than one wife the co-wives either live close to each other or in separate places. Polygyny is still significant, but the spread of Christianity and the economic pressure of having more than one wife and family have reduced its popularity.

The first married son receives from his parents land, a hoe, a machete and an axe. To a daughter parents must give utensils, *cheko*, *cesona* and a knife for use in *enset* processing. Other kin are not involved in any exchange of gifts at the time of a marriage. For the first year a married couple live in the house of the bridegroom's father. After one year they build their own house.

A man can take a second wife if he gives a dowry to the bride. But he does not receive any assistance or land from his family. He must build a new house for her and allocate the land he owns equally between his two wives.

A widow is free to choose to remarry or to live with her children who have inherited her husband's wealth, including land. If she marries again, she will give all the property to her husband's relatives, and her children will be brought up under guardians.

There are 5 forms of marriage practised among the Gedeo, namely, *kada* (marriage arranged by the parents), *hawadie* (elopement), *boota* (abduction), *kintcho* (sororate marriage), and *dala* (levirate marriage). The most common and widely accepted form of marriage is the *kada*. It is arranged by the parents of the bride and the groom. In earlier times, the prospective bride and groom neither had a say nor were they informed about the planned marriage. The situation has, however, been improving in recent times and the couple now have chances of getting to know each other in advance.

Usually a prolonged negotiation process takes place before the parents of the bride consent to give their daughter in marriage. *Kada* is the only form of marriage marked by a special celebration called *Jilla* conducted at the place of the bride's parents. An important aspect of the *Jilla* celebration is the ceremony whereby the elder brother of the bride hands over the bride to the peers of the groom with a symbolic stick called *hororessa* in her right hand. The symbolic significance of the ceremony is that the marriage has been made public and official in line with the accepted customs and conventions of the society. A *kada* conducted without this ceremony means a marriage practised against the accepted set of norms and is therefore regarded with low esteem and reduced to the level of concubinage.

*Hawadie* is elopement to which the couple resort when the groom and his parents realize that the chances of getting the consent of the bride's family are minimal. In this case, the groom and the bride arrange between themselves to disappear under the cover of darkness with the bride holding the symbolic stick (*hororessa*). The groom usually picks the girl from the market place. This type of marriage is not accepted by the community as legal until bridewealth (*messano*) has been paid and reconciliation has taken place between the two sides.

The third form of marriage which is informal but common is abduction (*boota*). A young man wishing to marry a certain girl, but not inclined to approach her parents for approval may abduct her himself, or arrange her abduction by way of friends. Abduction usually takes place at a market place and the abducted woman may resist the act. However, if she shows no sign of resistance her situation will be regarded as an elopement comparable to what happens in *hawadie*. Like *hawadie*, *boota* will not be valid immediately after abduction. For it to be legitimate and socially acceptable requirements, such us the payment of *messano* and mediation between the concerned parties, have to be satisfied.

*Kinticho* has legitimacy in accordance with traditional practices. This kind of marriage takes place when a man takes over the sister of his deceased wife. *Kinticho* closely resembles what anthropologists call sororate marriage. However, the former differs from the latter in that, unlike in sororate marriage, the husband of the deceased wife in *kinticho* marriage does not as of right demand the substitution of his sister-in-law as a wife.

The fifth type of marriage called *dala* (levirate) is a practice by which a man takes over the wife of his dead brother. This is considered as socially proper and is an arrangement whereby the brother assumes the responsibility of taking care of the property as well as the wife and children of his dead brother as an heir to his family. The heir is referred to as *wassilla* in Gedeo.

In earlier days bridewealth offered by the father of the groom to the father of the bride consisted of one piece of iron and/or a silver bar (*messano*), which traditionally was used as currency, together with a long belt of cloth. As time went by, the bridewealth provided consisted of a large-sised traditional cotton garment called *sema* for the father and a small-sised garment of the same type (*duda*) for the mother of the bride. The payment of bridewealth is now made in cash, currently 90 *birr* to the father of the bride.

### Divorce

Divorce is an undesirable but easily accepted practice among the Gedeo. When it happens, the wife has no share of the family property whatsoever and is let free empty handed leaving her children to the father.

### Inheritance

Gedeo women are not generally eligible to inherit land. Property transfer is patrilineal and is allocated on the marriage of sons and at the death of the male household head. Upon the marriage of a son, the father calculates the land to be given to his son by dividing it by the total number of sons and himself. Upon his death the youngest son inherits his father's land if the older sons have already married and been allocated land. Occasionally, women can inherit if they are the only daughter. If the household has two or more wives the husband equally shares the land among the number of his male children born from his wives.

In terms of other property, upon the death of the household head, relatives and elders decides what each son should inherit. The eldest son will inherit any guns, spears and shields unless he is deprived of that right in which case they will go to a younger brother. The right to inherit will be removed if the person in question has an undesirable character in the family and community.

### Lineages and clans

There are important social and economic obligations associated with clans and lineages among the Gedeo. Members of the same clan or lineage come together to form an *idir*-like institution whereby the members provide mutual support when the need arises. To that end, they set up a common fund towards which each member regularly contributes 1 *birr*. The money thus raised is utilised when someone falls sick, suffers bereavement, loses his houses and property by fire, gives his son or daughter in marriage and so on.

Another area where the corporate nature of clans and lineages is manifested is the fact that clan and lineage leaders are responsible for settling disputes that may arise between members belonging to different clans and lineages.

Among the Gedeo there are no clan marks as such but clan members who have lived together long enough know one another very well. When they go to other places, they get to know each other by inquiring about their clan affiliations.

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

The once strong tradition of the *Gada* has become increasingly eroded over the years due to the encapsulation of the Gedeo by the central government and, most importantly, due to the policies of the previous government such as collectivisation and villagisation. Moreover, more recently the growing influence and infiltration of Protestant denominations like *Kale Hiwot*, *Mulu Wongel* and *Mekane Yesus* have also played their part in undermining the Gedeo *Gada* system.

Unlike in pastoral societies, where there exist a number of elaborate rites of passage both for men and women, there are not many life cycle rituals among the Gedeo. The existing important rites of passage for the Gedeo men and women, involving expenditures are rites connected with birth, initiation, circumcision, marriage and death. The death of members of the Gada such as the *Aba Gada*, *Aba Roga*, and *Hyitcha* are accompanied by elaborate rituals, dances, chants and feasts.

Traditionally, circumcision was not practised among the Gedeo. However, during the *Gada* ritual marking the transfer of power from the outgoing *Gada* to the incoming, the newly installed *Gada* members used to be circumcised. At present circumcision is becoming more and more common probably due to the increasing contact of the Gedeo with the peoples and cultures of the areas where circumcision is practised.

### Markets

No standard measures and weights are used in the local markets. Sales are made by bargaining between buyers and sellers. Coffee is sold in tins or baskets to each of which containers a price is fixed. Balls of meat are sold wrapped up in *enset* leaves and prices are fixed according to the size of the ball. *Enset* or *kocho* is sold in loads or in parts according to which the prices vary.

During the time of Haile Selassie the local market was policed by the representatives of the local land lords called *koro*. They maintained market security by arresting thieves and those who tried to disturb the peace as well as by arbitrating between quarrelling parties. Since the period of the *Derg*, these duties have been taken over by members of the *Kebele* administration.

### Credit and social security

In the case of a personal crisis such as a fire the community will give assistance. The elders assess the damage and coordinate to raise the funds for compensation.

Crisis-survival strategies among the Gedeo include saving cash, migration into Gujiland for support, marketing of *enset* and fruit at Guji markets, and shifting cultivation between highland and lowland areas. Inter-group lending and borrowing of cattle and *enset* between the Gedeo and Guji are also encouraged during times of crisis.

Four local organisations are present in the community that help to provide a form of social security. They were created in the following years; they are ranked from most to least useful for the community: 1918 - *idir*, 1940 *equb*, 1940 *mehber*, 1974 Peasant Association. The membership of the *idir* varies between 40 and 200. Members in the different *idir* pay 0.5-1 *birr* a week, 1-2 *birr* for a fortnight, and 2 *birr* a month. On death the following sums are paid: son or daughter - 50-100 *birr*; husband or wife - 100 *birr*; a relative - 40 *birr*; *merdo* (mourning a relative who died in another place and whose funeral you could not attend) - 30 *birr*. The *idir* also provides *kocho* (*enset*) for the funeral.

There are *equb* among retail traders They contribute between 2 and 5 *birr* a week. There is also a group called *edigret* ("development"). This is like *equb* but only happens once a year.

### Community Decision-making

Previously there was a community decision-making system called *Gada*. It made decisions from simple disputes to complex questions by putting the dispute through the system hierarchy *Aba Gada*, *Aba Roga*, *Hyiticha*, *Jalkaba*. The final decision was made by the *Aba Gada*. Since the introduction of state decision-making institutions there are several possibilities for dispute resolution depending on the desire of those involved. Some go to the hierarchy to settle their dispute or the PA may recommend that the case be seen by the hierarchy. If the case is serious they will be sent to the police or court. The PA also have local police, a prison, and court to exercise power over local lawbreakers.

In 1991 two political organisations, both claiming to represent the Gedeo, clashed. Each side arrested members of the other organisation and tortured them Upon the fall of the *Derg*, the *Kebele* leadership was replaced by the Peace and Stability Committee which in turn gave way to the establishment of the *Kebele* Administration. The *Kebele* Administration is still the representative of the government at the lowest level of the society in so far as it implements and executes the guidelines and policies of the state. However, a significant change has taken place regarding the relationship between the administration and the traditional community leaders. Not only are the traditional leaders recognised but they are also consulted and sometimes invited to attend government-called meetings concerning the welfare and common interests of the community. On such occasions, the local leaders give their blessings to all present and share their rich experience with the participants. Apart from this, there is no situation in which the local elders have taken over the place of the *Kebele* Administration so as to perform its duties and responsibilities. There are different hierarchical levels of elders' councils among the Gedeo. The council at PA level is known as the *hayo*. They are involved in solving disputes and some matters related to justice.

Land tax is a serious problem about which the population often complain. There is a general feeling that the amount of land tax levied during the period of Haile Selassie was relatively fair. During that time taxes were collected per *gasha* (a *gasha* consists of 40 hectares) of land rather than per head. A gasha of land was taxed 40 *birr* annually which meant that an individual farmer who shared the *gasha* with a number of others was required to pay an insignificant part of the total for his own plot. Since the time of the *Derg*, however, taxes began to be imposed on individual plots, rather than on the basis of *gashas* of land. The amount levied on a single plot had reached 20 *birr* annually about the end of the *Derg* era. Farmers who possessed many plots of land had to pay up to 80 *birr* annually.

Although taxes have been reduced to a certain extent during the period of the Transitional Government, the amount required per plot of land continues to be high in view of the farmers annual income. Farmers explain their discontent in different ways. One farmer was reported to have brought handfuls of soil wrapped in *enset* leaves as his payment of the land tax. He explained that he was given soil and was paying back soil itself for what he had received. His act demonstrated that he had got no harvest and what he had was only the soil.

### Redistributive mechanisms

The major traditional feast involving all members of the community has been the *Bale* ceremony which take place once in eight years and is associated with the *Gada* system. On this occasion bulls are slaughtered and the community feasts together for several days in succession.

Following the return of the Emperor from exile in 1941, measures were taken to Christianise the Gedeo as a result of which certain members of the local people were converted to Orthodox Christianity. The converts started to observe certain holidays and festivals in accordance with the customs of the church on which occasion they prepared feasts for the local residents. However, such feasts have now lost importance since they were regarded as not originally belonging to the customs of the native population. Hence, apart from the major festival mentioned earlier, there are no other important occasions when feasts are prepared and wealth is redistributed.

## Beliefs and values

### Land

Occasionally a crisis may occur, such as the destruction of *enset* and coffee plants due to diseases. One such occurrence was the 1972/73 coffee failure. According to one source the Gedeo attempted to alleviate the coffee crisis by carrying out a ritual process of cleansing Gedeoland, called *Getala*. The process involved in each village the ceremonial washing away of the evil that invaded Gedeoland by performing the act of slaughtering goats and praying, which started early in the morning, and ended at sunset.

### Religion

The traditional religious beliefs of the Gedeo are centred on a supernatural being referred to by the Gedeo as *Magganno*, which literally means Sky God. All creations, best qualities and abilities and limitless powers are attributed to the *Magganno* whom all Gedeo by instinct invariably believe to exist. Hence, the entire body of Gedeo oral traditions, their proverbs, maxims, folk tales, and myths reflect their beliefs and convictions in *Magganno*. Besides *Magganno,* natural objects and geographic features such as trees, rivers, and hills which are thought to possess superhuman powers are also adored. On the whole, the religious devotion of the Gedeo revolves around their desire to be protected against calamities and misfortunes so as, with all the adverse situations prevented, to live in peace, good health and happiness.

The Gedeo also have religious practices which serve as instruments of mediation between man and God. The first called *Kettelia* is a ritual performed by singing, dancing and praying meant to express thanks to the divine so that he will send them blessings and curse their enemies and drive evil forces away. The Gedeo have great respect for their ancestors and there is a ritual called *Terro* when the head of the family offers food as sacrifices. The father goes to the place where his forefathers sacrificed and scatters food as an expression of thanks to God for the good harvest and all other benefits received from him. The third form of practice called *tolicha* is carried out on behalf of individuals believed to possess ritual powers. In this sacrifice, the Gedeo beg their God to pour down his blessings on the ritual leaders so that they will bring good luck and fortunes to the community.

Traditionally, all religious and ritual performances are carried out by the traditional leaders of the community (*Aba Gada*, *Aba Roga*, *Hyticha*) assisted by the elders of the clans to which role they are assigned. One example is the traditional religious ceremony which they carry out when they begin communal work and on its completion.

Christianity was introduced into the area during the 1920s and 30s and a good number of people in the PA have become Christian and some are Muslims. 90% of people are Protestants, 5% Muslim , and 2% orthodox Christian. The religions co-exist peacefully with each other and with the practice of local/traditional religious beliefs.

### Explanations of misfortune and illness

Illness may be explained as a punishment for someone who has stolen somebody's property, or it may be considered as God's wishes. Carelessness is blamed for accidents.

There are local witches. They are engaged in fixing *tare*. *Tare* is something which is placed or fixed by the witch to protect somebody's property. The person who desires this protection must pay money to the witch. These witches are also traditional medical practitioners.

There are no rainmakers, but the elders pray to their gods if the rain delays.

## The community

### Social conflict

There has been traditionally a series of conflicts between the Gedeo and the Guji over the use and exploitation of land. Similar conflicts are also known to have taken place between the Gedeo and the Sidama. As far as the Gedeo elders recall, these conflicts were resolved about eighty years ago in a traditional peace-making ceremony called *Gondoroo* during which occasion the *Gada* leaders of both sides conferred to negotiate and make peace. The *Gada* leaders and the members of both communities feasted together upon the bulls slaughtered for the ceremony and broke a bone symbolising the end of hostilities and peaceful co-existence afterwards. Ever since, no large-scale conflicts have taken place involving the communities apart from separate incidents between individual members of the group.

### Poverty and wealth

One can get a glimpse of Gedeo living standards from the following statistics: in 1984 the literacy rate was 33%; working age population was 44% of total population; average household income was 328 *birr*; only 4% of the Gedeo rural population have access to piped drinking water; only 13% of the population have access to medical facilities at nearby health clinics; and the unsanitary and crowded conditions of rural dwelling units were considered to be one of the lowest in Sidamo.

The source of wealth in the community is trade in agricultural products, farming, and land. The rich buy coffee and other crops to sell when the price increases. People become poor if they are not saving, if they have sold their land, or if they are not cultivating their farm properly. The richer are mostly middle-aged.

Due to the population increase most of the people have a very small size of plot which is not sufficient to feed their family throughout the year and the number of landless people is increasing.

In a wealth-ranking three respondents divided a sample of households into 4 categories: rich, middle, poor and very poor.

The wealthy were described as having many plots of land; having sufficient coffee and *enset*; saving in the form of cash; having galvanised iron roofs to their houses; having sufficient clothes; being able to borrow from outside the household; possessing the surrounding crops; being able to use what they have effectively; being able to produce a wide range of products for consumption and sale; and being able to employ daily labourers on their farming land.

The middle category have fewer plots than the rich; are unable to overcome the problem caused by coffee disease; cultivate effectively; work day and night to compete with the rich farmers; employ fewer daily labourers than the rich; have enough land to some extent; have a roof made from thatch and occasionally galvanised iron; have less coffee and *enset* than the rich; are able to manage the household; and do not borrow from outside the household.

The poor have very small plots; or they have many children with not enough land; some are employed in the surrounding service cooperative coffee mill; some work for individuals; have houses whose walls are made from bamboo and the roof from *enset* leaves (*officho*); and who live from hand to mouth.

The very poor are mainly those who have no land or crops for consumption; have no house or one made of twigs and *enset* leaves; are employed in coffee milling or in local households and in the town for their daily food consumption; have been going to Shakiso for goldmining; are going to steal if given a chance; who are drunkards; and are unable to borrow since they have no collateral.

### Social mobility

One respondent said that it takes about 5 years for a household to move down 1 category: eg from 1 to 2, or 3 to 4. Typical reasons for downward mobility are coffee "cholera" (coffee berry disease); sometimes the coffee does not flower; and frost (if the frost hits the coffee it does not give fruit for up to 5 years). People also become poorer due to shortage of land. The same respondent suggested it takes about 5 years to move up from 1 category to the next. The typical reason is the absence of the problems just mentioned. People also should be good farmers.

Other reasons for downward mobility given by the 2 other respondents included the fluctuation of market prices; being afflicted by *wello*, a disease which kills *enset* which may affect the family for up to 7 years; being unable to farm because of sickness or old age; a change in character such as when a respectable person becomes a drunkard; getting a small share of land, particularly in large families; the cost incurred when a household member dies; the cost of wedding ceremonies; and selling land at different times. All these factors are more acute for large families.

Other reasons given for upward mobility included migrating to farm a large plot of land in other areas; using income effectively; minimising unnecessary relaxation eg avoiding excessive drinking and sex; working without undermining the job; saving what is generated by the farm or other income-generating activities; working day and night; buying land (even though it is illegal) at any time and expanding the farming plots and thereby increasing the number of permanent crops (coffee and *enset*); trading locally even though they do not have a business licence; having a good housewife who can save and use efficiently what is produced on the farm and control her husband.

People frequently move between the 2 middle categories but tend to get restricted to these categories. The crucial factor is land; they do not have enough land and are not able to sell or lease it. Other suggestions are that they do not try to improve their farming methods and do not look for other opportunities

The child of a poor person can become rich if he saves and coordinates trade and farm activities. The Gedeo highly value hard work. As a result, it is possible for someone who has been poor to acquire possessions and become wealthy through hard work. On the other hand, a rich man may lose his wealth as a result of having large family to support or his wealth may be abused by his children and he may become poor as a consequence.

### Status

An individual's prestige and power in the community are not determined by the number of livestock that he possesses (which is the case among the Guji). The prestige of the Gedeo rather depends on wealth acquired through individual effort and initiative.

The most respected people in the community are those who save and who effectively manage their livelihood. Management skills are highly valued. A successful farmer is one who has enough means of production, who saves from his production for the next season, and who has a locally accepted good house. A successful farmer is recognised as one who uses well what he has and not he who produces the largest amount. Saving is seen as the most important skill. Technical skill is not valued as such, what is respected is the effort made to be self-sufficient.

Undesirable qualities in men and boys are drunkenness and thievery. He who sells off his farmland, disrespects his wife or is a womanizer is strongly disapproved of.

Diplomacy is the most important social skill. People who are regarded with great esteem are those who able to generate ideas to solve problems within the community, with other communities, and with the wider political system.

The other important basis of status among the Gedeo has traditionally been attaining the membership of the Gada system as *Aba Gada*, *Aba Roga*, *Hyticha*. A traditional power transfer ceremony called *Bale* takes place at an interval of 8 years, during which time a new group of *Gada* members take over political ritual, social and even economic responsibilities from the out-going group of leaders. People who have attained this status which is a symbol of prestige are viewed with high respect and esteem.

There are caste groups in Adado, tanners and blacksmiths being called *Awado* and potters *Watta*. Traditionally, the caste groups are not entitled to possess plots of land. However, there are a few artisans with small plots of land. While these caste groups reside among the community mixed with the non-caste members, they intermarry only within their own group.

### Social stratification

As far as social inequalities are concerned, Gedeo society did display (in the past) small differences in wealth and property possession. The religiously and traditionally ordained *gada* system, supported by social sanctions, was an effective means of regulating marked differences in wealth and property. This had been attested by the relative equality in the communal allocation of land to all members of the Gedeo society. In those days, each individual had access to land; though, the principle of seniority took precedence in the administration of land by village elders. However, the community as a whole had the overall responsibility in ensuring that no household would be denied access to the minimum requirements of life. As a whole the Gedeo society was not based on exploitative social arrangements, with the exception of divisions between men and women and between cultivators and artisans. Even then, the latter were not completely subjugated to the interests and needs of the former since cultivators were dependent (in many ways) on the products of artisans.

However, the transition of Gedeo society from a communal to an individualistic orientation to wealth and property during the second half of the twentieth century has brought about internal differentiation in wealth and property. Such differences today are observed between traditionally dominated cultivators and market-oriented individuals. While most Gedeo still stick to their traditional ways of acquiring subsistence (through the hoe and digging stick, and occasionally through oxen traction), some have shifted to the cash economy dominated by coffee trading. These individuals act as mediators between town merchants and ordinary Gedeo men as a result of which they collect coffee from peasants at cheaper prices and sell to markets at relatively high prices. Besides, motivated by individual interests, some Gedeo have become successful entrepreneurs and have such establishments in Dila as hotels, restaurants and bars. Therefore, one can say that recent trends are showing significant differences in the acquisition of wealth, and such differences are conspicuous in the possession of cash, clothes and food patterns.

A person from a well-to-do family can get a job in the service cooperative.

A respondent reported that PA officials are among the local elites; they have been elected by the people and they are trying to serve loyally. They are getting wealthier but this is not because they are elites but because they work hard. One person who was named was Kebede Maru who was rich and literate and even before he came to power the society supported him. He inherited his wealth. He is the treasurer of the coffee hulling machine. Bekele Bekete is the *wereda* administrator. Other members of the elite include Alemayehu Maru, Alemayehu Benta, and Woldemariam Yicheniku. They achieved their positions through hard work and their good relationship with society. There is no conflict among them.

## Relationships with other communities and the wider society

### Clans and ethnic groups

The Gedeo people have a special relationship with the Guji people, in which they assist one another both in bad and good times. The Gedeo supply the Guji with *enset* and the latter provide the neighbouring Gedeo with cattle. Nevertheless, the two groups have had conflicts, often caused by the encroachment of Gedeo upon Guji land through migration. The occupation of Gujiland by the Gedeo had been undertaken through tactful methods of displacing Guji pastoralists. It involved the gradual eviction of the Guji by means of cursing their pasturelands with cabbage seeds (this act was considered by the Guji as a cause of bad fortune to the well-being of the people and the cattle) which the Gedeo brought from their homeland.

Today, because most of the cultivable land is being devoted to coffee plantations, mainly in the lowlands, rather than *enset* in the middle elevation zones, some tension is being caused with the Guji who formerly used the lowlands. The Gedeo have managed to settle in lowland areas through migration since the early part of the century. As population pressure on the Gedeo's traditional settlements increased, this had to be mitigated by means of occupation of Guji lands which has caused tensions and conflicts between the two groups. In fact, such conflicts are said to have involved wars between the two, and when these wars took place, the outcomes were in favour of the Gedeo people, due to their superior military position over the neighbouring groups. For these and other similar reasons, the Gedeo land has expanded by 50% since 1895 (the period when the Gedeo people became incorporated into the Ethiopian empire).

As a strategy for dealing with crisis the Gedeo borrow and lend *enset* for cattle with Guji people. Some Gedeo also find relatives (nowadays the Gedeo and the Guji do intermarry) down in the Guji area and may spend weeks and months there when crises heavily affect Gedeoland.

The Gedeo community in general is composed of 7 different, but often cohesive clans, whose basis of social organisation lies in territorial divisions as expressed in rituals and the institutionally-focused Gada system known as *Hayuma*.

### Villages and regions

With the construction of the Addis Ababa - Nairobi all-weather asphalt road and the growing of such commercial towns as Dila and Hagermariam, the traditionally peripheral Gedeo area has become accessible for such infrastructural developments as roads, water, electricity facilities, schools and health facilities. In particular, Dila has become the centre of all trade activities for the Gedeo people and for the settlers, and is provided with most of the urban services, like a health centre, a high school, a junior agro-technical institute, electricity, water supply, hotels and other similar basic urban services. Today, the Gedeo have access to several feeder roads that connect Gedeo to different market places. With such developments, the alluring commercial nature of coffee has increased, and coffee together with *enset* accounts for about 32% of the cultivated land in the Gedeo area. As the Gedeo's interest in coffee increased, further reinforced by the growing importance of coffee on the international market during the post-World War II period, the traditionally *enset*-focused cultivation in the highlands had to give way to downslope cultivation in the lowlands where coffee grows in abundance.

Local elites have a link with neighbouring peasant associations in coffee trading as well as politically. Adado PA is average in terms of income compared with surrounding PAs.

### Relationships with wider Ethiopia

Political issues are not the major concerns of the people of Adado at large. However, the population do not want a repeat of the times of the *neftenya* and the *Derg* regime which they remember with bitter memories. Besides, the people as a whole would like to be recognised as an ethnic group and be represented in the central government as an expression of being accepted as Ethiopians.

PA officials relate to wider Ethiopian political and administrative structures through the *wereda* agents.

### Effects of government policies

One respondent reported that people in Adado are better off economically than they were in 1991 since the price of coffee has increased (from 2 *birr* to 17 *birr* per kg). Also there are no obligation duties and contributions. Although another said the cost of living had also increased. However they are politically worse off because of the ethnic conflict between the Gedeo and the neighbouring Guji clans because the Gujis are claiming that some of the land now included in Gedeoland is theirs. Another said that they are happy about Mengistu's exile because he used to take people to the war front by force (pulling them like asses) and forced contributions are abolished.

Another respondent suggested that most people did not know much about the Constitution or even what it means. Local elites are familiar with those bits that they think will affect them like self-determination and regionalisation.

People do not support the policy of self-determination since they think this will make the conflict between them and their neighbours worse. They do not like regionalisation because they want to be able to move to any region where they might find work - either farming or trading - which they cannot do since the people of one region do not allow others to live and work there.

One respondent said that people do not understand about the Constitution. People do not know about democracy properly but they think it is good since the word is said now and then by everyone as if it were good. For example, if something is done democratically but may not be good in their thinking they would not consider it as democracy. Another said they assume it is freedom to do whatever they want. Another said the do not have full knowledge of democracy but understand it as a means for equality with others and an opportunity for learning in their own language and other rights. There is a security problem in the surrounding *wereda* because of the conflict with the Guji. Even though the conflict areas are not adjacent to the Adado site it is threatening.

There is a shortage of land and because of this people are migrating to other areas for gold mining (Shakiso) and for farming. This was common before Mengistu left but now has decreased because of regionalisation. Parents are sharing their land with their children. When we think about the future it is difficult to give a solution. Land may be distributed by local elites through the number of household members. This might not be acceptable to the people because one might own the land by different means like buying, inheriting and so on.

### Government activities in the community

Adado is the central hub of the local service cooperative which was founded by 9 surrounding PAs. Facilities located in Adado include a coffee washing plant, shop, service cooperative office, school, health clinic. The SC, which was organised in 1977 by the development agents from the Ministry of Agriculture, buys coffee from and supplies merchandise to the member PAs.

In 1977 the community members built the school and the government provided the teachers. In 1979 community members attended the government literacy programme. In 1986 the community built the Health Clinic and the government supplied drugs and health workers.

The services provided by the government were not considered useful because:

a) The school did not provide a good education and as a result the students are not able to attend higher education.

b) The health clinic has not cured people of illnesses, although they pay large amounts of money.

c) The service cooperative does not provide services of which the community is in need.

d) The development agents could not help them to increase production. On the contrary, once they brought in very low production coffee seeds.

During the *Derg* regime the Gedeo had access to credit facilities and a Ministry of Agriculture survey in 1983/4 indicates that the average household credit in Gedeo was 5.05 *birr* of which 18% was spent on food, 18% on clothes, 19% for medical expenses, 10% for social and religious ceremonies, 19% for tax and debt payments and 1% for agricultural inputs.

### NGO and community activities in the community

There are no NGO activities in the community. However there have been a range of community activities to help families and neighbourhoods. Most of these activities are centred on local cooperative efforts (many of which are traditionally-based) and include road construction, the establishment of irrigation channels, the construction and maintenance of new and existing water sources, and several conservation measures including terracing. Most of these are seen by individual Gedeo as being imposed rather than self-initiated and motivated.

### The future

There is a shortage of land which is due to the increase in population and because of this people are migrating. The shortage will get even worse in the future. One said this could be solved by controlling fertility. He suggested that if the land were redistributed in the future the community would be better off. There is a need to find extra land and off-farm unskilled jobs. They would like the establishment of projects and a free coffee market. They would also like new technology for coffee production, material aid from the government to help the poor work on their land properly, and improved seeds. They also need clean water, clinics, toilets, farm inputs, education and transport.

These inapplicable policies in developing countries like us are affecting the poorest members very much. When the cost of living increases the poor are forced to use everything they had and then become day labourers or unemployed. To come out of this, first some research has to be done in the community and then, depending on this, policies might be adjusted in relation to the available resources and the customs and traditions of the people.

One respondent said that the community does not do anything for the poor and that the rich have excess land and livestock. Those with large holdings are those who bought land at different times, who inherited from their families and who have few sons. Policies to counteract poverty are required.

## Glossary

*Araqi:* A distilled spirit.

*Balabat:* Landlord in the Southern part of Ethiopia.

*Belg*: A short rainy season usually occurring during February/March/April; the harvest takes place in July/August.

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

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

*Dejazmach:* Military title.

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

*Enset:* False Banana. A plant resembling the banana; the roots and inside of the trunk and branches are eaten often being stored to allow for fermentation.

*Equb*: A rotating savings and credit association.

*Gada:* Age grade social structure among the Oromo.

*Gebbar:* A tenant or a servant.

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

*Idir:* A burial society.

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

*Maderia:* Land given to soldiers as a pension.

*Mehber*: A religious society which meets monthly on a Saint’s day. Each member takes a turn to host the group, providing food and drink.

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

*Neftenya:* Literal meaning is one who carries a gun. Often used to refer to the soldiers and other landlords from the North who took up land in the South at the instigation of the government.

*Qallad*: Unit of land measure.

*Qudad:* Labour obligation due to a landlord or *balabat*.

*Rist:* Type of land ownership.

*Tef* (grain): *Eragrostis abyssinica* (The staple cereal crop in northern Ethiopia).

*Tella* Home-made beer.

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