

# **Ethiopian Village Studies**

(Designed and edited by Philippa Bevan and Alula Pankhurst)

## **Sirba and Godeti**

**Ada'aa**

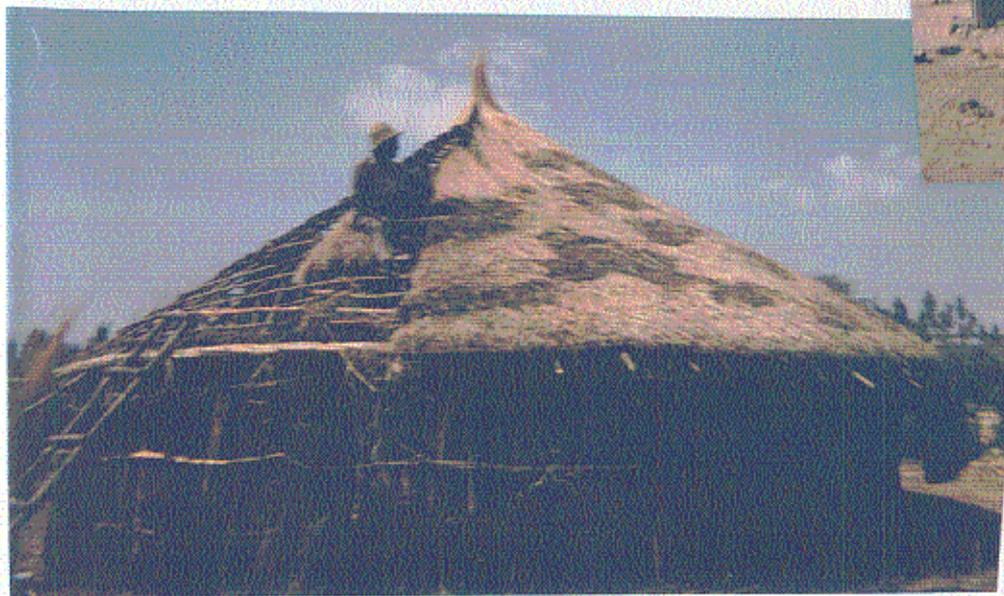
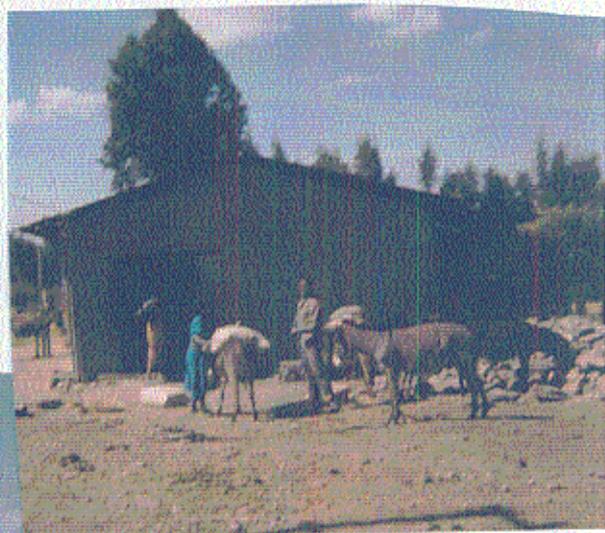
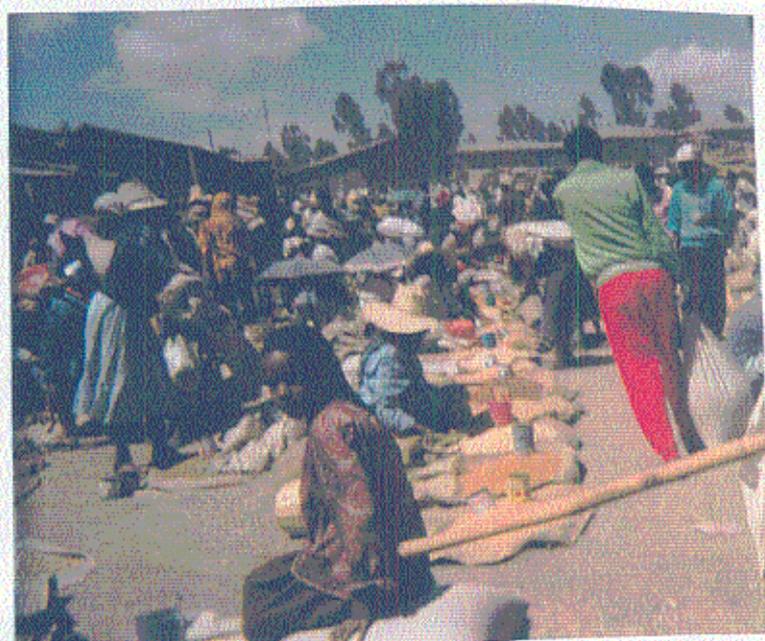
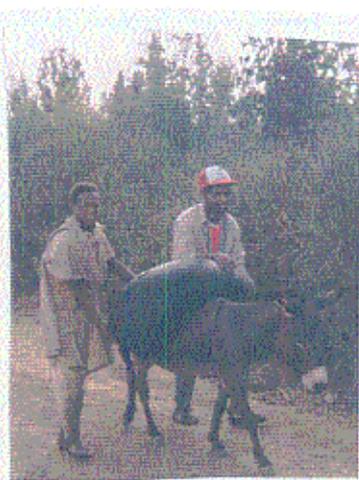
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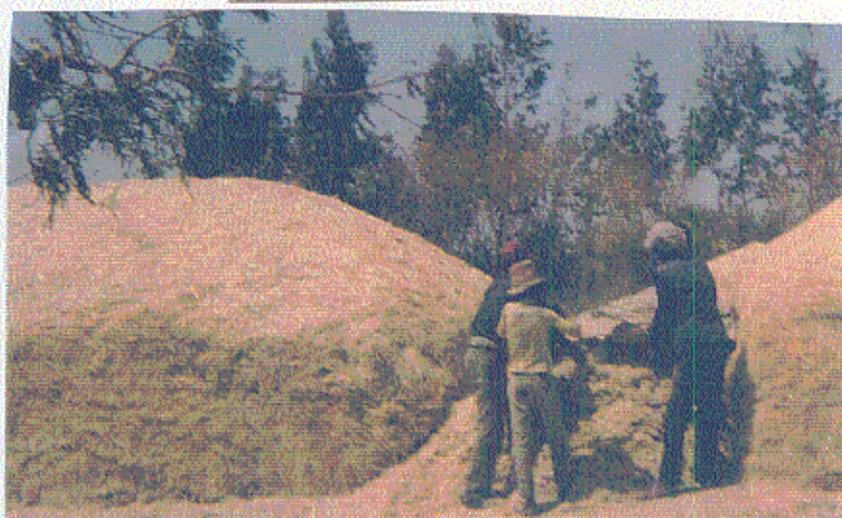
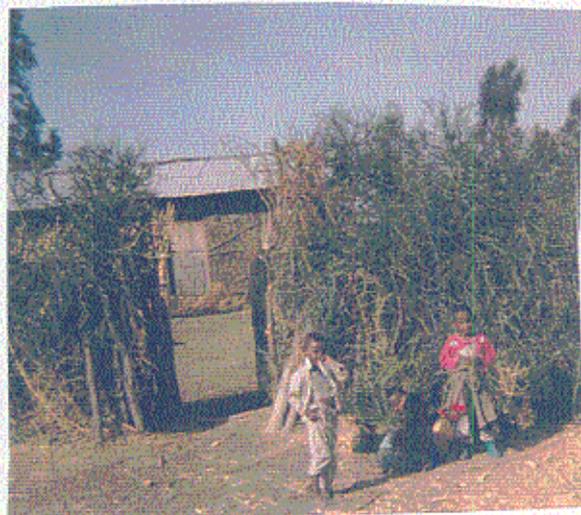
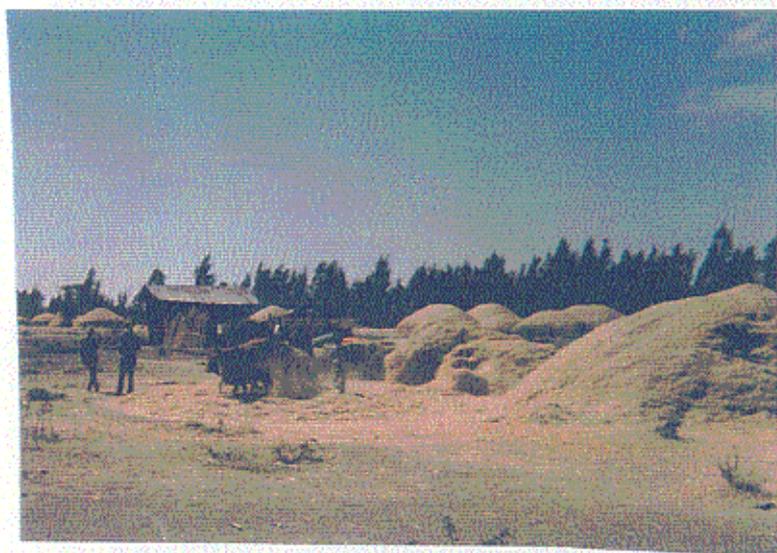
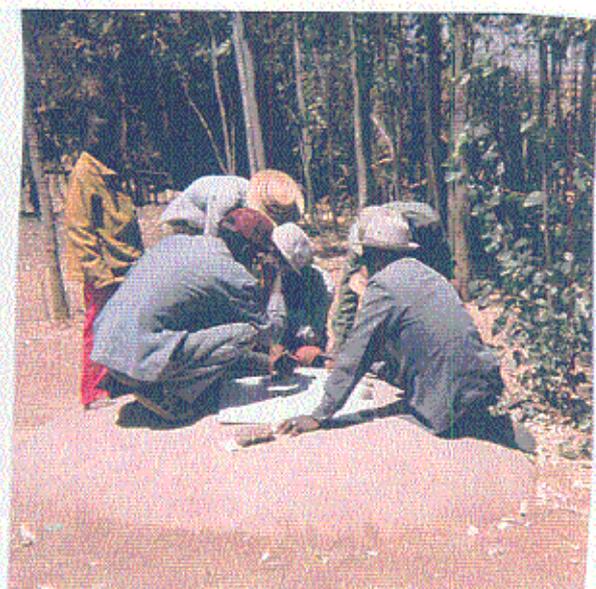
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(Field managers: Bereket Kebede and Shukri Ahmed)

**June 1996**

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## Forward

All the reports in this series have been constructed from a number of sources:

- A background paper on aspects of the local culture in which the Peasant Association is located, based mainly on secondary sources;
- Some rapid assessment material collected in the PA by site managers and enumerators whose chief business was administering 3 rounds of a household economic survey which covered a whole year of economic activity;
- A field visit to the site by an anthropologist who took a draft village profile for correction and supplementation. In a few cases the profiles were not ready before the field visit was done, but the same questions were followed up;
- A questionnaire completed by the enumerators at the end of the survey;
- A community economic survey administered by the site managers.

A large number of people has been involved in the construction of these profiles. Most important are the people in the villages who answered questions, raised issues we had not thought of, and provided hospitality for our fieldworkers. The site managers, enumerators, and anthropologists played a vital role, but are too numerous to mention by name here; the names of some are on the title pages of the profiles. Etalem Melaku-Tjirongo and Joanne Moores constructed the majority of the first drafts of the profiles. Sandra Fullerton Joireman provided important assistance in the preparation of the final drafts. Backup in terms of translating, editing, word processing, mapmaking and general support were provided by Tina Barnard, Ziggy Bevan, Girma Getahun, Haile Redai, Sarah Smith, and Ruth Tadesse. Our economist colleagues at Oxford (Shukri Ahmed, Stefan Dercon, and Pramila Krishnan) and Addis Ababa (particularly Bereket Kebede, Getinet Astatke, and Mekonnen Tadesse) provided ideas and conversation from economics which stimulated our thought processes. The administration in the Economics Department at Addis Ababa University was extremely supportive.

Profiles are available for the following villages:

<i>Tigray:</i>	Geblen	<i>Gojjam:</i>	Yetmen
	Harresaw	<i>North Shewa:</i>	Debre Birhan environs
<i>Wollo:</i>	Shumsheha		Dinki
<i>Arssi:</i>	Korodegaga	<i>Gurage:</i>	Imdibir Haya Gasha
<i>South Shewa:</i>	Sirbana Godeti	<i>Wolayitta:</i>	Gara Godo
	Turufe Kecheme	<i>Kembata:</i>	Aze Debo'a
<i>Gamo:</i>	Do'oma	<i>Gedeo:</i>	Adado
<i>Harerghe:</i>	Adele Keke		

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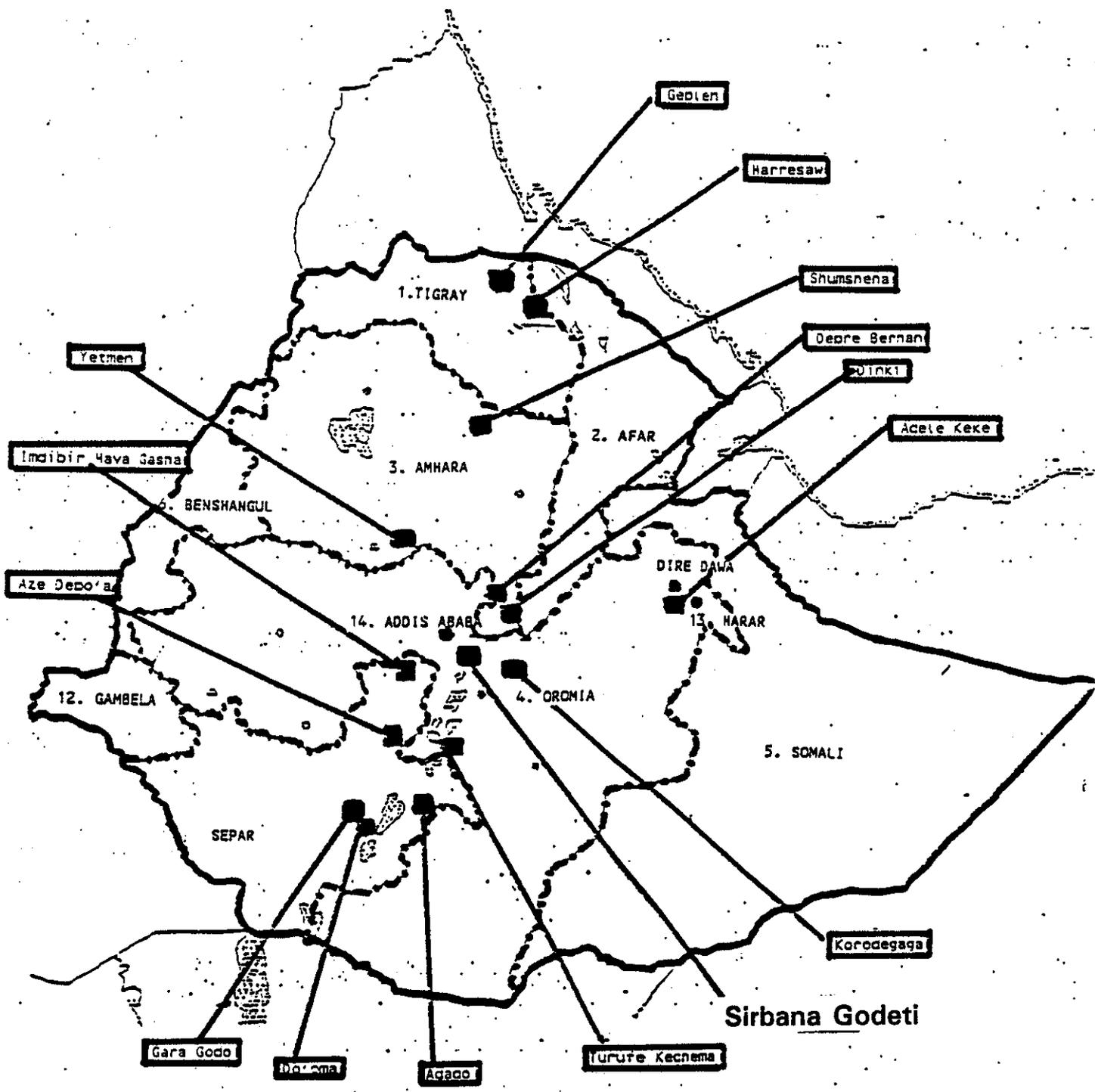
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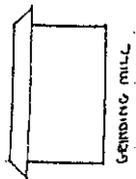
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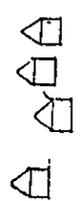




FARMING



GRINDING MILL



VILLAGES OUTSIDE  
VILLAGEZATION PROGRAMME

SHADES

STORAGE

WATER  
BOREHOLE

FARMING

HAND  
PUMP

FARMING

SOLAR PUMP

HAND PUMP

OFFICE

SIGA  
MOUNTAIN

VILLAGES UNDER  
VILLAGEZATION PROGRAMME

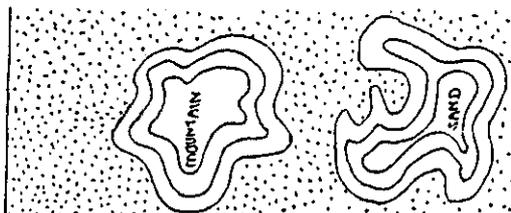
STRAW PILES

FARMING

FARMING

VILLAGES UNDER  
VILLAGEZATION PROGRAMME

FARMING



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# 1. Locating the Site in Time and Place

## *Geography and Population*

The PA of Sirba and Godeti is now in Ada'a *Woreda* (it was previously in Yerer and Keryu *Awraja*) in Shewa province. The villages are located by the main road that connects Addis Ababa to Dire Dawa, about halfway between Debre Zeit (a town with a population of around 60,000) and Mojo (a population of around 40,000) the distance from each being about 20 km. At the time of the first research it was reported that the total population of the village was 1,990, in 180 households. Of these, 176 households are members of the PA, 151 are male-headed and 25 are female-headed. 49.7% of the population of Sirba and Godeti are below the age of 15. The total area of the village is 600ha giving a crude population density of 1.71 people per ha. However, the number of households in the PA has diminished as people have left the village to return to their old homesteads. Recently we have been given a new set of statistics: 98 households in the PA with 45 of them female-headed. The village is smaller than surrounding villages; 200 people are landless. The altitude is *weyna dega*.

## *Climate*

The Ada'a *Woreda* is divided into three climatical and topographic variations: the highlands (including Tulu dimto, Kajima, Gerbicha, and the northern quarters of Liben and Zukala), the rift valley area (covering the southern sub-districts of Zukala and Liben), and the mountain zones (Zukala and Yerer). The villages of Sirba and Godeti are located in the highlands which comprise  $\frac{1}{3}$  of Ada'a *Woreda* with an area of 1,000 km<sup>2</sup>. In the highlands, elevation varies between 1,800 and 2,000 metres with alternating temperatures of between 17 and 20 degrees centigrade. The average annual rainfall of this area as recorded in Debre Zeit is 1,100 mm and there is a slight occurrence of frost every 3 or 4 years. The area of the rift valley section is about 600 km<sup>2</sup>. The elevation of the rift valley area varies from 1,500 to 1,800 meters with a corresponding reduction in rainfall that fluctuates between 750 mm and 1,000 mm per year. The two major mountain peaks (Zukala and Yerer) reach heights of 3,000 to 3,500 meters. A third minor hill lies south of Debre Zeit. Frost is a common occurrence in these parts of Ada'a. The altitude of the village ranges from 1,800 to 1,900 meters with an average monthly temperature of 17 degrees centigrade and an annual average rainfall of about 860mm. Part of the village is vulnerable to flooding during the rainy season, but there are no serious incidents of flooding in Sirba and Godeti which disrupt the normal activities of life. There was no time in the past when the village was isolated from the nearest towns or villages due to the impact of rain. Since the area generally falls within the climatic zone called *weyna dega*, it does not get very cold. However it may get relatively colder in October and November as compared to other months of the year.

## *Production*

Plough agriculture is the basis upon which the economy of the village depends, with the supplement of animal husbandry. The crops produced in Sirba and Godeti are *tef*, barley, maize, sorghum, beans, chickling peas, peas, chickpeas, lentils, fenugreek, and cow peas. In the back garden of many houses, we find small quantities of cabbage, green peppers, tomatoes, onions, and carrots mainly for household consumption. The villagers also keep oxen, cows, sheep, goats, donkeys and chickens. The soil is generally *lem* (fertile). This year's *meher* has not been good because the rain was not sufficient. There is no *belg* harvest. There is no grazing land and households do not earn income from tree crops. Fertilisers are used and substantial income is earned from the sale of animal products in the area. Since 1989 the production of wheat and cowpeas has risen. The 1994 *tef* harvest was the lowest in the last five years and the 1993 harvest was the best.

### *Infrastructure*

The site is adjacent to an all-weather road; there are two large towns within 20km. Each has a large market. The nearest market is in Denkata PA.

### *Social Structure*

According to the first information provided in the village, there are 189 household heads of which 4 are Tigrayans, 6 Wolayittas, 25 Amharas and 154 Oromos. Settlements in the area are not a reflection of tribal groupings in the village. *Ato* Tuffa Bedada remarks that *Sadden* Ada'a (the three sons of Ada'a) make up the three Oromo clans throughout the *Woreda*. He says that in earlier times the three clans (*Handa*, *Dhakku*, and *Illu*) had their own separate locality and political entity. However at the moment, they reside in the diaspora of Ada'a, being mixed with each other and other ethnic groups. In Sirba, almost all the Oromos interviewed were aware of their clan identity. The clan identities are important in involving clansmen in the payment of blood-fees, which have to be settled through the mediation of elders. The clans are also significant in identifying elders who give blessings in rituals in the following order of seniority (*Handa*, *Dhakku*, and *Illu*). Nevertheless, most of the day-to-day activities as well as intensive social networks are handled by the internal social structure of the village. Such structures are represented by two or more nuclear families interwoven by kinship ties that are residing side by side in the immediate neighbourhood.

People of different ethnic groups mix socially in various ways. There are a number of families linked by relations of affinity among the four ethnic groups. For instance, twenty-two households are formed through marriage between Amhara and Oromo. Members of various ethnic groups interact by joining the same *idir*, *equb*, *mehber*, and *senbete*. To a certain extent, the groups share the same values, customs and beliefs as followers of Orthodox Christianity. However, the traditional customs, beliefs, and rituals of the Oromo significantly differentiate them from non-Oromo groups, though in some annual rituals and festivals people tend to intermix. One is the *Abdar* ritual of December that is attended in five different quarters of the village. Another is a communal ritual (*Dirree*) attended at the hill of Sirba every year by all villagers.

Ethnic conflicts have never occurred in the village. Two years ago, when the ethnic conflicts between Amhara and Oromo in Arssi were a hot issue, ethnic relations in Sirba were affected a little. Some Amharas said that there was a clandestine plot to evict all non-Oromo from the village. In fact, this did not occur and the fieldworker could not confirm the existence of a plot from Oromos. He heard that two villagers have returned to Sirba fleeing ethnic conflicts in Arssi.

People are Orthodox Christian "mixed with superstition".

### *History*

Tenancy was the typical tenure system of the area before 1974. *Gebar* (freehold estate in land) and *Semon* (land of the Orthodox Church which was leased out to the clergy) were the major forms of tenure in the village. The landlords of Sirba are as follows:

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	Name of landlord	Size of land (ha)
1.	<i>Ato</i> Tessema Aragaw	40
2.	Debtera Haile	40
3.	<i>Ato</i> Taye Bezabih	40
4.	<i>Fitawrari</i> T/ Mariyam	40
5.	<i>Ato</i> Ababayehu	40

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6.	<i>Wetero</i> Fikre	40
8.	Baleambaras Bitew	40
9.	Memire W/ Michael	40
10.	<i>Ato</i> Asrat G/ Medhin	40
11.	<i>Ato</i> Demisse Hailu	40
12.	<i>Ato</i> Roba Karru	40
13.	<i>W/ro</i> Tsige	40
14.	<i>Ato</i> Fanta Haile	40
15.	<i>Fitawrari</i> Teshome	40
16.	His holiness Abuna	40
17.	<i>Ato</i> Alemu Gurgi	20
18.	<i>Ato</i> Laikke	20
19.	<i>Ato</i> Gameda Asfaw	20
20.	<i>Ato</i> Teffera Gurmu	20
21.	<i>Ato</i> Robe Gorade	20
22.	<i>Ato</i> Taye Lemma	20
23.	Kengazmach Abebe	20
24.	<i>Ato</i> Tadesse Bogale	20
25.	Shambel Dinku	10
26.	<i>W/ro</i> Kamso Jimma	10
27.	<i>W/ro</i> Simenge	10
28.	<i>Ato</i> Assefa Abebe	10
29.	<i>Ato</i> Yisihakk	5

Most of these farmlands were operated by tenant cultivators. A tenant who had more than two oxen could hire labourers from his neighbourhood. At that time, labour could be exchanged for either land or grain. In the first case, the tenant provided the land, seed and oxen. The labourer performed all duties from ploughing to harvesting for one year. The labourer was then granted the yield of two *qarti* (.5 ha). According to the prevailing convention, the labourer could entirely utilize the yields of one *qarti* (one quarter of a hectare) for himself while paying  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the yield of the second *qarti* to the tenant through an arrangement called *guluma*. Otherwise, a labourer could be paid for the same kind of service for one year. The wage was 3 *inqib* of *tef*, 3 *inqib* of various other grains and 4 *birr* for clothes. *Inqib* is a local measurement equivalent to 50 kgs. In both the above arrangements, provision of food and shelter was provided for the labourers by the employer (tenant). For the *gebar* farm lands of the area, tax was paid by the landlords. The rate of the tax had three levels.

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Quality of land    Amount of tax in Eth. birr  
per *gasha* (40 ha)

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<i>Lem</i> (fertile land)	80
<i>Lemtef</i> (semi fertile)	60
<i>Tef</i> (unfertile)	40

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The fieldworker was told that there were tenants who could operate as much as 30 *qarti* (7.5ha) for rental payment of one-third of the total yield. Due to strong competition among tenants for better and additional land, the rate of rent reached the level of one-half of the yield in the beginning of 1970. Another shift was also seen in technology in about the same period. Three land owners (namely *W/ro* Fikkre, *Ato* Alemu Gurgi and *Ato* Yisihakk) began to use tractors and threshing-machines for ploughing

and threshing. This measure led to the eviction of tenants from these fields. Tenants started to become wage labourers performing activities that were not done by the machines. Their wage was 3 *birr* per day.

Agricultural inputs, especially fertilizer, were distributed to members of an association which was organized by *Ato Bisrat*. Members contributed 1 to 2 *birr* to cover running costs and they paid 100kg of *tef* for a 50 kg bag of fertilizer.

After the revolution of 1974, all the villagers gained access to land. The Sirba and Godeti PA was formed on the area of about 23 *gasha* (920ha) of farm and grazing land. In the agricultural season of 1975 just after the reform, land was not allocated to each household except for small garden plots. Two *qarti* were given to bachelors whereas 4 *qarti* were provided for a couple. The vast remaining part of the land was ploughed communally by all villagers. The product of that agricultural season was shared as follows.

- Those who employed two oxen were allotted 4 quintals of different grain.
- Those who contributed seed received equal amounts of grain from the yield.
- Those who did not have oxen and had a family size of more than three received 10 *quna* (50 kg) of grain.
- Those who did not have oxen and were bachelors received four *quna* (20 kg) of grain.

Some farmers claimed that during these distributions there were abuses of power by PA leaders in allocating larger shares of the yield for themselves, their relatives and friends. In the following year (1976), farm and grazing land were distributed by persons elected from the community and PA leaders on the following bases.

- A household that had more than 10 members received 2 ha (10 *qarti*). That was 8 *qarti* from *Koticha* land and 2 *qarti* from *Tcheri* land.
- A household that had less than 10 and greater than 6 members obtained 2 ha (8 *qarti*) of *Koticha* land.
- A household that had 3 to 4 members was allocated 1.5 ha (*qarti*) of *Koticha* and .5 ha (2 *qarti*) of *Tcheri* land.
- Newly married couples were allotted 1 ha (4 *qarti*) of *Koticha* and ¼ha (1 *qarti*) of *Tcheri* land.
- A bachelor received 1 ha of *Koticha* land.
- For each household, 0.5 ha of *Tcheri* and 1 *qarti* of *Koticha* grazing land were allotted.

Two *gasha* (80 ha) of land were then reserved as a communal land. This land was cultivated every Friday by the villagers who were divided into four work groups (Sirba, Godeti, Awacho and Gichi) on the basis of the village quarters. Each work group was responsible for agricultural tasks on 20 ha of land. Of the produce of this communal land, 30% was allocated to cover the running costs of the PA, a certain portion was kept for seed and the rest was shared by all villagers. It was said the yield was divided among the villagers taking into account their active participation in the communal labour. However, the community was not interested in communal activities because the PA leaders were suspected of abusing their access to the resources. Individuals were paid up to 25 kg of grains from the communal yield. This communal land was also used to give farm land to newly married couples from time to time. Consequently, its size gradually decreased. Finally, the remaining land was divided among villagers bringing an end to communal activities at about the end of 1988.

Starting in 1977, conscription of soldiers was exercised in the village; about 100 men were recruited to the army until the last days of the defunct regime. After 1977 the four groups of the village were obliged to work every Wednesday on the land of ex-villagers who were at the war front. In addition, older people's land was cultivated by the groups on Wednesdays.

A land tax was introduced in 1976. In that year, each household had to pay 6 *birr* annually regardless of size of holding. The payment was increased to 7 *birr* in 1977. By 1978, the tax had grown and there were three levels of differentiation:

1. Those who had more than 2 oxen had to pay 18 *birr* annually.
2. Those who had 2 oxen had to pay 14 *birr* annually.
3. Those who had no oxen had to pay 12 *birr* annually.

By 1987 taxes were being paid at the following rates:

1. Those who had more than 2 oxen had to pay up to 80 *birr* annually.
2. Those who had 2 oxen had to pay 50 *birr* annually.
3. Those who had no oxen had to pay 40 *birr* annually.

In 1988, after an appeal by the villagers, the authorities readjusted the tax payment in the following manner:

1. Those who had more than 2 oxen had to pay 50 *birr* annually.
2. Those who had 2 oxen had to pay 40 *birr* annually.
3. Those who had no oxen had to pay 30 *birr* annually.

After the advent of the Transitional Government, the land tax was reduced and now it has only two levels. The highest is 25 *birr* while the lowest is 20 *birr* annually. However, there are still people who complain that they are paying the same tax for a small size of land (3 *qarti*) as those who have larger holdings.

The amount of tax is still decided by higher authorities, but assigning the level of rates to individual farmers and then collecting taxes is the responsibility of the PA leaders. Assigning tax rates was often used by PA leaders to attack opponents and to benefit allies. There were numerous complaints regarding the unfairness of the allocation of tax rates.

The monopsonistic crop-buying organization of the *Derg* (the Agricultural Marketing Corporation) appropriated surplus from the village through the PA committee. When it was first started in the middle of 1980, quota allocations coincided with the three levels of differentiation made for tax.

1. Those who had more than 2 oxen had to sell 2 quintals of *tef*, wheat or peas to AMC annually.
2. Those who had 2 oxen had to sell 1.5 quintals of *tef*, wheat or peas to AMC annually.
3. Those who had no oxen had to sell 1 quintal of *tef*, wheat or peas annually.

However, the quota of sales kept increasing reaching the following levels.

1. Those who had more than 2 oxen had to sell 5 quintals of *tef*, wheat or peas to AMC annually.
2. Those who had 2 oxen had to sell 3.5 quintals of *tef*, wheat or peas to AMC annually.
3. Those who had no oxen had to sell 2 quintals of *tef*, wheat or peas to AMC annually.

Even though there may be a difficulty in remembering accurately, the villagers gave the following list of farm-gate prices paid by AMC:

35 to 45 *birr* for 1 quintal of *tef*  
 25 *birr* for 1 quintal of maize  
 30 *birr* for 1 quintal of wheat

As with the tax rates, the power of allocating quotas of grain was abused by PA leaders who could benefit their allies and harm their enemies. It was often a cause of conflict between PA leaders and the community. There were a number of households who lost their farmland because they were not able to fulfil the required quotas of grain to the AMC. The victims say that they were forced to leave their land, although others say that they voluntarily abandoned their right to use the land so that they could not be

asked for the annual quotas. The fieldworker only managed to find 8 victims but their number could be higher. These people are making a living by various activities, such as working for those who have land, providing cooking services, selling wood and charcoal and so on.

Adding to the above surplus appropriation, there were several minor annual payments that were contributed by each household. These are

- For running costs of *Woreda* PA, 2 *birr*, annually.
- For running costs of *Awraja* PA, 3 *birr* annually.
- For literacy campaign, 4 *birr* was paid once.
- For the war, 1 *birr*
- For the drought and famine, 1 *birr*

In 1983, a Producers' Cooperative was formed with 18 members. Power in the village was shifted from the PA to the PC. The PC members were given all sorts of privileges in the area. They were not asked for large quotas of grain for sale to the AMC as compared with individual farmers. They were made masters of the best land in the village. Modern inputs of technology were provided for PC members including tractors and threshing-machines. It is said that the PC held 53ha of farm and grazing land. The PC was encouraged to expand its holdings by incorporating individual farmers. In 1985, Sirba and Godeti was villagized by force. Many individual farmers (about 20) complain that they lost their grazing land when earlier holdings were taken over by the PC. Compensation was not provided for the losers so they are facing shortages of land. Status holding in the PC matched with membership in the WPE (for instance, three chairmen were members of WPE). The PC tried to ban alcohol drinking in the village by confiscating and closing many of *Tej*, *Tella*, and *Areqe* houses. But this action seemed to have been unsuccessful having only a temporary effect.

Many of the villagers recollect the harsh treatment of a cadre by the name of Gurmesa who was responsible for villagizing the area. People hurried to build their houses in the new quarter for fear of being punished by Gurmesa. People say that people who kept livestock in the house were fined 20 *birr*. If they were not using the latrines, they were also fined by the cadre. Some of the villagers were beaten up for committing similar minor acts.

In response to the mixed economic policy of the *Derg*, the PC was disbanded. The 18 members of the PC divided the land and other property among themselves. According to many of the private farmers, the earlier members of the PC have been able to keep hold of the best and largest size of farm land as compared to the other villagers. After the collapse of the PC, power was returned to PA leaders.

In the past three years of the Transitional Government period, some basic commodities previously available in the service cooperative have become more scarce than they were before. This seems to be the influence of the free market policy which leads people to find the kind of commodities they need in the market. Moreover, inputs (specially fertilizer) are not provided on time before the onset of the rainy season. When they are delivered, it is not the requested amount. Prices of fertilizer also show slight increases in contrast to the price level in the *Derg* period.

The price of 100 kg of Dap during the *Derg* period was 87 *birr* in the beginning of 1982 and it was 120 *birr* in 1988 while it is 142 *birr* at the moment. 100 kg of Urea was 66 *birr* in the beginning of 1982 and 75 *birr* in 1988. However it is 122 *birr* now. For this season, 355 kg of Dap and 177.5 kg of Urea is supplied to Sirba on credit. At the maximum, an individual receives 300 kg of Dap while the minimum is 50 kg. The PA leaders are ordered to enforce the complete payment of credit by the month of March 1995 for fertilizer distributed this year. However, there is a large amount of credit which has not yet been paid by the villagers during the past years.

Since the implementation of the regionalization policy, political meetings and demonstrations seem to be attended only by the Oromos, excluding non-Oromos. In the recent demonstration held on 30 of August 1994, which was organized in support of resolutions passed by the 1st OPDO (Oromo People's Democratic Organization) meeting at Bishoftu, the non-Oromo villagers did not participate. They are isolating themselves, saying that it does not concern them. During the *Derg* regime, both the Oromos and non-Oromos used to hold power in the bureaucratic structure of the PA. At the moment, all PA

leaders in Sirba are Oromo.

*Ato Maru Gemmeda* is an Oromo merchant who was purchasing grain from the surrounding villages and took it to markets at Debre Zeit or Addis Ababa before the revolution. He performed such activities by utilizing his grain store at Sirba. In the wake of the revolution, *Ato Maru's* grain store was confiscated by the PA and he was expelled from the area. After the end of the *Derg* period, he has returned to Sirba, resuming his trade activity and replacing the AMC. Now he has leased land, constructed a grain store and dug a well which is used by him and the villagers free of charge. Although the prices of *Ato Maru* are better than the AMC prices they are not so high as the prices in Addis Ababa. He paid these farm-gate prices for the following grains last year:

160 to 200 *birr* for 1 quintal of *tef*  
125 *birr* for 1 quintal of wheat  
80 to 100 *birr* for 1 quintal of peas or beans  
140 *birr* for 1 quintal of chickpeas  
190 *birr* for 1 quintal of white peas  
80 *birr* for 1 quintal of maize

One of the important functions of *Ato Maru* is to sell seed to needy villagers at the time of planting. He sells the following seeds to the villagers at the price indicated for this season (1994).

300 *birr* for 1 quintal of *tef* (white)  
220 *birr* for 1 quintal of wheat  
140 *birr* for 1 quintal of beans or peas  
200 *birr* for 1 quintal of chickpeas  
290 *birr* for 1 quintal of white peas  
170 to 180 *birr* for 1 quintal of maize

The farm-gate prices of *Ato Maru* are not comparatively different from the grain prices at nearby markets (Denkaka and Debre Zeit) during harvest time. The villagers consider his prices to be good. From the viewpoint of villagers, considerable hardship was caused by the imposition of quotas of grain and the growing rate of taxes. Other than these, there has not been serious hardship during the past ten years. There are still some social activities that are handled by elders but, in general, important decisions are made by the PA leaders as before. About 50 men from the site were conscripted and all but one have returned to the site.

## 2. Seasonal Events and Activities

At the back of the profile there are seasonal calendars of crop activity, off-farm activity, credit needs (men and women), livestock sales and diseases, rain and water and fuel availability, labour (men, women, boys and girls), and diseases. Notable features include the following:

Men are involved in off-farm activities in December, January February, and March.

Women need credit in August and September; men need it in June, July, August and September.

Sheep and goats are sold in June, July, August and September. Oxen are sold in May, June and September.

## 3. The Farm Economy

### *Crops*

The following crops are grown on the community farmland: *tef*, wheat, beans, chickpeas, barley, maize

and sorghum. The area is a food surplus one. In this village grain/plough technology is used, the ox being the most important source of traction. *Tef* and wheat are the most important crops. In the Ada'a region annual crop rotation is often practised. So that, for example, *tef* or other grain is grown one year and chickpeas the next with a subsequent return to *tef*. The productivity of cereals is increased through the growing of (nitrogen fixing) pulses on alternate years.

While farmers appreciate the use of manure as fertilizer its use is minimal for the following reasons: a) the limited number of livestock, which in turn is due to the scarcity of grazing land which has contracted due to the expansion of farmland; b) wood is very scarce so the farmers give priority to the use of animal dung as fuel; c) due to the distribution of land holdings over a large area it is difficult to transport the dung to every farm site.

Intercropping was far more common in the older times than now. Mixed cropping involved side by side plantation of wheat with barley, beans with peas, and sunflower with *tef* or maize. The most frequent instance is the mixture of *tef* with safflower in the same field. *Tef* and *gomenzer* are also planted mixed in Godino areas. The practice of intercropping seems to be a precautionary measure against relying on a single crop.

*Ikkir* is a word used to describe the plots of beans, peas, chickling peas and chickpeas. These crops are usually used in crop rotation. After planting *tef* for three consecutive years (white *tef* for two years and red one for a year) in the same field, one of the *ikkir* crops is sown in that field to improve its fertility. After the *ikkir* crop, *tef* is subsequently grown in the field. There are farmers who grow white and red *tef* in alternate years using fertilizer without shifting to *ikkir* crops. *Ikkir* crops may not be grown by those farmers who have a shortage of farm land because, if they are not able to produce *tef* in one season, they will lose the considerable income that can be made by selling the cash crop. Also farmers were not willing to upgrade the fertility of their land by planting *ikkir* crops during the *Derg* regime since they feared that this might result in their land being taken by the PC, which had a right to use all fertile lands. Currently, some farmers are not willing to practice *ikkir* because they do not have security of holding. They are expecting redistribution of land and that they may lose their *ikkir* land since it is assumed that land will be allocated in a draw.

In addition the growing prominence of *tef* as a cash crop may intensify the tendency towards the elimination of inter-cropping and *ikkir*. The task of harvesting safflower is difficult for oxen which may also makes it less attractive. On the other hand, fallowing, which was a widespread practice in the past, is becoming infrequent due to the scarcity of land.

The following information was gathered from the MOA in Debre Zeit. The crop diseases of the area are rust and smut. The pests or insects of the area are aphids, grasshoppers, African bollworm, cut worm, stockborer, and beetles. The following weeds are commonly found in the area: pig seed, *guizeta*, *arobannche* spp., spiny coke labour, *doder*, *seidgg*, oats, broom grass, phalaris spp., couch grass, runner grass, darnel and mexican poppy.

The following table of the DA (Development Agents) office of Ude shows the yield during the 1993/94 agricultural season in Sirba village, by quintal. According to the DA, yields of wheat, peas and beans were lower last year because of crop disease and pests. This is due to the fact that pesticides and chemicals were not delivered to the extension agent. The DA estimated that the average lost yield in quintals were 88 for wheat, 126 for peas and 200 for beans.

Types of crops	Planned yield per ha	Actual yield per ha	Total yield in Quintals
<i>Tef</i>	12	10	2290
Wheat	21	13	163
Barley	20	22	168
Maize	20	22	176
Chickpeas	12	22	330
Lentils	5	5	15
Peas	22	4	28
Beans	20	10	200

The villagers remember the good prices of 1985 when parts of the country were affected by famine. They obtained better prices for their grain which is listed as follows:

- 300 *birr* for 1 quintal of *tef*
- 250 *birr* for 1 quintal of wheat
- 300 *birr* for 1 quintal of white peas

### *Livestock*

Due to the scarcity of grazing land the number of livestock is steadily declining. Sheep are the most popular animals, and oxen are also owned. One estimate of the average herd size is 3 oxen, 2 cows, 3 calves, 3 donkeys and 5 sheep. Bereket lists the number of domestic animals owned by the villagers as of February, 1990 as follows: 238 oxen, 128 cows, 94 bulls/heifers, 105 calves, 112 donkeys, 1 mule, 2 horses, 54 sheep and 57 goats. The recent figures of the DA office in Ude provide the following information on the number of livestock in Sirba: 290 oxen, 134 cows, 89 bulls, 81 heifers, 45 calves, 43 sheep, 46 goats, 358 fowl, 113 donkeys, one mule and a horse.

The following table shows the oxen and cow distribution of the village by wealth strata.

<u>Strata</u>	<u>Oxen</u>	<u>Cows</u>	<u>Cows per head</u>
Very poor	0	11	.18
Poor	19	20	1.05
Middle	150	70	.93
Rich	69	27	1.50
Total	232	128	.74

In addition to their use for traction power, oxen are fattened for sale. The fieldworker found 24 people who are engaged in this activity after harvesting time. They usually take oxen to market for the Christmas and Easter holidays. Complementing their animal-feed of straw, the persons buy fodder from the flour factory in Debre Zeyt. Also the milk of local cows, which give two to three litres a day, is used for both household consumption and for sale. Likewise, sheep, goats and chicken are kept for home consumption and to be sold in the markets as required. Donkeys are used as pack animals. Many households have a barn outside their home for livestock. However there are some houses where livestock, especially, calves and cows are kept inside.

There were large stocks of horses and mules in the village before the revolution. They were used for transportation and the riding game resembling *lolo* called *gugs*. The importance of horses and mules has been declining due to the spread of vehicles and shortages of grazing land.

Outbreaks of anthrax occurred in the nearby Ude village in 1991, killing 26 oxen which were not vaccinated. According to the DA (*Ato Kasahun*), 600 oxen of the area (including those of Sirba) were vaccinated against anthrax so as to control the spread of the disease. Kasahun says that campaigns of vaccination against anthrax were carried out in the area in 1990. It was the arrival of unvaccinated oxen in the area which caused the epidemic.

A cross-breeding station is located in Ude. People can take their cattle and pay 2 *birr* for the service after making sure that fertilization has occurred. Kasahun claims that cross-bred cows can be milked with yields of 10 to 12 litres a day. However because of their vulnerability to local diseases and shortages of fodder, the new breeds are not preferred by peasants. There are only three peasants who cross-bred their cattle with the new breeds in Ude and there are none in Sirba.

Many of the villagers remember the incidence of crop failure in the area in 1963 which is known as *Shenkute*. The crop failure was caused by drought. Relief supplies of grains were not provided by the government. Shortages of seed were eased by borrowing from the landlords of the area. In fact, there were a number of peasants who had to sell their cattle and buy seeds from distant areas such as Arssi.

## Land

The total land area of the village is 600ha. *Tef* is the major cash crop of the village covering 58.5% of the village's 417ha of farmland. Wheat covers 18.8% of the village farmland. The largest landholding in the area is 10 *kartha*, the average landholding is 7 *kartha*. The majority of villagers (58.9%) have landholdings ranging from 1-2ha. In Sirba and Godeti oxen are more scarce than land. Most people in the village have adequate land.

Those who obtain PA leadership positions have the power to make decisions on matters of land allocation. Since the PA is formally organized in the village, the leaders, their relatives and intimate allies, and those able to bribe PA leaders have been able to obtain better quality and large amounts of farm land. In Sirba, more frequently *qarti* (50 x 50 meters) and to a lesser extent *wederro* (60 x 60 meters) are used to measure land. But there are times when these standards are abused. If a PA leader wants to favour someone during the distribution of land, he can increase the size of one *qarti* a little bit to 60 x 60 meters or larger. The fieldworker was told that such abuses occurred during the distribution of land among PC members.

The current PA leaders claim that more than a hundred persons are landless in the village. The fieldworker was able to gather the name of 38 landless people but believed that the number is much higher. Out of the 38 landless people, 15 are ex-soldiers. All of these people derive their income from one or a combination of activities such as petty trade, renting of farmland, gift of farmland from their families, and involvement in various types of share-cropping arrangement. There are also some individuals working in the *Gafat* Ammunition Factory as guards who also participate in one or two of the above income-generating activities.

Land is rented for one agricultural season by a considerable number of villagers. The rental price varies depending on the type of soil. One *qarti* of *Koticha* land is rented for 180-160 birr, *Gonbore* 150-180 birr and *Tcheri* 130-160 birr. If the land is *ikkir* (previously planted with peas, beans, chickpeas and chickling peas) a 20 *birr* increase might be made on the above prices. Some cases indicate that renting land out is conducted by those who have no oxen or insufficient numbers. In other cases, older people rent their land out since they are not strong enough to plough. It was also suggested that holders of larger sizes of land rent out some of their portion. Although this practice was banned in the land reform proclamation of 1975 and is still illegal, it is quite pervasive throughout Ada'a. The widespread practice of renting land commenced at the beginning of 1990. Although it seems clandestine, everybody speaks about it openly. However, it is difficult to discover the actual size of land that an individual is either giving or receiving in rent. A recent report from the site said that land rents range from 400 to 600 *birr*/hectare for one production season. The renters of farm land are better-off farmers. In the area, there is only one rainy season which is *meher*. There is no farm land which is used twice a year.

Since the end of the *Derg* there has been no significant change in land allocation at the site. The landless include returned soldiers and those who did not pay their land tax during the *Derg*. Women can own and inherit land. In matters of land disputes, people usually take their cases to PA leaders rather than to elders or government courts. During the proceedings, however, the case might be referred to elders to be resolved.

## Labour

During most of the year the farmer is self-sufficient in labour. During the ploughing and harvesting period other members of the household help. 30% of extra labour is supplied by work groups. Bereket shows that 61% of total agricultural labour expenditure is contributed by men whereas 26% of it is contributed by children below the age of 15.

Ploughing activities are dominated by men who are the main agricultural decision-makers in this area. Tasks include transporting fertilizers to the field, ploughing, sowing, spraying weed-killer, harvesting, loading and transporting the harvest of grains and chaff, threshing, winnowing, storing of

yields and selling grain. Men also engage in fencing, house building, cutting trees, digging small wells to store dung, and bringing fodder from Debre Zeit after harvest. However it is difficult to say that all these activities are left exclusively to men. Women, boys and girls are the main labour for hand-weeding fields. They may participate in harvesting, transporting of grains and straw, winnowing and so on as required. Moreover, 37 households are headed by women who hold land. The participation of women in agricultural activities in these households seem to be greater.

Women are predominantly involved in hand weeding, transporting grain, preparing threshing-floors, looking after garden vegetables and crops, milking and tending cows, fetching water and straw, storing dung in wells in summer, preparing dung-cakes in the dry season, brewing beer, making *arage* and *tej* and routine household tasks. Girls usually help their mothers by taking part in the above activities.

Boys also complement the family labour in hand weeding, collecting straw, keeping cattle, preparing soil, fetching firewood, transporting grain by pack animal and so on. When boys and girls are at school, most of their work is carried out by parents.

Employing hired labourer is a very common phenomenon in Sirba. In general, the level of wage rates is higher in the rainy season than in the dry season when the supply of labour increases. There are two types of hired labourers: immigrants and villagers. The immigrant labourers often come from neighbouring districts of Ada'a, and from far regions such as Gondar, Wello, Selale, and northern Shewa. Some villagers of Sirba who have no land or insufficient land become hired labourers. There is no sign to suggest wage labour is regarded as degrading in the area. Boys of the poor are frequently employed as cow boys. It is impossible to be conclusive about the factors that motivate immigrant labourers to come to Ada'a. Some admire the fertility of Ada'a as compared to their home village. They say that they are interested to work for a short while and go back to their families. Others mentioned last year's drought which caused them to migrate from otherwise fertile lands such as Bale. Most of the labourers met by the fieldworker confirmed that they have sons or relatives that look after their plots in their home land. In most cases, they do not leave their homes until ploughing is completed. Labourers can be seen in both Debre Zeit and Mojo markets, but immigrant labourers also go through villages with their sickles asking for employment. Some immigrant farmers come to the area annually.

It is difficult to categorize what kind of farmers employ hired labourers in Sirba. Although land size might be one determining factor in hiring labour, the fieldworker also found that poor women with only three *qarti* of land employ a labourer. This seems to be due to the fact that such women have no sons and or relatives to plough.

The fieldworker's data is not exhaustive but sheds light on the problem. In the village there were 34 households that hire labour on a yearly basis, 20 on a monthly basis and two on both yearly and monthly bases. Many of the households (34 of them) that employ labourers have four or more oxen. It seems that if a family has capital and adequate oxen, hiring of labour enables them to expand their land size through renting.

From another perspective, 17 of the employers in Sirba are money-lenders. Of all the employers, seven of them need more than one labourer either on a monthly or a yearly basis or both. Only one farmer who is not a lender hires two labourers on a yearly basis. Otherwise, the data indicates that most of the employers need one hired labourer. However the DA comments that many of villagers in Sirba and Godeti hire from two to three labourers during the harvest period. Therefore, the actual figure is likely to be higher.

Payments to farm labourers depend on the terms of the contract. There are labourers employed on yearly, six-monthly and monthly bases. The payment can be in cash, in kind, or the right to use a plot of land in exchange for labour.

1. If a labourer is employed for a one year term, he is expected to perform all agricultural activities from ploughing to harvesting. His shelter and food is provided by the employer. The employer provides one *qarti* of farm land which the labourer ploughs. He takes the yield as payment for his service. In addition, 30 *birr* is paid to the labourer for the cost of the clothes he needs.

Alternatively, payment can be made in kind. In addition to providing food and shelter, the employer pays either 4 quintals of a mixture of grains or 3 quintals of white *tef*. Also, 30 *birr* has to

be paid for clothes. To work for one year, a labourer has to be hired in April. Payment is usually completed at the end of one year's work after harvest. Most of the time, no one pays labourers in cash who are hired on a yearly basis. However, if the employer is dissatisfied with the performance of the labourer, payment is made in cash after calculating the yield of one *qarti* and the amount of work contributed by the labourer. Then the contract ends.

2. If a labourer is hired for six months, he is paid either 3 quintals of mixed grain or 2 quintals of white *tef* and 15 *birr* is given for clothes. There is no change in the provision of food and shelter but land is not exchanged for labour to those hired for six months. Payment can be made in cash if an employer wants to as above.
3. Labourers can be hired for one month without much change as to the provision of food and shelter. For a short term labourer, payment is usually made in cash. Between 25 and 30 *birr* is paid for ploughing and sowing one *qarti* of land in a month.
  - 35 *birr* is paid for harvesting 1 *qarti* of *tef*
  - 20 *birr* is paid for harvesting 1 *qarti* of wheat
  - 3 to 4 *birr* is paid for threshing wheat or *tef* for 1 day.

Since *tef* and wheat are the main cash crops of the area, it is for these crops that labourers are usually hired.

Herding is conducted by hiring sons of poor villagers. The households employ herdsmen for several reasons. Some do not have sons. Others send their children to school or to fields for agricultural activities. Households that own a larger amount of stock tend to employ herdsmen. Payment is either in cash or in kind. If it is in cash, a herdsman is paid between 15 and 25 *birr* per month, depending on the size of stock. 15 *birr* is paid for smaller stock such as four oxen and 10 sheep. 25 *birr* is paid to keep 10 or more oxen and 20 to 50 sheep. This is an estimated average since there is no fixed rate for these duties the prices of which have to be negotiated between the concerned parties. Long-term services of keeping livestock are often paid for in kind. Thus for six months' service, two *inkib* (100 kg) of various types of grain and one *inkib* (50 kg) of *tef* is paid. If the service is for one year, two *inkib* of various sorts of grain and one *inkib* of red and another of white *tef* is paid.

There are women who take contracts to weed plots of land. The payment is agreed upon between the two parties. The common rate is 10 to 15 *birr* for one *qarti* of *tef* and 8-12 *birr* for wheat. The woman usually mobilises a working group. The group is organised on the basis of mutual obligation. Poor and landless women are hired to prepare food for wage-labourers during harvest. They are paid 15 *birr* a month for such service.

Recent wage rates provided from the site are as follows (for 0.25 hectare): ploughing - 25-50 *birr*; weeding - 18 *birr*; harvesting 30-37 *birr*. There is a scarcity of labour in the village during weeding and harvesting. There are no seasonal employment opportunities outside the village.

Working parties are a common feature of labour organization in Ada'a. In the case of *wonfel*, people of the same community organize themselves and work for one member who calls them for a job that can be finished in a day. The member who requires the work must have prepared food and drinks (usually *tella*) to be served to the participants. The host is expected to reciprocate this labour whenever demanded by any other member. It seems that the frequency of *wonfel* is on the decrease due to the availability of hired labour. There are also several other variations on this theme practised in Ada'a.

*Qabo* is one of the most frequent forms of reciprocal labour. Between 6 and 11 or more people are organized in a group. *Qabo* is widely used for weeding, to harvest and to some extent, to load and transport grain from the farm field. During fieldwork in August 1994, the fieldworker observed a number of *qabo* work groups. These groups are organized on the principles of hard work, neighbourhood, age, sex and kinship. All of the 5 *qabo* observed were formed on the basis of neighbourhood settlement. Marital status may influence the formation of *qabo*. Of the 5 groups, 1 was exclusively formed by 8 married men ranging in age from 55 to 35. The second group consisted of girls

aged from 15 to 22. The third group had 6 young men of about 20. The remaining 2 groups were mixed. The first had 10 members, of whom 6 were girls aged between 18 and 21, except that one was 27. Three men aged 18, 27, and 30 were members of this group because they have relatives in the *qabo*. One young boy of 18 was also a member because the group came from his neighbourhood. The last group had 11 teenage members, of whom 9 were male and 2 female. One girl was a member because she had a brother in the *qabo*. Another one joined the group after the *qabo* had completed half the job.

One of the main features of *qabo* is that it is mainly formed by boys and girls who are not engaged in ploughing. This facilitates the division of labour in a household leaving the tasks of ploughing to the head. *Qabo* mechanisms are also efficient in reducing expenses in the hungry period, when there is shortage of money to employ labourers to weed a field. Unlike other work groups, there is no feast in *qabo*. Members of *qabo* receive food from their households. For weeding, the members of a *qabo* spend half a day on each person's plot. They work on plots of two members in one day and work five days a week from Monday to Friday. They work from 7 to 12 in the morning and from 1 to 6 in the afternoon, leaving one hour for lunch at home. Priorities are given to plots which are most affected by weeds. If the *qabo* members happen to disrupt their work on a plot due to a holiday or rain, they complete their work on Saturdays and Sundays as is convenient to the group. This suggests that *qabo* members stick to their sequence and shift of work day by day. This helps to distribute group labour equally to all members turn by turn. Membership in the *qabo* is flexible because there can be drop-outs who are not satisfied with the group's performance or membership may decline when those with smaller plots have completed their labour obligations. Those who have larger plots may stay in the *qabo*, unless declining numbers of members seriously reduces the amount of labour available. There are *qabo* groups which work as a group for more than two months of weeding.

Another form of group labour is *jigi*. *Jigi* is widely practised during harvesting, loading and transporting grain from the field to home. The fieldworker was told that there were a couple of *jigi* work groups involved in ploughing for *tef* and wheat. However *jigi* is used more frequently for transporting grain than for ploughing. Almost all households of average economic position move grain from fields using *jigi* labour which involves preparing feasts that can easily be afforded after the harvest. People who join the same *jigi* are organized according to neighbourhood and kinship.

The third form of working group is called *ras simosh* or *dabo*. The fieldworker was told that this is rarely used nowadays. Ploughing and harvesting used be undertaken by *dabo* labour. Since the social distance between *dabo* labourers and the owner of the field was wide, it is said that feasts were very expensive and occasionally, labourers got drunk and became aggressive. If they were not satisfied with the prepared feast, they tended to harm the host by damaging his property. These factors seemed partially to contribute to the decline of *dabo* work. *Dabo* was not used during the last ploughing season in the village.

*Wonfel* is not a type of work group by itself. It is a reflection of reciprocal exchange of labour within a certain work group. There is *wonfel* (reciprocal exchange of labour) in *qabo* and *jigi* but this is absent in *dabo*.

Another kind of group labour that the fieldworker observed seems to be more frequent. Its size is smaller involving four to five persons together. Such group work has no local name and it is organized by one person who seeks the assistance of others who are related to him by networks of neighbourhood and kinship. The kind of assistance varies according to need. The fieldworker saw two such groups who pool their oxen and labour in order to cooperate in the task of ploughing chickpea fields. The organizer of the group has two oxen and a brother. He requests two of his neighbours to help him ploughing with their oxen and asks two oxen from another neighbour. The organizer brings lunch from his home for his assistants. The work is completed in two days. The second group is comprised of five persons who pool their oxen and labour to assist their neighbours. In both groups, the *wonfel* is not paid back rapidly. Such cooperation seems to fit Sahlins's category of generalized reciprocity because the assistance is reciprocated only if possible and necessary and if there is a demand for it in the future.

The majority of the villagers still rely on reciprocal exchanges of labour using various forms of work groups. Even though many households use hired labour, most of them do not use it exclusively.

Rather they utilize both group and hired labour. On average, the fieldworker did not think that hired labour covers a higher proportion of agricultural activities in the village than group labour. However, recently a few of the villagers seem to be relying more and more on their own resources and hired labour. In one case, a rich farmer hired forty labourers for loading and unloading grain into and out of a threshing-machine, whereas other farmers using this machine performed this task by *wonfel* last year.

Local people celebrate religious holidays and do not work on the 12th, 19th, 21st, 27th and 29th of each month.

### *Interlinkages*

Interlinkages are mechanisms by which oxen, land, labour and crops are circulated among needy villagers through exchange. The fieldworker found (noting that his records were limited) that those who are linked in these partnerships are tied by kinship, and neighbourhood as well as networks of relation and intimacy.

*Minda* is an arrangement by which oxen are exchanged for a plot or crop. One ox is exchanged for one *qarti* of farm land for a year, or for either 6 quintals of mixed of grain, or 3 quintals of white *tef*, a year. The varieties of crops exchanged for an ox are agreed upon between partners. In both cases, the ox remains throughout the year in the home of the person who provides the land or grain and feeds the animal. The fieldworker recorded nine example of *minda*. Seven of the farmers exchange one of their oxen. One *Kallu* exchanges 4 of his oxen and 1 farmer exchanges 2 oxen. Six oxen are loaned through *minda* to persons who are tied to the owners in networks of relationships. Four of these persons are in other PAs (three in Kallalla and one in Algey). In addition, 4 oxen are provided through *minda* to relatives. A further 2 are borrowed through *minda* by neighbours. In general, such deals are mostly, though not always, formalized by the signing of a contract by the two parties in the presence of two to three elders.

*Arso-arash* is a mutual deal that facilitates the exchange of labour for oxen and ploughing. This is a more flexible arrangement that can be terminated at any time, if one of the parties wants to. Signing of the partners is not important in *arso-arash*. A farmer who has no ox or only one ox can get ox/en from the owner in exchange for his labour. The *arso-arash* farmer must work in his field for three days while spending two days in the field of the owner of the ox/en. The number of ox/en in the deal does not make any difference to the proportion of labour divided between the *arso-arash* and owner of ox/en.

The two parties in an *arso-arash* arrangement have their own plot and each is responsible for seed, fertilizer and other inputs. Although the ox/en is/are used by the two partners forming the bond of *arso-arash*, the owner must feed the animal. Of the 8 *arso-arash* cases recorded, 5 are formed on the bases of neighbourhood whereas the remaining 3 are based on kinship. All of the *arso-arash* have no ox except 2 farmers who have only 1.

*Sisso* is an arrangement by which a farmer uses his labour, oxen and inputs on a plot taking two-thirds of the yield and leaving one-third for the owner of the land. The owner of the land contributes nothing to the agricultural activity. This deal can be conducted with or without the signing of the partners involved depending on their social distance. Of the limited cases of *sisso* the fieldworker observed, 9 were made by people linked in networks of relations and intimacy, 6 were based on kinship, and 2 on neighbourhood. The cases suggest that farmers give their plots for *sisso arash* if they have insufficient oxen. Thirteen of the farmers who contracted their plots for *sisso arash* had no ox and 2 farmers had one each.

Those who exchange their oxen for plots, crops, and labour are of a better economic standing in the village. Reciprocal arrangements of labour, land, oxen and crops seem to be very frequent. Informants also stress the widespread use of such mechanisms. The recent trend, however, reflects the growing preferences for *minda* and land renting instead of *arso-arash* and *sisso arash*. This is because rental income is better than the benefits derived from *sisso arash*. Also, farmers who cannot work their own land are inclined to choose renting out instead of *arso-arash*. The reason for this is that then they do not have to bear the expense of investing in their farm land.

## Technology

The following technologies are used in the community: biogas fuel production, a solar water pump, fertilizers, ploughs and a tractor. Transportation of grain to nearby markets is mainly carried out by pack animals. In Ada'a donkeys are the most common means of transportation, costing 1 *birr* per quintal for one day's service. Considerable borrowing of donkeys is practised between neighbours and kin groups to avoid transportation costs.

The farming technology of the village is dependent on the plough, draught-oxen, and family and group labour. There have been no significant changes in the basic farm technology. However, in recent years, new technologies have been introduced to the area, but they have only reached a portion of the villagers by virtue of their high cost.

Ploughing services using tractors are offered to those who can afford to hire them. Three bodies provide tractor services: the MoA Department of Agricultural Mechanization, the Service Cooperative of Ude and individual owners. The hiring cost of individual owners and the Department of Agricultural Mechanization is 200 *birr* per hectare. The tractor of Ude SC is hired for 180 *birr* per hectare. The fieldworker was told that about 12 persons utilized the ploughing service of the tractor last year. Nine of them are money-lenders, 1 is a grain merchant and the other 2 derive their income only from farming.

A threshing-machine is offered for hire by the Department of Agricultural Mechanization. The cost of the service is 150 *birr* for 20 quintals of *tef*. Twenty-eight people used the service last year. For other crops, the villagers use the traditional methods of harvesting, threshing and winnowing. However a threshing machine is also used for maize.

In the middle of 1988, sprayers were sold by Ude SC to the area at a unit price of 140 *birr* for those with a volume of 16 litres and 170 *birr* for those with a volume of 20 litres. At least 10 people have bought sprayers. The villagers use weedkillers and pesticides bought from the SC of Ude and from markets. Villagers hire sprayers from owners so as to spray chemicals in their fields. In order to spray 16 or 20 litres of chemicals 1 *birr* is paid if a farmer performs the task himself. If the owner of the sprayer does the job, 1.50 *birr* is paid. If the chemicals belong to the owner of the sprayer who is performing the task, 5 *birr* is paid.

Women use local technologies to process food. Most of the grains are separated from husks and dust. This is performed with the help of a circular flat tray made of a grass plant which is known as *gundo*. The chaff of wheat and barley is separated from the grain by beating it in a font-like carved wooden mortar (*moyee*) with a tall pestle. The height of the *moyee* is about one metre and it is thicker in the middle than a font. It can hold 1 kilo of grain at a time. The pestle (*boko tuma*) is about 1.5 metres long. After the grain has been beaten in the *moyee*, the chaff has to be separated by winnowing with the *gundo*. The spices for sauce (*wot*) are crushed in the *moyee* including pepper, onion, and garlic. Hops, malt or barley are also crushed to prepare local drinks. To prepare the flour made from pepper, peas, beans, which is necessary to make *wot*, the women use a mill. However, half the process of crushing beans and peas is carried out at home with grind-stones which are called *agga*. Wheatflour is sieved in a *gingilchaa*. This is made of grass and hemp fibre. Roasted barley and maize are turned into flour using grindstones to make the local beer. A flat iron pan, which has a semi-oval shape, is used to roast various grains. A smaller but similar kind of material (*elle sibilla*) is used to roast coffee which is then crushed in a mortar with a pestle.

To cook or prepare soup or other items of food, they use a vessel of pottery or iron called *dist*. To bake bread and *injera* (a pancake made from the flour of *tef*) they use a circular flat-shaped baked-clay (*mittad*) with a semi-circular lid made of plastered mud and dung. The *mittad* is usually put on a fire on three triangular stones forming a hearth. Coffee is boiled in a vase-like pot. A larger pot is used to boil grain. Kerosene as well as charcoal stoves are in use. Fuel is obtained from wood, kerosene, dung-cakes, and charcoal.

Milking is performed by hand. Water is fetched by women carrying big pots on their backs which contain a volume of about 15 litres. Sometimes a bucket is used to carry water. Women look after the garden crops and vegetation. They may dig the garden plot with pick-axes so as to soften the soil. They store *tef* flour for household consumption in a big pot or a barrel. They stock grain in a sack or barrel-

shaped container made of plastered dung and mud called a *gumbi*. Women prepare the threshing floor with plaster made of dung during the harvest. They spin cotton or make baskets during their spare time. Women chop wood with an axe for fuel if men are not home. They present food using plates and trays bought from the market. In addition, women make shelves for storing different household goods out of wood that is plastered with mud and dung. Similarly, they make chairs with backs and arms from wood that is plastered with mud and dung.

There are two types of storage containers for grain. One is made locally in the village by one man. He produces grain-stores made of wood and plastered with mud and dung. Many of the villagers buy these for 20 *birr*. A few rich farmers, on the other hand, use stores made of cement. They make a special compartment in one of their rooms with a width of 1.5 metres, a length of 3 metres and a height of 1 or 2.5 metres. The inside part of this compartment is plastered with cement. Farmers estimate that a cemented store costs about 100 *birr*.

Crops are stored in sacks or *gumbi* in many houses. According to the estimates of villagers, 2.5 per cent of grain is wasted during storage. Food is transported to stores by pack animals. According to farmers' estimates, about 5% of grain is lost in the process of moving it from field to storage. Wood can be transported either by people or donkeys. There are no carts. Vehicle transport is available from the village to Debre Zeit or Mojo at a price of 1 *birr*. It takes an hour to walk either to Mojo or Debre Zeit.

### *Innovations*

Biogas technology was introduced by FAO in 1992 due to the shortage of fuelwood. The gas, which is produced from cow manure, can be used for household heating and cooking instead of firewood. After rotting, the manure can also be put on the fields. The technology is only somewhat successful since it is not seen to be very efficient. As a result it has not been taken up by many others in the community, although it does address the problem of the shortage of firewood to some extent.

The Ministry of Agriculture introduced fertilizers in 1977 as the land was losing fertility. Their use has been very successful and most of the community now uses them. The productivity of crops has been increased by the use of fertilisers.

Tractors make ploughing much easier than using an ox-drawn plough and hoe. They were first introduced to the community in 1987. The tractor is seen as a great possible benefit but it is not economical. More people would use tractors if it were cheaper.

The solar pump generates energy to pump clean water from the ground. It was introduced in 1989 by the Ministry of Agriculture and State Farm Administration in order to bring clean water to the people. It is a highly complex technology that needs special materials and so it is not possible to copy.

In 1992, a team of rural women and home economics workers from the Ministry of Agriculture organized two groups of women to look after donated chickens. The women were free to choose their partners in the groups. Two groups (1 with 8 members and the other with 7) were formed and 18 improved species chickens were donated. Members of each group came together on the basis of kinship and neighbourhood. The project did not work because not all group members took their turns in looking after the chickens. Consequently, both groups were disbanded and the fowls were divided among the members. These chickens can now be observed in several of the homesteads in the village. Thus, although there are not large poultry farming activities, there are a considerable number of improved chickens kept largely for household consumption, and to a lesser extent for the market. There is one man who practices poultry-farming on a larger scale using coop-hens.

*Ato Maru*, the grain merchant, has dug a well to be used by him and villagers free of charge. This water can be used for watering livestock. For the guard of the solar hand pump, all villagers pay 0.75 cents each month.

The DA, *Ato Kasahun*, considers the following as ones always ready to experiment with new innovations.

- |                                  |                             |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. <i>Ato</i> Asfaw Teshome      | 7. <i>Ato</i> Worku Demmise |
| 2. <i>Ato</i> Dinege Telila      | 8. <i>Ato</i> Belachew Tena |
| 3. <i>Ato</i> Kefeni Birmeji     | 9. <i>Ato</i> Lemma Wodajo  |
| 4. <i>W/ro</i> Tirunesh Mihirete | 10. <i>Ato</i> Seyfu Desta  |
| 5. <i>Ato</i> Girma Shibiru      | 11. <i>Ato</i> Sisay Gebru  |
| 6. <i>Ato</i> Shegena Gebiru     | 12. <i>Ato</i> Shibiru Kaba |

### *Common Property Resources*

The water supply is open to all. The community shop, and the windmills are communal for members of the PA. There is now no communal grazing land according to one informant. Animals are fed on private land or straw. Some people in the area used to take their livestock to another PA for grazing but that has now stopped due to theft.

When Sirba and Godeti PA was formed in 1984, it had an area of about 25 *gasha*. However its size has shrunk to about 12 *gasha* because of several factors. *Gafat* Ammunition Factory used some of land from Kallalla PA for its compound and buildings. Following a complaint from Kallalla PA the administration office of Debre Zeit ordered the removal of about 9½ *gasha* of land from Sirba. All the residents of the 9½ *gasha*, except land users of Basha Newte and *W/ro* Ayelech, transferred from Sirba to Kallalla PA. The villagers count the reduced land by the name of earlier landlords as shown below.

1. One *gasha* of *Ato* Asrat
2. One *gasha* of *Ato* Zeleke Belayneh
3. One *gasha* of *Ato* G/Yes Astatikke
4. One *gasha* of *Ato* Lemma Metekiya
5. One *gasha* of *Ato* Demmo Kallacha
6. One *gasha* of *Ato* Ashenafi Sori
7. One *gasha* of *W/ro* Atsede W/ Agengehu
8. One *gasha* of *Ato* Mengesha
9. Half *gasha* of *W/ro* Ayelech
10. Half *gasha* of *Ato* Gebru
11. Half *gasha* of Basha Newte

Another portion of land was transferred to Ude PA to compensate for the area utilized for construction of service cooperatives there. All the users of the confiscated land were given other plots in Sirba and Godeti. The holders of transferred plots in the pre-revolutionary period were *Ato* Taddese Bogale (10 ha), Shambel Dinku (10 ha) and *W/ro* Kemso Jima (10 ha). The Algey PA claims 20 ha of Sirba land that was in its boundary and the authorities ordered this to be taken from Sirba. The plots were named after the holders of the pre-revolutionary period as 10 ha of *W/ro* Simenge and the same size of *Ato* Tesemma. Users of these plots were compensated with plots from Sirba. Finally, 40 ha of land was reduced from Sirba's share so that the Highway Authority could construct its camp site. Before 1975, these pieces of land were owned by *W/ro* Tsige (10 ha), *Ato* Assefa Abebe (10 ha) and *Ato* Taye (20 ha). As in the other cases, users of these plots were compensated from Sirba.

One observer said that there is a shortage of land in the area which affects younger farmers. To solve this the Farmers' Associations are redistributing land. Another said there is a serious shortage of land because of returnees from the war. After returning they got married and claimed land, which is already short. A third said that there is no land shortage; there are people with a great number of *kert* and people with no land. The people would like land to be distributed evenly.

### *Environment*

If the whole district of Ada'a is considered, there are differences in the kinds of crop sown in different areas. In the mountain zones of Ada'a (Yerer and Zukala) we usually find Ethiopian cabbage, hops, and

pepper growing on steep slopes. Yerer mountain has been taken as a government controlled forest site. The forests of Mount Zukala belong to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The villagers distinguish three types of soils shown here in their order of fertility: *koticha* (black clay soil), *gonbore* (light red soil) and *tcheri* which is considered to be the poorest. White *tef* is mainly grown in highland areas and red *tef* is dominant in the Rift Valley areas. *Gonbore* is planted one to two months earlier than the *koticha* soils because of better drainage. Maize and barley are more widespread in the southern area than the highlands. Wheat is mainly found in the highlands and is not grown in the Rift Valley.

During the highly concentrated rainy season the black soils do not give high yields; the red soils are much more productive. The soils are quite varied in their fertility.

The danger of water erosion is not felt strongly by the villagers because most of the Sirba land is on a wide plain. However those who till land in marshy areas practice terrace farming and construct dykes to mitigate the impact of water erosion on their plots.

Trees cover roughly  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the area. The tree cover has declined from previous times. About 30 years ago, there were plots which were entirely covered with trees. Though the figure of the DA shows 6 ha of forest land in Sirba, there is not one plot which is completely covered with trees. There are scattered planted trees in the compounds of many households. The villagers ascribe the disappearance of tree cover in the area to the expansion of farm land and the consumption of wood for fuel.

Villagers are aware that the fertility of the land has declined. To improve fertility they use fertilizers and crop rotation rather than dung, which is mainly reserved for fuel. The quantity of fertilizer used by the majority of the villagers is, however, below the standard set by Ministry of Agriculture. They use 3 *quna* (15 kg) of Dap and one *quna* of Urea for one *qarti* of land whereas the standard recommended by the MoA is 25 kg of Dap and 12.5 kg of Urea for one *qarti* of land. Very recently, a new method of using fertilizer has been developed. Farmers mix wheat seeds and Dap in a container and sprinkle water into them. They rub the mixture with their hands so that the seeds and Dap become glued together. Then they sow the mixture in their fields. In this way, they use 2 *quna* (10 kg) of Dap and 1 *quna* of (5 kg) of Urea for one *qarti*. Those who practise this method say that the yield of their fields is not less than that obtained by those using 3 *quna* of Dap.

## 4. Off-Farm Activities

### *Within the Community*

Some men complement their income by selling wood. Usually, they bring the wood from far-away places, but some also cut their own trees. A few men prepare charcoal for sale. Others participate in trade, ranging from grain sales to smaller items such as fresh beans. The fieldworker understands that at least two people, apart from *Ato Maru*, buy smaller quantities of grain from several farmers, store it, and supply it to markets in Addis Ababa during the harvest season. Women actively participate in petty trade selling eggs, dung-cakes, straw, smaller quantities of various types of grain and so on. If women want to spend the income on themselves they must consult their husbands, otherwise they spend it on household consumption.

The following occupations are found in Sirba and are performed as part-time activities in addition to farming.

Grain Storage: One man makes granaries from wood and plastered mud and dung called *gotera*.

Carpenter: One carpenter lives in the village.

Mud-plastering: Two men provide plastering mixtures of mud and straw for newly constructed houses.

Tree cutting: Two men are engaged in cutting trees.

Drinking-houses: There are a lot of local drinking houses (*tella* and *areke*) run by women. There is one mead (*tej*) house owned by a woman.

Guarding: 1. There is one person who is employed to keep water pumps.

2. There are about 10 men working in Gafat Ammunition Factory and Highway Camp.

Carriers: There are three men who are hired to carry grain by *Ato Maru*.  
There are a number of teachers and other civil servants living in the village.

### *Migration*

No one migrates from Sirba to perform seasonal activities, except for a few days in Debre Zeit and Addis Ababa for trading or maintaining social networks. A few people have established permanent residence in Debre Zeit and work in the town and/or own shops. These people often visit relatives in their home village.

## 5. Reproductive Activity

### *Household Management*

According to a male fieldworker the main tasks of women include:

- Keeping rooms clean and tidy and organizing domestic tasks
- Collecting, preparing and storing dung-cakes
- Cleaning activities
- Fetching water
- Chopping wood if men are not home
- Controlling daily consumption of wood
- Milking cows
- Looking after calves and cows in the homestead
- Taking care of garden crops and vegetation
- Grinding grain with grind-stones
- Going to mill houses
- Shopping in nearby weekly markets and so on.

Women are engaged the whole day in carrying out these tasks. In an average household, they are estimated to take between 10 and 12 hours a day.

This list does not include child-rearing and care or caring for other dependents (sick and old).

### *Fuel and Lighting*

In almost all houses, they use kerosene lamps (*kuraz*) for lighting. Two houses use lanterns for lighting whereas 3 households use biogas for fuel and lighting. Wood and dung-cakes account for most of the required fuel for cooking. To get wood they have to walk for more than 3 hours. None of the villagers need heating which can easily be produced using charcoal stoves.

### *Water*

There is a constant and steady supply of water for the community. There are two hand pumps and a solar pump in the community. The first hand pump is a 5 minute walk, the solar pump a 20 minute walk, and the second hand pump a 60 minute walk from the centre of town. Each household in the village has contributed 2 *birr* to the Debre Zeit branch of the Water Resource Authority to repair the two hand pumps.

There has been a problem with phosphorus in the water, so people have had to go to Kallalla and Daletchs PA to get drinking water.

### *Sanitation*

During the villagization programme, every household had to prepare latrines. This practice has not been maintained by villagers who have abandoned many of the nearly completed latrines after the heyday of that programme. Apart from narrowing their garden space, latrines are considered to be expensive, taking into account the replacement of old ones. One respondent said that at the moment, only 10 latrines are used in the village. Another said there were none in the village.

### *Fertility*

Infertile women or men can adopt a child through an institution called *gudifecha*. The adoptive couple, accompanied by elders, go to the family from which they intend to take a child. They stay outside begging for a child. The request of the adoptive couple is presented to the child's family through elders. Such a request is not likely to be turned down. However the matter may be suspended for three days. Rejection of elders' request is deemed to result in fatal consequences for all the members of the child's family. So the family says if we are giving a child to the earth (death), why not give to a couple who are in need of a child. After the permission of the family has been given, the child will be taken by the adoptive family. In former times, the adoptive family had to prepare a feast to acknowledge the adoption and give 2 oxen, a cow with a calf, a thick garment to the father, and a garment and dress to the mother of the child. Visits between the two families were not frequent so that the adopted child should not be aware of his consanguinal parents. If the adopted child was returned to his consanguinal parents, he would be cursed. The fieldworker understands that this institution is still present in the area. However gifts are not as expensive as before. Gifts are negotiated and settled between the two concerned families through the mediation of elders. In general, it seems that cursing and respect accorded to elders are the most important sanctions that maintain and regulate the institution of *gudifecha* in the area.

The treatment for infertility of men and women is mostly traditional. Of course, some infertile couples go to Addis Ababa or Debre Zeit to obtain the advice of a physician. However many infertile couples present their problem to the *Ayana* cult through the intermediary of the *Kallu* (ritual leader) so that their problem will be solved. If the hope of getting a child is realised, the couple reciprocates the supernatural offer of *Ayana* with offerings according to their vows, submitting them to the *Kallu*. A few women from the village attend a birth control programme in Debre Zeit.

### *Childbirth and Childcare*

During pregnancy, if a woman feels seriously sick, she will visit a physician in Debre Zeit. She is expected to stay at home doing lighter tasks and abandoning heavier ones, including agricultural activities, five months after conception. Neighbours and relatives might help in fetching water and sometimes other heavier tasks. Those who have a son or daughter are relieved of heavier duties sooner than those who do not have.

After childbirth, women are expected to rest for 1 month. Depending on the external relationships of the household, childbearing women receive gifts of food from kin groups and neighbours. While staying in bed, the woman is expected to be provided with good care by her husband, especially better food (meat, soup, ritual porridge and other items). The household management of a mother is taken over by a woman who is related to the a couple by kinship or is a neighbour. Women usually give birth at home, helped by traditional birth attendants. The degree of care accorded during pregnancy and childbirth is dependent on the economic status of the household. Poor women are not provided with good care, by the standards of the village, if they do not have children or sisters. Even if they have children to perform household tasks, they may not be fed as well as rich women. The care provided to women during pregnancy and childbirth is ensured by the institution of gifts which dictates reciprocal exchange of food among households linked by networks of kinship, friendship and neighbourhood.

## *Socialization*

Men who are admired in the community should be brave, hardworking, skilled in argument, good with their hands, independent and obedient. People acquire these qualities from their families, their surroundings and neighbours. The best way to teach boys these qualities is through good example.

The following traits are undesirable in men and boys: thieving, drunkenness and gossiping. Literacy and numeracy are considered important by men. Men who are good organizers and who help to settle disputes in the community are well respected.

The qualities which are most highly regarded in women are good behaviour and hard work. Women believe people are born with these traits. To develop these traits in girls you must ensure that they have almost no connection with boys, teach them housework, give them advice and if they are ready for school then control them. It is important to restrict the places they go. Wives should be willing to try businesses to fulfil the household needs..

Women's technical skills that are most respected are basket making, spinning and knitting.

The local concept of intelligence emphasizes memory. This includes remembering the names of people who are not frequently met, memorizing stories, remembering a path that led to a certain house, remembering orders of parents that are to be carried out after two days and so on. If a boy is good enough to remember stories, events and tasks, he will be deemed intelligent.

## *Education*

The nearest primary and junior school is at Denkaka which is 2 kms from the site. There are around 410 children at the school in years 1-6 and 161 in years 7 and 8. There are 21 teachers. In the primary part of the school there are shortages of classrooms (13), tables (114), chairs (112), blackboards (9); and chalk, pencils/pens, paper, and radios. There is no shortage of school books but they have no reference books. In grades 7 and 8 there is a shortage of everything. School fees are 10 *birr* a year to be paid at the beginning of the year. There are no scholarships and no academic requirements for entry. The main problems faced by the school are shortages of classrooms water and stationery and books and problems with water supply.

A group of men reported that at school children learn academic subjects as well as woodwork. Everything is taught in Oromiffa. At church they learn religious teachings. Education is considered to be useful for being a better farmer and in preventing delinquency. It also makes earning a living in other ways easier. The amount of education is seen as directly proportional to the ease of earning an income off the farm, ie the more education the easier it is to make an income.

A group of men said that 50% of boys in the community are at primary school and 25% at secondary school. There are also boys who leave school when they reach 10th or 11th grade. It is considered that literacy and numeracy are not so important for girls. However, education is still useful for being a good farmer's wife. But the length of education does not matter. A group of women said that 50% of girls in the community are at primary school and 20% are at secondary school.

The criteria for the selection of children for school is not clear. It seems that those children who are primarily oriented to, and good at, agricultural activities and household duties might not be sent to school. Other children are sent to school after the family obtains the required family labour. However, all children of rich families go to school while none of those of poor families do. Some families point out that children who do not like to go school are allowed to stay in the village rendering agricultural services. There are about 20 school leavers and drop-outs ranging from 2nd to 12th grades. Most of them participate in agricultural activities by receiving small plots from their families, through interlinkages, and renting of land. Five students of Sirba have joined various colleges. One of them has returned to the village to take over agricultural duties as head of a household. The remaining four are employed by different government offices working outside their home village.

## Health

The nearest health clinic, hospital, doctor, modern midwife and pharmacy are all in Debre Zeit which is 15 km from the PA. It costs 1.80 *birr* for transport. The nearest maternity clinic is in Addis Ababa, a distance of 60 km at a cost of 5.25 *birr*. The initial consultation at the clinic, hospital and doctor is 1 *birr*. There are four traditional doctors in the village and three *kallu*. These are described below under local services.

The clinic has a full-time doctor and nurse; it is open 40 hours a week. The hospital is open all the time for emergency cases. Both clinic and hospital have an irregular supply of antibiotics, and a regular supply of malaria drugs. Polio and measles vaccines are available at the clinic. One normal course of malaria treatment costs 1.20 *birr*. Both clinic and hospital have equipment to sterilise needles and cooling storage (without backup). The clinic does not have a minimum supply of bandages and compresses, but the hospital does. Both have a minimum supply of sterile needles and syringes. The illnesses most frequently seen at the clinic are: TB, AIDS, diarrhoea, malnutrition, and other respiratory illnesses. Those most frequently seen at the hospital are TB, AIDS, diarrhoea, cancer and accidents.

A group of men ranked diseases in the community in order of severity as follows: malaria, pneumonia, *moyale* (the Amhara version), influenza and measles. They described the following beliefs about causes, and practices of prevention and treatment.

Malaria often attacks children who have eaten very young maize and adults when they have had the disease previously. Preventive activities include telling children not to eat young maize. Traditionally the victim is isolated and given parsley, lemon, and *ferto* as medicine. If this does not cure it they go to Debre Zeit for medical treatment (in about 75% of cases).

Pneumonia is due to getting cold while your body is sweating. No-one tries prevent it; there is nothing to be done about cold. Treatment includes swallowing a raw egg yolk, *areki*, and if necessary medical treatment in hospitals. In about 25% of cases traditional medicine is used, in about 25% of cases the patient goes to hospital, while the other cases are taken to the health clinic.

*Moyale* is caused by dirty surroundings: dust is a host. Prevention involves mixing DDT with cow dung and using this to clean the surroundings. A needle is used to pull out the *moyale* and it is burned in order to stop the disease from spreading. They use butter for children to make it easy to pull it out. There is no non-traditional treatment.

Influenza comes in the rainy season and is caused by a bad smell. As it is a communicable disease people do not use the same utensils as the one who has it. Traditionally influenza is treated with eucalyptus and hot drinks. People rarely go to hospital with influenza.

They do not know what causes measles: it is just a communicable disease. Prevention can be achieved by vaccination like for the 6 major baby-killer diseases. Patients are isolated and sometimes taken to the health clinic (about 20% of cases) or the hospital (about 5%). They use things that have a good smell.

A group of women ranked diseases as: malaria, measles, influenza and colds, eye disease, emergency (unknown), gastritis, pneumonia, and "mild measles".

Malaria is caused by the weather and there is no prevention but control with the consumption of proper food. They treat it using traditional and modern medicine.

Measles is transmitted from patient to patient and can be prevented by vaccination. Treatment is 90% traditional (white-leaved eucalyptus and other leaves) and 10% hospital.

Influenza and colds are caused by bad smells. There is no prevention and treatment is 75% traditional.

Eye trouble is caused by smoke from cooking and windy and dusty air. There is no prevention and they seek traditional or modern medical treatment.

The case of "emergency" illness is unspecified but is due to the change of temperature. There is no prevention and primarily traditional treatment is sought.

A group of women listed and ranked the following five children's diseases from most to least serious: diarrhoea, vomiting, malaria, pneumonia and measles.

The women said that diarrhoea is caused by the poor condition of food and water. Prevention is the eating of black *tef* pancakes with oil. Treatment is sometimes sought at the hospital though some traditional medicines are used.

No cause or prevention was known for vomiting and treatment is traditional and sometimes obtained from the hospital.

The women said that eating vegetables such as sugarcane or sorghum stalk and stagnant water was the cause of malaria. There is no prevention and treatment is found at the hospital.

Pneumonia occurs mainly during the rainy season (winter) and the prevention is the traditional plant medicine of cut leaves and squash juice applied to the body and taken internally. Once contracted treatment is either traditional or sought in the hospital.

In the case of measles no cause was named and vaccination was the named prevention. One traditional treatment to speed the recovery of the victim is to have them smell different things such as lemon, coffee, grass and perfume.

There seem never to have been any incidents of epidemics in Sirba and Godeti.

## 6. Consumption

### *Food and Other Day to Day Goods*

Cereals and pulses contribute 83.3% of total calories per day. For the majority of the villagers, there does not seem to be any emergency crop which is reserved for future use. Of course those farmers with a good economic standing have reserves of crops. Likewise there is no wild food because almost all forest lands have now been cleared due to the expansion of farm land. In Sirba, famine (except for the crop failure of 1963) has not occurred within living memory.

Since there are differences of income and economic standing, all villagers do not eat the same kind of food. In particular, differences in the type of food consumed are marked by livestock products. Meat, eggs, milk, and so on are more frequently consumed by rich farmers than poor ones.

As a staple food, *budenna (injera)* which is a pancake made from *tef* flour, is commonly eaten with *wat* (a boiled sauce made out of the mixture of water, pepper, onions, oil and spices) on a daily basis in the village. In different households, various eating habits are practised. In some households a husband and a wife are served first and children eat after their parents. In others, parents eat together with their children (except small children) from the same plate. However if a chicken *wat* is prepared, it is usually the parents who are served first in most households. Children eat *wat* of chicken if there is any left by their parents. Otherwise they eat different food. Of course, at times of peak agricultural activities, children and the wife may be served first because household heads and adult children might be late for lunch, or a plate might be sent to them in the field. In most cases, members of a household eat from the same plate. Of course, if there are guests, parents eat with them while children eat from a separate plate. Lower quality food is always provided for hired labourers on a separate plate.

### *Saving and Investment*

The motive for using smaller quantities of fertilizer is to save some for the next agricultural season. Many farmers also try to save seeds for the next planting period, particularly the seeds of white *tef* are reserved for the next planting season. If a farmer obtains a good yield of white *tef*, he will sell a portion of it and save some for seed. Usually, white *tef* is not consumed in the household. The majority of the farmers are, however, not capable of saving seed for the next season. Hence, their option is usually to borrow money or seed from the rich and invest it.

### *Housing*

Houses of wealthy farmers are bigger, and the largest house in the village has six rooms. Many of the

larger houses have 3 to 4 rooms. In Sirba, 64 houses have tin roofs whereas 114 have thatched roofs. According to the rough estimation of the farmers, the construction of a thatched-roof cottage costs from 500 to 1,000 *birr* depending on the size. On the other hand, a tin-roofed house, if it is circular with 30 sheets, costs 1,300 *birr*. If it is L-shaped and covered with 48 tins, the house may cost 2,000 *birr*. Thatched-roof houses last for 20 years while tin-roofed ones last for 45 years.

### *Household Assets*

In a poor home, we find

- A platform constructed from stones and mud and plastered with dung to form a bed.
- Sacks or hides of animals for mattresses
- Worn out and old blankets
- A platform is used as a chair during day times
- Vessels of pottery
- Bigger pots called *ubbo* to store grain flour and to fetch water
- Vase-like pottery with a few old cups for coffee
- An *elle* which is circular flat-shaped baked-clay plate with semi-circled lid made of mud and plastered dung called *gonbisa* used to prepare *injera*.
- Tin-cans to drink water or other drinks
- Grinding-stones called *agga*
- Old and corrugated trays and plates from which food is eaten.
- A charcoal stove
- A gas lamp
- The kitchen is inside the home
- Various bottles and tin cans to store oil, spices, salt and so on.

In the home of wealthy persons, we find

- A radio and tape recorders
- Chairs, stools, tables and benches
- Beds made either of iron or wood with mattresses, sheets and blankets
- Several vessels made of pottery and iron
- A bigger granary made of wood and mud as well as a storage bin made of cement
- The staple food (*budenna*) is prepared with *elle* similar to the one above
- Tin-cans, glasses and bottles to drink water or other duties
- Bigger pots, jerricans, buckets to fetch water
- A barrel to store grain flour
- Grinding-stones and different sizes of pestle and mortars
- Trays, and plates made of iron and plastic
- A gas lamp
- A kerosene and charcoal stove
- A vase-like pot to boil coffee, a kettle and several cups
- A cupboard and boxes

### *Local Services*

There are 5 shops in the village. They normally sell kerosene, matches, soap, incense, salt, sugar, coffee, cooking-oil, cigarettes, biscuits, sweets, ointment for hair and skin, blades, pencils, tea leaves, soft drinks, incense sticks, pins and soap-powder.

The nearest drug-shops to Sirba are those found in Debre Zeit and Mojo. The community prefers to go to Debre Zeit. According to the villagers, the extension agent visits them sometimes, making contact

with a few farmers. The extension agent says that he is working in the village by applying the technique of contact farmers. Three *kallu* are living in the village. But, due to the hierarchical nature of *Ayana*, the three ritual officials seem to be possessed by less powerful *Ayana* and have lesser influence as compared to others found in neighbouring PAs of Kumbursa and Kallalla.

There are 4 traditional doctors in the village. Two men give bone-setting services free of charge. One man has specializing in pulling out internal parasites from the inside part of the ear charging from 100 to 200 *birr*. He is so famous that patients come to visit him even from Addis Ababa. One woman renders traditional treatment using herbs both for humans and animals. For a single dose that may be sufficient to cure a disease, she charges 1 *birr*. Three traditional birth attendants (all women) are available in the village. One of them took part in some training of modern birth attendance techniques in Debre Zeit. She charges 10 *birr* for her services. The other two (one is too old now) have not received modern training and render their services free of charge. There is one private mill in the village that has not been functioning for more than a year. Villagers go to Ude to grind their grain.

Various services are given by mobile specialists coming from Debre Zeit. These people are skilled in carving and make stools and *moye* (mortar) from wood. During their working period, they are provided with food and shelter by clients. To carve a stool from wood, they charge 8 *birr* while 16 is paid to make *moye*. Others also render the services of mending bigger pots and other products of pottery, broken umbrellas, pierced iron vessels and water containers. These people can finish these tasks so quickly that they do not need provisions as above. The payment for these services varies depending on the extent of the damage. On average, the cost of the services is from 3 to 5 *birr*.

## 7. Local institutions and organizations

### *Households*

The closest word to define household seems to be *mattii* which means family and children depending on the context of usage. Some say *beetasabba* (family) but it is a word borrowed from Amharic. *Mattii* indicates a family formed on the basis of consanguinal relationships. It covers a range of meanings relating to living, eating and farming together. The term implies sharing a household budget. However, living, eating, farming together as well as sharing a household budget cannot by themselves define *mattii*, since it is possible to share one's home with a hired labourer who is not a member of the *mattii*. On the other hand, relatives can eat and farm together and share a household budget through feasts or gifts but not live under the same roof.

### *Marriage*

On the marriage of a son the parents should provide a pair of oxen so that the son can establish his family. There is no strict rule beyond this. Any further provision depends on the goodwill of the parents. Upon the marriage of a daughter the parents should buy clothes and slaughter a cow or ox for the wedding ceremony. There is nothing special given except this. Other kin may provide assistance to the new family, but not for the marriage as such.

The new couple usually live in the same compound as the bridegroom's family. It is never the case that they move in with the bride's family. There are no gifts for subsequent marriages.

Widows usually remarry. If not they often specialize in making local alcoholic drinks for sale.

If we contrast current marriages with those of forty years ago, it is possible to discern modifications and changing patterns of marriage practices of Sirba. The shift seems to be from polygyny to monogamy, from the selection of brides for sons by fathers to an agreement between the would-be couple, the dropping of bridewealth, increasing frequency of divorce, and greater share by a wife of household items on the occasion of divorce.

Forty years ago the father, as head of household, had the right to select a bride for his son. The matter was with between the two households because the selection involved not only a wife, but also a

household from an appropriate social category (excluding caste groups of crafts) with which strong political, economic and social bonds could be established. After the selection, a father sent elders to the bride's household. At this meeting, the date for delivering the bridewealth and the wedding was decided. If the bridegroom's household was not ready to pay bridewealth, the payment, after negotiations, was postponed to a day when the bridegroom gave a feast for the *Gada* ceremony. According to the *Seerra* (customary law of Oromo) of the area, a person who did not pay bridewealth was obliged to fulfil this obligations during the time of preparing the *Gada* feast. The following bridewealth was, during their minor feast, given to bride's family and her relatives through the mediation of elders: six oxen to the wife's eldest brother, a thick garment for her father, a garment and a dress for her mother and a cotton-made belt for the brother of the bride's mother.

The elders say that a wife's brother took either all or half of the oxen as he wished. The *Seerra* of the village did not stipulate the repayment of bridewealth by the bride's group if divorce occurred. In addition, the bridegroom presented gifts of cloth, shoes, cosmetics, silver/gold rings and other items to the bride.

During the preparation for the wedding day, a number of gifts were presented to a bride, a groom, and their families from kin groups, neighbours and friends. On the wedding day, the bridegroom, accompanied by elders, his bestmen and friends went to the bride's home. He was then received with colourful songs and dances.

The most important aspect of the ceremony was the benediction pronounced by elders, fathers and mothers and relatives of the bride and bridegroom. The benediction included moral pronouncements that are deemed to strengthen the conjugal bond and the forbidding of malicious behaviour. After blessings, the feast would be served, followed by the departure of the bride to the groom's home where she resided. Similar procedures of benedictions and feasting would be undertaken there. On the next day, elders declared the virginity and virtue of the bride in the home of the bride's family.

It is difficult to estimate the cost of a wedding feast. For one thing, different families prepared feasts of different scales depending on their economic standing. For another, the elders estimated the cost of weddings in terms of the food items and the materials spent on the wedding, rather than money. The fieldworker was told that the larger feasts were organized by preparing the following main items: 50 *gann* of local beer, one or more jerricans of *areqe*, two oxen, 3 or more fattened sheep or goats and so on. However poor families prepared 4 *gann* of local beer, a sheep and chickens. Weddings were, and still are, arranged after the harvest.

Since polygynous marriage was common (and is still being practised to a smaller extent) there was not much change in the procedures between first and second marriages. However, the magnitude of the feast was much less for later marriages. Men who could not afford the wedding feast, kidnapped a wife. If the matter was not resolved by elders, this could cause conflicts between the kin groups of the two households. If a settlement was reached, the household of the bride prepared a feast to mark and formalize the marriage bond between the concerned households. The size of the feast varied depending on economic status. It was the bridegroom's family and relatives that stood by the new couple in helping them to establish the patrilocal home by supplying land, a house, and household items.

In older times, taking into account the wide rift between the rich and the poor, marriage was isogamous (marriage among households with equal status). Informants stress that a poor family could not establish affinal ties with that of the landlords. However, ethnic differences were not a determining factor in selecting a wife, if the two households had equal economic status. Nevertheless, caste groups were, and still are endogamous, and marriage with them was, and still is, prohibited. Oromo clans were not exogamous 40 years ago. They say that if two households were not linked by blood to the depth of seven generations, marriage could, and can still be, made between them. Marriage was, and still seems to be, a transfer of reproductive rights from the bride's group to that of the bridegroom. There was, and still is, the practice of levirate marriage. If the groom dies his elder brother had, and has, the right to marry the bride.

In the present context, patterns of marriage have been modified. Selection of partners is mostly completed by the would-be couple. But parents still can interfere or reject the choice if it is made from an inappropriate group (castes). In Sirba, there are no caste groups but they are found in neighbouring

Kallala PA and marriage can occur between households in different PAs. As in older times, elders are still important in mediating and formalizing marriage contracts. Nowadays, bridewealth is not accorded to the bride's group except for gifts of clothes, shoes, a silver or gold ring, cosmetics and so on that are provided by the bridegroom to the bride. Though marriage is still patrilocal and the major conjugal support (land, oxen, and others) is provided by families and relatives of the groom's group, the bride's group is now expected to support the new couple by providing the household items it can afford. Regarding feasts, informants claim that there has not been much change. Feasts are as big as they were and depend on economic status. Marriage is now formalized by the signature of the couple and witnesses in the presence of elders. Like civil marriage in towns, the content of the agreement stipulates that the couple own equal shares of the household items and livestock that they accumulate in the course of their marriage. The frequency of polygyny has been declining. Villagers say that it is difficult to manage two or more families given the meagre level of subsistence. Polygyny is still practised by a few rich farmers. Differences of economic status are not as marked as before so that this does not prohibit affinal ties between two households which are relatively differentiated in their economic stand. Likewise, ethnic differences do not hinder intermixing of households through marriage.

### *Divorce*

In the case of divorce the marriage gifts are divided equally between spouses. The children choose their own place to live, but they usually move from one parent to the other. Divorce seemed to be less frequent forty years ago. Bridewealth, stronger authority of elders, benedictions and cursing and other social factors had a substantial influence in maintaining the marriage bond. It is said that divorce was the most hateful course of action to be pursued in the past. If one of the couple sued for divorce, he or she presented grievances of malicious acts to the elders who might accept or reject the allegation. Adultery was an accepted reason for divorce. Otherwise neither of the couple was capable of fleeing or ending the wedlock of their own will. If one of them broke the marriage bond, it was believed that he or she would be afflicted by the cursing of elders, who could make an end to the marriage bond after pronouncing benedictions. When divorce was formalized by elders, children and the larger part of the couple's property belonged to the husband. Usually, the ex-wife would be given only one cow. After this formal act, the divorced couple would be free to lead their lives separately.

Currently, divorce seems to be more frequent than forty years ago. According to the villagers factors that cause divorce are the poor economic status of a household, adultery, drunken behaviour etc. Unlike in the past, elders cannot strongly influence couples to maintain the marriage bond. If one of the couple wants to break the marriage bond, he or she presents the matter to the elders and they ratify the divorce formally by tearing up the marriage contract. The couple divides household items and livestock between them equally except for the land which stays with the husband. Children are also taken into account when dividing property, (especially, if it is known with whom they are going to live). If they are not too small, it is said that children will choose their place of residence after divorce. Often, the house will be the property of the husband.

### *Inheritance*

Rules of inheritance reflect patrilineal descent which entitles males of a household to property rights. Patrilocal residence makes wives members of a new household. Married women have no rights to claim their father's home, land, livestock and other belongings. If a head of a household is dead, and if all of his children are not married, all of them have rights to share the property of household. Daughters abandon their share of household property after marriage. In a household where parents are dead, the eldest son is responsible for controlling and administering the household property. But if sons form their own households, they have rights to a share of the land of their father. If widows do not remarry, they may maintain control of the household property including land. They farm the land using family labour, if they have children, otherwise they may hire a labourer or become involved in different contractual arrangements as appropriate. If widows enter into a second marriage in their first husband's

house, the administration of the land will rest in the hands of the new husband. If there are children from the first marriage, their rights to property will be recognized. If a widow leaves the home of the first husband for a second marriage, she may not claim property rights from the first husband's property that will be given to children of the first marriage. If illegitimate children are introduced to their parent families, before the death of parents, their right of inheritance will be acknowledged and recognized according to the above values of property right.

Children receive inheritance depending on the placement of the children. The eldest (male child) takes a larger portion because he is considered the new head of the family. He is then be responsible for providing resources for the younger members of the family.

### *Kinship*

It is difficult to depict all kinship relations within this short observation. The social obligation of kinship involves the strict observance of rituals. Kin groups are also expected to help in the preparation and coordination of feasts. Kinship norms include establishing harmonious and peaceful relationships, observing the incest taboo, and avoiding conflicts among themselves. Kin groups are expected to form alliances and share a sense of brotherhood. Kin groups are strongly expected to share in the sorrow and happiness of their relatives.

In the economic sphere, wider ranges of obligations are prescribed by kinship norms. Dyadic exchanges of materials through gifts on different occasions is one of the frequent and common features of kinship. Important economic resources of the village, such as land and livestock, circulate within the confines of kinship circles. More often than not, a household supports a newly married son by providing a certain portion of land and, if economically possible, oxen. Above all, the main labour force in the village is that of a family. Relatives are expected to help each other by combining the labour force of their households. Reciprocity of labour among kin groups is quite common. Borrowing of money, oxen, seed, and sprayers without interest is common within kin groups. In general, kin groups, especially those closely related by blood, are interwoven by generalized reciprocity which does not entail immediate reciprocal gestures.

The patrilineal line is important to define lineage identity, sets of *gada* groups, and for allocation of property rights in the village. On the other hand, kinship affiliation gives equal weight to both patrilineal and matrilineal lines. Children are equally affiliated to relatives of their father and mother depending on social distance exhibited in both lines. They support old relatives of their parents equally. This may include labour and a range of material assistance that is economically affordable. To sum up, social and economic obligations are equal on patrilineal and matrilineal lines.

### *Lineages and Clans*

In the present circumstances, neither clans nor lineages are the basis for the formation of corporate groups. Neither do they sustain strong economic links. However, as part of orally transmitted knowledge from older generations, villagers distinctly recognize their lineages and clans. The three clans and their lineages are shown below.

Handaa	Dhakku	Illu
Danyu	Bonnaya	Bonnaya
Saphera	Moo'oo	Dikko

Seniority is still accorded priority in the pronouncing of benedictions during rituals. According to the villagers, the first son of Ada'a is *Handa*, then *Dhakku* and lastly *Illu*. During rituals, elders of *Saphera* of *Handa* start giving benedictions followed by *Moo'oo* of *Dhakku* and lastly *Bonnaya* of *Illu*.

The most important obligations of lineages and clans is payment of blood money. In older times, lineages and their corresponding clans were exclusively responsible for covering the cost of blood. It is

said that the price of blood money was increasing and that this limited the capacity of lineages and clans to cover the required cost. Consequently, after the end of Italian occupation, the *Chaffee* (the traditional council of the Oromo) enacted a new customary law that obliged contribution from all clans to pay blood money. Since then, blood money has been paid by the contribution of all clans and non-Oromo residents. Nevertheless, the villagers still emphasize the obligation of lineages and clans to pay blood money. They hold that it is the close-kin, lineage, and clan that are primarily accountable in paying blood money, supplemented by contributions from outside.

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

The life cycle of *Gada* ceremonies, in contrast to their significance in earlier time, largely serve ritual purposes at present. The *Seera* of *Gada* divided a society into 5 male groups which hold minor communal responsibility for 8 years in a 40 year cycle. Membership of these groups is transmitted along patrilineal lines. The five *Gada* groups with their alternative names are listed below.

1. *Birmajjii* (*Seeffee*)
2. *Belbaa* (*Horrattaa* or *Horsaa*)
3. *Muddannaa* (*Dilboo* or *Bokka*)
4. *Hallchisaa* (*Miichillee* or *Dalloo*)
5. *Robbellee* (*Jiilchaa*)

Each of these *Gada*-sets, regardless of age differences, have to pass through 4 cycles of social adulthood before reaching their ruling period. Each group remains for 8 years in each category, each of which has its particular responsibilities. These are listed as follows in their order of sequence:

- |                     |                 |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1. <i>Ittimakko</i> | 4. <i>Luuba</i> |
| 2. <i>Dabballee</i> | 5. <i>Gada</i>  |
| 3. <i>Follee</i>    |                 |

*Ittimakko* (the first period in the life cycle) has no specific duty or responsibility on its own. Neither does it have its own allocated share of food or local beer. Members are considered to be assistants to the *Follee* group with whom *Ittimakko* is served at the ritual feast. *Ittimakko* are expected to carry out the orders of the *Follee* group.

*Dabballee* is the next period in the life cycle. Members have the right to partake in half of the *Follee's* share of food and drink. The relation between *Dabballee* and *Follee* is one of rivalry. A certain distance is ritually symbolized between the two. Although *Dabballee* partake of half of *Follee's* food, they do not sit and get served together. While *Follee* has its own seating place inside a house or a tent where the feast is served, *Dabballee* stays outside the house and the tent. The two groups do not mix with each other in singing and dancing.

Members of the third period in the life cycle (*Follee*), have a right to approve second marriages. The villagers recognize it as punishment. If the *Follee* group finds a person who has contracted a second marriage, it will, as part of the punishment, take his thick garment worn around the shoulders (*Gabbii*) and tear it into pieces. Then all people of the *Follee* cycle tie a piece of the garment on their stick and depart from the house singing and dancing to attend a feast. Each piece of the torn garment is known as *Horrora*. This is considered to be an approval of the marriage bond. This act also reflects the interrelation of the *Gada* groups. Often immediately consecutive *Gada* groups compete with each other. For instance, *Birmajjii* is preceded by *Robballee* while it is followed by *Belbaa*. If *Birmajjii* is the *Follee*, it will tear off the garment of *Robballee* and *Belbaa*. Likewise, *Robballee* will do the same to *Birmajjii* and *Halchissaa* while *Belbaa* punishes *Birmajjii* and *Muddannaa*.

The next grade in the cycle is *Luuba*, which has no specific role. It is a preparatory cycle for the next social responsibility that is *Gada*. When the group reaches the *Gada* grade, it takes over the power of authority from the retiring group. The responsibility of *Abba Gada* includes organizing and

administering rituals, resolving conflicts through mediation, giving blessings and making prayers and so on. While staying in power for eight years, *Abba Gada* prepares the necessary resources for the big feast that marks retirement from the *Gada* cycle. In general, the social roles of the first four cycles (*Ittimakkoo*, *Dabballee*, *Follee*, and *Lubba*) are not so noticeable except in the last year of their cycle. They have merely ritual roles synchronized with *Gada* rituals and feasts. *Abba Gada* serve all of the eight years actively.

The *Gada* rituals were disrupted or prohibited by the *Derg*. This year, the *Halchissaa* group hands over rule to the *Robballee* group by giving feasts. There are about 10 heads of households of *Halchissaa* that will give feasts in the village. They must prepare them between the Holy day of the Founding of the True Cross (end of September) and Saint Michael of Sene (End of June) in this year. Feasts are preferred on Friday evenings if there is no fasting in that month, otherwise Monday evening will be chosen. These days are chosen because it is preferred that the day after the feast is not a fasting day so that they can consume livestock products.

The feasts are said to be very expensive. Preparation take seven years. Usually, members of a household that have passed through the five social responsibilities will combine their resources and give a joint feast. It is difficult to estimate the cost of feasts. In material terms and on average, the feast could be composed of 30 to 40 *gann* of *tella*, 40 litres of *areqe*, one ox, and various ritual foods such as bread soaked with butter, roasted wheat rubbed with butter, and others.

The retiring *Gada* leaders who prepare the feast should have their hair and nails cut on the eve of the feast day. In the presence of elders of the five *Gada* groups and relatives, *Gada* leaders are circumcised. If they are already circumcised, a knotted thread is symbolically cut from their male organ. After the pronouncement of blessings by representatives of the five *Gada* groups, the feast is served. Non-Oromos can be invited to the feast if they are close to the person preparing it.

### *Friendship*

The institution of *moggasa* creates a strong bond-friendship between two households which were distantly related. In the presence of representatives of the five *Gada* groups and the necessary rituals and feasts, a man (non-Oromo) establishes lasting bonds with an Ada'a Oromo. Through this institution the *moggasa* person is incorporated into the lineage, clan, and *Gada* group of the person with whom he is ritually tied. From then onwards, relations between the two persons and their households take the form of networks of kinship. The two households are prohibited from marriage and are expected to take a common stand on blood-feuds. The two households' mutual interdependence and assistance reinforces their bond. If one of the parties deviates from the norms of *moggasa*, affliction is expected to come over them since such actions have already been cursed by representatives of the five *Gada*. The *moggasa* institution is still alive in the village incorporating non-Oromos into Ada'as' clans and lineages.

### *Citizenship*

The social organization of Sirba is based on the principle of territory. Hence everyone (non-Oromos and Oromos) has equal access to farm land. However recently there has been a growing awareness of citizenship concepts. That is Oromo land, in general, and Ada'a, in particular, is perceived as belonging to Oromos. Nevertheless, no non-Oromo has been deprived of the citizenship right of access to farmland. Non-citizens cannot be incorporated into the five *Gada* groups or other Oromo rituals unless they become *moggasa*.

### *Markets*

The nearest large market is in Debre Zeit. Markets are held on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Cows are sold in Mojo. In the nearby Denkaka market, grain is sold by measuring the amount in various volumes of tin-cans. The fieldworker observed the following quantities of grain and their respective prices in the market.

- 1 tin-can of *tef* was sold for 1.65 *birr* (3 tin-cans are equal to 2 kg).
- 1 tin-can of wheat was sold for 1.20 *birr* (3 tin-cans are equal to 2 kg).
- 1 tin-can of chickpeas was sold for 1.15 *birr* ( 1 tin-can is equal to 1 kg).

No one polices the market, but if there are problems, the peace and stability committee members of Denkaka PA are within reach and take the necessary action.

### *Credit and Social Security*

Agricultural credit is needed during some times of the year for the purchase of fertilisers. Credit used to be obtained from local moneylenders. However, nowadays it is becoming too expensive. Now farmers give a down payment and take fertilisers from the government agencies (MoA and the Service Cooperative). A non-commercial credit system has operated in the Ada'a region for many years. The suppliers of this kind of rural credit are wealthy farm owners, wealthy tenants, petty traders, relatives, friends, women running *tella*, *tej* or *katikala* houses, town men, etc. Most of these non-commercial lenders are still present in rural areas, but their number is decreasing as they are being replaced by commercial lenders.

*Equb* (rotating credit associations) are very popular both in the town and rural areas. These are savings institutions formed by members whose income level is more or less similar. But the frequency of *equb* is very low in the rural areas as compared to the urban areas of Ada'a.

*Idir* are also common in Ada'a. These are based on the ethic of assistance and interdependence during times of mourning or disaster. *Idir* render funeral benefits, some material help for one whose house is burnt, and comforting for those who have lost relatives. Members are usually drawn from the same ethnic group.

Since the majority of people are followers of the Orthodox Christian Church, there are *mehber* in the rural parts of Ada'a. Members of *mehber* are people who worship a particular saint to demonstrate their devotion. It is also a means by which to strengthen relationships. In social, religious and economic affairs members of *mehber* are expected to visit and help each other in times of happiness and misfortune. *Senbete* (commonly practised in rural areas) is another religious group which is formed by groups of neighbours in dedication to the church found in their locality. Members are expected to reciprocate in the provision and consumption of *tella*, bread, and roasted cereals at gatherings in the church every Sunday. Everyone brings these food items in turn. In addition to feasting, the gathering of *senbete* is used to discuss problems and settle quarrels between couples in the community.

The Sirba villagers tend to distribute their risks among different *idir* and *mehber*, being members of two or more associations, simultaneously. There are 6 *idir* for men (namely, *Amanuel*, *Balewold*, *Gabrel*, *Giorgis*, *Mariam*, and *Michael*) and 4 for women (namely, *Mariam*, *Michael*, *Balewolde*, and *Abbo*) in Sirba. There are 2 *equb* that are organized and operational after harvest. There are 3 *mehber* (*Michael*, *Giorgis* and *Abbo*) and 2 *senbete* (*Giorgis* and *Amanuel*) for men. There is one *senbete* for women (*Mariam*).

Often members of *mehber* and *senbete* are drawn from neighbouring PAs on the basis of friendship and kinship. The *idir* and *equb* of the village are organized on the basis of neighbourhood. The contribution of members to the 2 Sirba *equb* was 5 *birr* in every week of last year after the harvest.

The money-lenders of the village are richer farmers and a *kallu*. The common interest rate is 100 percent for one year's term. This rate is applicable for interest on loans in cash and in kind. Of course, borrowers could obtain money or seed from their relatives without interest but the capacity of relatives is limited, so borrowers often go to money-lenders who can lend them the amount they require. The deal is contracted by signing. Since 100 percent interest is very high by the standards of the Ethiopian Commercial Bank, and thus the government courts to which charges of dishonour may be presented, the borrower has to sign for double the amount borrowed, as if he borrowed without interest. The largest amount of money borrowed in the village is 800 *birr* which will be repaid as 1600 *birr* including interest. One person borrowed this amount from various lenders. There are 17 known money lenders in

the village and 61 heads of households who are recognized as frequent borrowers. It seems that the dominant form of surplus appropriation in present-day Sirba and Godeti is money-lending.

### *Community Decision Making*

The decisionmakers are the officials of the Peasant Association and the community elders on occasion. In the case of disputes within or between local households the elders examine the case and give their judgment based on their information. They ensure that compensation is made to those who were mistreated and harmed by the disagreement.

In the case of more important decisions it seems that the officials of the PAs and other authorities have taken control of community decision-making. "The officials ordered us what to do and what not to do. These decisions involve land distribution, quota, allocation of benefits..."

Even though important decisions are made by PA leaders, traditional political authority circulates among the five *Gada* every eight years. At the moment *Gada* leaders are relegated to rituals, marriage and other minor social aspects, being excluded from decisions about land and other resources.

As has been explained before, the level of tax has been arbitrarily assigned and it is collected by PA leaders. The villagers have always wanted to lower taxes but they do not have access to decision-makers above the PA level. People still complain about the unfairness of the present day tax system which does not take into account difference in the size of land holding.

During the *Derg* regime, the institution of *kallu* was suppressed as a backward cultural practice. The ritual activities of the *kallu* had to be hidden and were not openly exercised as they are today.

### *Redistributive Mechanisms*

Rituals and feasts are frequent in the village and are tied with traditional religion and Orthodox Christianity. Apart from their religious context feasts are still important status symbols in the village. The bigger the feast, the higher the status of the individual giving it. The following feasts are commonly given in the village. Relatives, friends and neighbours are invited and *tella* and baked wheat bread are commonly prepared.

#### 1. At the household level

- i. The birth day feast is usually marked by the sacrifice of an animal.
- ii. If one of the parents is a follower of the *Ayana* cult, the baby and parents will participate in a name-giving ceremony (*Amechisa*) in the *Kallu* ritual house. This ceremony takes place after 40 days for a son and 80 days for a daughter. Then the baby is christened at one of the churches in the village or outside, and a proper feast is held in the parent's house. If it is not a fasting day an animal will be sacrificed. In the *Amechisa* ceremony, bread and one bottle of *Areqe* are usually presented by the parents.
  - If parents are not *Ayana* cult followers, they christen their child in one of the churches and prepare a feast, sacrificing an animal if it is not a fasting day.
- iii. The *Wodaja* (*Atete*) ritual is conducted once in a year in December and January by all Oromos. The sacrifice of *Dalecha* (grey) sheep or goats is made once every two years. Roasted or boiled grain, roasted coffee grain smeared with butter, ritual porridge and other items are served.
- iv. The *Boranticha* ritual and feast takes place in May every year. Sacrifice of a black sheep or goat is made once every two years. Libations of coffee, ritual grain and other offerings are common.

#### 2. At the religious group level

- i. A member of *Senbete* or *Mehber* has to provide a feast at least once a year on the saint's day to which the group is devoted. The *Senbete* feast is conducted in the compound or *Senbete*-house of a church. Depending on the host's wealth, a sheep or goat may be sacrificed. However, it is also possible to prepare *Mehber* or *Senbete* feasts without sacrificing an animal. These feasts

are intended to reciprocate those provided by other group members but they can be attended by non-members (neighbours, relatives and friends).

- ii. Individuals can prepare feasts on the days of saints to which they are devoted without belonging to a *Mehber* or *Senbete*. If a household can afford to do so they will sacrifice a sheep. Otherwise, *tella* and bread will suffice.

### 3. At the community level

- i. *Abdar* feasts are organized in at least five quarters of the village on the day of *Hedar Michael* (20 November). On these occasions, individuals who regularly make sacrifices to the spirit, buy an ox and ritually kill the beast under the sacred sycamore tree. Neighbours share the left-over meat by paying the fixed amount of *birr* depending on the quantity of their share. In addition *tella*, bread, coffee, butter, ritual roasted or boiled grain and so on are contributed by neighbours who regularly participate in the ritual.
- ii. *Dirree* is a communal ritual attended by all residents of Sirba in June under a tree at Sirba hill. An ox is sacrificed and the meat is roasted and distributed. The cost of the feast is covered by contributions by all villagers. Last year, each household paid 2 *birr* for the *Dirree* feast.

Feasts at community level have ritual importance and do not involve redistribution. Feasts at household and religious group level can serve as redistributive mechanisms, because the rich are expected to provide generous feasts, and they usually do hold bigger feasts.

### 4. Feasts of the *Kallu*

Of the 3 *Kallu* in Sirba, 1 is rich. In order to get blessings and protection from *Ayana*, adepts and relatives present 1 to 2 *quna* of *tef* to the *Kallu* after every harvest. The *Kallu*, in return, gives large feasts once every two years, which are attended by his relatives, adepts, and neighbours. The feast involves the sacrifice of an ox and is a redistributive mechanism in the village.

## 8. Beliefs and Values

### *Land*

People are not attached to or associated with particular plots of farm land. Neither do they consider land as sacred. The community bury the dead in church compounds. The burial sites do not have importance for ritual purposes. Of course, the villagers care for the land they till tenderly. They also value livestock and ritual practices dedicated to their ancestors.

### *Religion*

The community is Orthodox Christian. Religious practices includes fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays by not eating meat or dairy products. Locally worshipped saints are Balewold, Mary, Michael and Immanuel and people must not work on these saints' days or on Saturdays or Sundays. Anyone not respecting these practices would be kicked out of the local *idir* and no one would help them during crises.

*Waka*, the traditional God of the Oromo, and his creations known as *Ayana*, constitute the basis of the Oromo belief system in the village. In addition there are several spirits, also creations of *Waka*, that are believed to influence life in the village. These are *Atete*, *Boranticha*, *Abdar*, and *Dirree*.

*Atete* represents the spirit of an extended family which is transmitted to the eldest son of a household along patrilineal lines. The *Atete* spirit is symbolized by a necklace. The *Atete* ritual is performed by women who are wives of eldest sons. The *Atete* spirit is believed to protect the extended family. It is also believed that the reproduction and wellbeing of a family is guaranteed by strict observance of the *Atete* rituals. Members of the extended family are expected to contribute to the feast and to attend the

ritual in the home of their eldest brother. Although women are obliged to attend the ritual of their husband's *Atete*, they also participate in the ritual taking place in the home of their eldest brother. Although the *Atete* ritual is a matter for the extended family, neighbours can also be invited. Afflictions to members of the household are assumed to follow if the ritual is not regularly observed.

*Boranticha* is a spirit which has a specific concern for livestock. The *Boranticha* spirit protects livestock from any sort of disease and ghosts. Every household prepares the ritual of *Boranticha* in a barn to propitiate the spirit every year. This ritual is primarily attended by members of the extended family but neighbours can be invited to the feast. If the ritual is not observed, the livestock are expected to be affected by disease and other calamities.

*Abdar* is a spirit of a specific residential quarter. The ritual site of *Abdar* is under a sycamore tree where a spirit is supposed to come. The *Abdar* spirit has a wide concern for the households of the quarter: their well being, reproduction, their good harvest, livestock, and so on. Each of the five *Abdar* has a ritual leader who organizes the ritual and kills the animal to be sacrificed, although *Gada* leaders also help in the process. These ritual leaders inherit the practices from their fathers who were attached to a particular *Abdar* in the area. Those who make vows to the *Abdar* give sacrifices in return for its blessing. After the benediction of elders and *Gada* leaders households of the quarter take their share of the *Abdar* meat to their home. The fieldworker was told that some households (usually non-Oromos) do not attend the *Abdar* ritual. However the Oromos strictly observe the *Abdar* ritual, disregard of which is supposed to cause affliction to a household.

*Dirree* is a spirit which is propitiated in order to make rain come on time in the planting season. *Dirree* rituals, unlike the others, bring together all villagers of Sirba. During the ritual, harmonious relationships between all residents are emphasized in order to address the spirit with one open heart and to obtain its favour. During fieldwork, rain was late and inadequate. Villagers said that their ritual could not propitiate the spirit since love and harmonious relationships have been declining among villagers. Before the ritual, they say, everyone is expected to resolve conflicts and to address the spirit without hidden feelings of hatred to one another. Thus the ritual, apart from the rain, has significance in reinforcing harmonious social relations in the village.

In Sirba, traditional religious practices are conducted side by side with Orthodox Christianity. However some non-Oromos say that the Oromos pay greater attention to their traditional religion than to Orthodox beliefs. They say that Oromos usually do not attend the Sunday mass of churches.

The most important influence is that of *Kallu*. In particular, the prominent *Kallu* of Kallala PA and that of Kumbursa have great social control in the area. The *Kud'arfan* ritual occurs every two weeks in the *Kallu's* home at Sirba. During the ritual children are brought to the *Kallu* in order to be named by *Ayana*. On these days, relatives of the *Kallu* and adepts of *Ayana* spirits gather and spend the night in ritual activities in the *Kallu* ritual house. However, most Sirba villagers go to the prominent *Kallu* of neighbouring PAs to fulfil vows, to obtain good fortune, to identify thieves or for revenge, to curse enemies and to beg absolution. The strongest sanction in the area is still that of cursing. It is common for a person who cannot induce an adversary to settle a dispute to appeal to *Ayana* through prominent *Kallu* and curse his enemy. To obtain the cancellation of these curses through prominent *Kallu*, from 200 to 400 *birr* is paid. The neutralization of cursing is usually sought after the curser and the cursed have resolved their conflicts or the cursed person, after experiencing afflictions, tries to minimize the punishments of *Ayana* through *Kallu*.

The following information is taken from field work done 10km south of Debre Zeit in the 1970s by Alice Morton. The study is among the Oromo of the area who are members of the Ada'a sub-tribe of the Tulama.

*Ayanas* are intangible spiritual beings who inhabit the atmosphere and, are creations and gifts of *Waka* to the Oromo to help them observe Oromo law and custom. The *Ayana* are noted by Morton especially in relation to their role in adjudication or dispute resolution. The *Ayana* are ranked hierarchically on the basis of their relative closeness to divinity, and thus their relative power. The *Ayana* spirits are highly moral divinities, guardians of the moral order that act through possessed ritual officials called *Kallu*. It is understood that any *Ayana* can possess any human being at will, however it is usual that only the *Kallu* is regularly possessed by the *Ayana* and this quality is passed on through

inheritance. The possession of other participants or adepts which occasionally occurs is sometimes interpreted as attacks by evil spirits or as warnings of punitive affliction.

It is noted that social organization is based on common territoriality rather than descent. In most cases, the community lives on the land of the *Kallu* or near his homestead and this area is coterminous with his sphere of mystical influence. In other cases, the territory may overlap with another *Ayana* cult circle. The various *Kallu* are thought to be linked to each other either through common sub-tribe membership or real or fictive kinship. They grade themselves as senior or junior on the basis of their personal ritual power and with regard to the relative mystical power and authority of their possessing *Ayana*. As far as the *Kallu* is able to be a successful mediator, which is dependent on the will of *Ayana*, he ensures the continued fertility, prosperity, health and peaceful coexistence of the community.

Other than regular possession of the *Kallu*, the *Ayana* also express their presence by causing affliction or misfortune. At the individual level this could be illness, bad luck, financial loss or sterility. At the collective level it could be drought, epidemics or famine following the ignorance of law and custom by the community. Different *Ayana* seem to have different areas of provenance in addition to their hierarchical variation. The different areas they cover are health, fertility, property, marriage, kinship and clientship. In addition to ritual judgement, there are also nonritual or lay judgements that occur at the same time as the ritual one, but in different areas which are not ritual houses and which are sites related to the spirits, such as under trees or near granaries in which special ceremonial grain is kept. The judges of lay courts are chosen by the *Kallu* and are ratified by the spirits. Each lay court is convened in the name of one of the *Ayana* and the decision made at the court is sanctioned by the *Ayana* in whose name the court is held. Judges are always men beyond middle age that are clients of the *Kallu* or elders who are mediators in the non-spirit sanctioned moot. In general, when the *Kallu* does not sit with judges, he is regarded as a court of appeal. It is believed that appeal is directly made to the spirits whenever the *Kallu* is possessed.

Three types of processes may be distinguished at *Ayana* court deliberations. The first one is related to the number of parties in a dispute and their justification. In these situations, there are publicly recognized injuries but the injured parties do not know who is guilty. For instance, mystical theft and mystical damage are commonly brought up to *Ayana* courts. The second one involves the matter of accusation and whether or not it is contested. Here the reaction of the accused depends on his beliefs in the power of *Ayana* as well as on the social relation between the accused and the accuser prior to the dispute. If the accused is himself an adept or a believer, he is likely to follow the accuser to the nearest *Ayana* court, respecting the tradition of maintaining peaceful relationships. If the accuser is not a believer and not an Oromo, he is likely to attend an *Ayana* court to contest the accusation so as not to be seen by his neighbours as guilty by default. The third process relates to the means available for settlement of disputes in which the other parties are known. If the dispute fails to be resolved by reconciliation attempts by the elders, the case may be taken to *Ayana* or government courts. But the government courts are not likely options since a process of mediation is preferred rather than one of adjudication. In the majority of cases, ritual offences against spirits as well as individuals and disputes between adepts will necessarily lead to ritual judgements, though litigants might sometimes go to *Kallu* or lay courts. Similarly, disputes between adepts and non-adepts will necessarily lead to lay courts though few of the cases might be presented to the ritual or *Kallu* courts as well as to the *Balabbat's* and *Shentcha* moot.

In order to identify the culprits, the simplest option is to call upon *Ayana*, especially a named *Ayana* spirit, to witness the injury. This act may be performed by an injured person at home, but to be effective as an explanatory device, the occasion must be attended by a member of the immediate family. If the injured is an adept, he may raise the issue at the next ritual judgement to be identified by *Ayana*. On the other hand, if the summoned neighbours confirm that they are not guilty in front of the injured party by swearing in the name of *Ayana*, the next move would be to call the police or to leave the matter to *Ayana* so that it could identify the culprit and reveal his identity through affliction. If the guilty and afflicted party comes to accept his offence, he must first go the lay court to settle the matter of compensation and then go to the ritual judgement to deal with *Ayana* regarding his moral transgression. Attribution of guilt is frequently retrospective. The matter of identifying the culprit has

to be allowed to continue until someone in the appropriate social category suffers some affliction which is not explicable in other terms by either the guilty or others.

The advantages of adjudication or mediation in the context of *Ayana*-sanctioned courts is that they are quicker, cheaper and potentially less disruptive than other available alternatives. Moreover, either adepts or believers may fear the wrath and power of *Ayana*. Even if a disputant has no regard for the supposed power of the *Ayana*, he may greatly respect the wisdom and probity of the local *Kallu*. The main virtue of *Ayana*-sanctioned courts is that in principle all are equal before the *Ayana*. This implies that it is impossible to corrupt a *Kallu* as it is impossible to corrupt the *Ayana*. In addition, this provides the opportunity that various ethnic groups of the area will be treated on equal footing. Morton says that "They (mystical sanctions) are then significant not only in terms of the implementation of routinized charismatic authority within a society undergoing change, but also in terms of individual religious belief and practice, communal decision making, and social control."

Morton notes the significance of the *Kallu*'s power in achieving social control. Thus the *Kallu* is a source of final authority being representative of moral *Ayana*. On the other hand, Lewis (studying western Shewa) sees the *Kallu* as not just purely an ascribed position, but as an achieved status of charismatic leadership which must be constantly worked for. The success of the *Kallu* is said to be dependent on how well they serve their congregations. To Lewis, this situation is reflected in western Shewa because of the persistence of an ideology of achievement and equality in the social relations and activities of the people. Lewis comments that "There is among the western Shewa Galla, an ideology of achievement and equality which is apparent in activities and social relations. This is consistent with the relative unimportance of descent as a basis of organization and the prominence of neighbourhood-based activities and voluntary associations".

People go to Faraqasa pilgrimage in Arssi. Villagers say that the transport cost is 30 *birr*. They often take their provisions from home so as to minimize costs. If they vowed before, they will sacrifice an animal during the ceremony. Pilgrims to Faraqasa are both Christians and Muslims.

### *Explanation of Misfortune and Illness*

Belief in sorcery and witchcraft is common among Oromo and non-Oromo villagers. The targets of sorcery are said to be human beings, livestock and crops. Some people are said to use concocted medicine to harm people or cause damage to their resources. Sorcerers are not found in Sirba but in other areas (Debre Zeit, Dukem, Nazreth and so on). The belief in witchcraft in the village is associated with the evil eye. The fear of the evil eye is inherent in their belief system; it is usually thought to attack children.

Belief in *Sallabi* (the person with evil spiritual power or the one who uses sorcery) that snatches away one's crop, livestock, or wealth is very widespread. The power of *Sallabi* has to be cursed by elders before the harvest every year. People who are considered *Sallabi* are assumed to use both sorcery and evil power to affect people's economic resources. In the past two years, new rituals were practised to curb and neutralize the power of *Sallabi*. Last year, during one evening in September, all villagers of Sirba came out of their home, and ululated while walking on their farm fields so that the *Sallabi* would flee from their crops. Doing this ritual, they marched up to the boundary of Kallala PA. The neighbouring PA (Ude) farmers had performed the ritual the day before up to the boundary of Sirba. There is a chain of rituals performed by one PA after another to make the *Sallabi* flee from their territory. This ritual was closed by elders cursing in Sirba. In this ritual, all residents of Sirba participated because non-participants would be identified as *Sallabi*. The continuation of this ritual seems unlikely since many villagers have ascribed to it the delay of rain in the village. The ritual has not yet been performed this year and it will be interesting to see whether it will be performed. Many of the villagers say that they adopted this new ritual because the "Ude people sent the *Sallabi* (assumed to originate in Gurageland) from their land to ours. Therefore, we had no choice except to drive the *Sallabi* from our land".

The villagers do not worship ancestors, but deep respect is accorded to them. Every Oromo household has inherited ritual practices, and sacrifices including *Atete* from their fathers.

If a person falls seriously ill, he will firstly visit a physician in Debre Zeit or in Addis Ababa. If he is not cured, he will go to a *kallu* who can give explanations of misfortune, illness and death. As described above, the *kallu* may diagnose the affliction to be caused by failure to participate in family and community rituals, by cursing and sorcery, by spirits, or by an evil eye. He gives relevant advice that is expected to cure the afflicted person.

### *Community Values*

In this short observation, it is difficult to identify changes in the belief system. Most of the religious beliefs described above are still alive today. The frequency of *gudifecha* and *moggasa* has been declining and patterns of marriage have been changing. Respect for elders is not so strong as before. The Sirba community seems to choose traditional and modern ways of life as appropriate to the situation.

The Sirba farmers do not answer accurately questions related to their economic resources, traditional religious practices, and political matters. They feel that the purpose of this research is to bring changes to their life through development projects. They consider the fieldworker to be a political figure, or one closely related to the authorities that could make readjustments by redistributing farm land so as to introduce the equitable use of land in the village.

### *Political Beliefs and Attitudes*

It is difficult to establish the attitudes to elections and the constitutional exercise since the villagers are not open in political discussions. One view is that power in the village should be given to *Gada* groups. If PA leaders were selected from the *Gada* groups, they would be more accountable. The Sirba villagers consider current land holding to be inequitable and believe that there has to be a new redistribution. To this end, a number of villagers appealed to the PA and through them to higher authorities.

## 9. The Community

### *Community Organization*

The Sirba community is not tightly-knit. There are factional groups in addition to different ethnic groups. There are a lot of social interactions in smaller circles and beyond the community of Sirba. Religious groupings of *Senbete* and *Mehber*, the rituals of *Ayana*, interlinkages, and *Gada* festivals involve interactions beyond the village community.

### *Politics*

The effect of the regionalization policy has been to increase the ethnic awareness of the villagers. So far the traditional political system of the *Gada* (now merely a ritual performance) has not yet been reinstated. There is not much change in the political, legal, social, and cultural practices of the village as a result of national policies.

### *Social Conflicts*

There seem to be no conflicts between groups in the village. It is said that the sizes of land belonging to Sirba and Godeti farmers are unequal. The Godeti residents did not accept the request of Sirba for a more equitable distribution of land. Political factions have not been observed in the village. However there were opposition groups in the PC which were rivals in the quest to control power and thus economic benefits. Conflicts based on gender have not been noticed.

## *Poverty and Wealth*

According to the fieldworker, wealth is based upon the possession of land and oxen, and the ability and desire to work hard. The relative poor in the community are those with little land and no oxen for ploughing. Stratification is discernable in the village. By village standards there are rich people and there are poor.

In a wealth ranking three local people each divided the surveyed households in the community into 3 categories. The following characteristics of the wealthy were identified (not everyone had them all): have a lot of land; lease land; get help from children; have enough oxen; hardworking; inherited land; *arata* lender; rent oxen; wise use of money; husband is civil servant; no family; sells *tella*; is a strong farmer; ox fattening; trader; purchased large land; enough knowledge; additional income from church. Characteristics of the poor included: drinking; widow; foolish use of money; oxen died; lazy; bad harvest; smoker; no herd worker; old age; no helper; being female; no oxen; not enough land; divorced; no land; oxen are looted; sick; one leg; very large family; wife died; prefers to talk; oxen are weak; retired from army - not enough land - drinks; rents land out; sold land; half mad; changed wife; notorious wife.

## *Social Mobility*

It is possible to become wealthier through hard work and involvement in trading activities in the nearby towns. With hard work and thriftiness, the children of the poor can become wealthy and by the opposite the children of the rich can become poor. In the case of girls, a beautiful girl who is skilled in household tasks may marry a rich farmer and therefore become rich herself. Hard work, a job in the bureaucracy, and money-lending have been instrumental in social mobility in the village. Wealth is still marked by larger farms and herds. A household that was a member of Producers' Cooperative has 20 *qarti* of land and a bachelor has 10 *qarti* of land, both of which are large by the standards of the PA. There are farmers who have 10 oxen and about 50 sheep and goats. These farmers are hard workers.

Interlinkages and land renting have been instrumental in enlarging landholdings. Among the 28 farmers that used threshing-machines last year, there were rich farmers that obtained a yield of 80, 120, and 140 quintals of *tef* alone. Farmers estimate that, on average, 4 quintals of *tef* can be produced from 1 *qarti* of land. The farmer who obtained 140 quintals must have used 35 *qarti* or almost 9 ha of *tef* land.

Rich farmers support their children by giving them some of the plots under their use. It seems that the best chance for a child of the poor to prosper is hard work and hypergamy. The fieldworker heard that there is one man who is getting richer by combining agriculture and trade.

In the wealth ranking the 3 respondents said that people were moving down from category 1 to 2 as everyone is becoming poorer. The typical reasons for downward mobility are having a large family, the rising cost of living, becoming careless, drinking, laziness (when you are rich you do not work much). Upward mobility is very rare. People become wealthy via *arata* lending, off-farm business activity, by God's permission, renting ox and *siso* ploughing, People become poorer through drinking and renting land, laziness, and God's will.

## *Status*

Status and respect is accorded to older people in the community. However, one respondent reported that recently this respect is only skin-deep, even for the elders. Elected members of the PA may be respected for fear of being put in jail. The bases of status in the village are old age, traditional religious leadership (*Kallu*), wealth and recently office-holding in the PA. Wealth has been a means to obtain power. It seems that in the history of Sirba, a farmer who has no ox has never held power in the PA. A few elders have been able to become PA leaders but the cases are not many. Elders are often relegated to ritual and lower social roles as members of PA courts. *Kallu* have never been PA leaders. Therefore,

it is not clear that status always leads to power. Of course *Kallu* have informal power outside the bureaucracy, as they have high status in their own domain of religious activity. Hence, it is usually wealth which coincides with power-holding and status in the PA.

"Caste" groups are not found in Sirba village. Tape recorders and radios have recently become status symbols in the village. However these new symbols have not replaced the traditional status symbols; land and livestock. The traditional symbols of status are still important and sought after.

### *Social Stratification*

As has been discussed above, incipient class formation has been manifested in the village. Rich farmers and money-lenders are accorded due respect in the village. Poor farmers greatly respect money-lenders to whom they frequently present their problems seeking loans or other favours. One observer said that in this area the gap between the poor and the rich is very wide. The poor tend to stay poor and the rich to stay rich. This is because the poor do not have access to credit and if they do they spend it on consumption not production. They are forced to share-rent their land every year which means they get poorer every year. He suggests that the government should supply them with free inputs and farming implements for at least 2 production years so that they could stop renting out their land and enter the productive force.

### *Dissent*

Political dissent has not been exhibited in Sirba during the past 10 years.

## 10. Relationships with Other Communities and the Wider Society

### *Clans and tribes*

Tribe (Ada'a) is significant in defining the relation of the three clans in the Woreda. Otherwise, it has no relevance to village life. Of course the seniority of the three clans is important in selecting the givers of benedictions at ritual gatherings.

### *Villages and Regions*

Networks between Sirba and other communities are formed through religious groupings, trade, affinity, kinship and friendship. Relations are not based on lineages ties. Relations with the wider Ada'a are reinforced by annual rituals of *Irrecha* in Debre Zeit. Considerable numbers of villagers have attended the *Irrecha* ritual at Hora Lake.

Villagers visit Debre Zeit for medical treatment, schooling, to go the market, to purchase all household items and to sell the harvest. Women sell most of their production in Debre Zeit and the remainder in Mojo. They also visit Mojo for medical treatment, to go to the market, to sell produce and on rare occasions to buy household items. Occasionally merchant women will go to Addis Ababa to trade. There are 6 neighbouring PAs with whom the villagers are linked through kinship ties. They visit relatives and go to weddings in all these PAs. They take their cattle to water at the Mojo river. They visit an ammunition factory for wood.

### *Relationships to Wider Ethiopia*

The Sirba community has never had traditional enemies. The villagers are well aware of the fact that they are part of Ethiopia. However their concern is with land and farming. They know that important decisions concerning their land have come from outside their village and have deprived their local

leaders of power.

### *Effects of Government Policies*

Some of the issues related to this topic have been addressed in other parts of the paper. After liberalization of prices and the ending of market boards, prices of grain have increased. One quintal of *tef* has been sold for 150 *birr*, wheat for 80 *birr*, peas or beans for 60 - 70 *birr*, and white peas for 120 *birr*. In general, the produce of the village reaches markets freely. However villagers are also obliged to obtain more of their consumer goods from the market, except for fertilizer.

One observer reported that farmers are now better off than they were before Mengistu left. They have land, a good harvest, and no forced contributions or labour. Farmers now sell their produce and buy commodities in the "free market" and they can sometimes be heard to complain about the rise and fall of prices. He did not think that the people understood the concept of democracy. There are no security problems in the area. The poorest members of the community are affected by the economic changes. He said that the farmer should be freed from economic and social repression so as to become self-sufficient.

Another observer said the community is better off because they live in peace and sell their produce in a free market which has improved their living conditions. They have no economic problems and politically have the right to elect and be elected. They have better administration systems as a result of democracy. People are pleased about regionalization because it helps create equality among the various communities. Because the Constitution was drafted by the people and because it deals satisfactorily with issues relevant to their community everybody is pleased with it. While people may not have a deep understanding of democracy they know that it means freedom of speech, writing, gathering, demonstrating, selecting/deselecting, etc. As they are using these rights they are happy. He said that in order to reduce poverty in the area the community should work harder. Farmers need to be taught about the uses of fertilizers and new agronomic techniques. The area is prone to drought and new technologies are required to make use of rivers and lakes for agricultural production.

Another respondent said that things are getting worse in the community because before they could get fertilizers and insecticides from their shops on credit, but now they have to buy them in the local market and they do not have enough money. The first important development policy to help the poor should be to give land to ex-soldiers and then help them until they become self-sufficient.

Another said that the community is better off since there is no longer a Producer Cooperative and the AMC is abolished. There are some who regret the loss of supply of fertilizer and long-term credit. Previously they had a Service Cooperative shop and the commodities were sold to them at subsidized prices. The sugar price was 2 *birr* a kilo and now it is 5 *birr* a kilo.

Another respondent said the community is better off because of market prices and no AMC quota. The people who support regionalization are the people who are indigenous to the region, namely the Oromo. The people who are badly affected are those who came from the north as *neftenya*. The Constitution was not explained to the people and they do not understand it. "Don't even think of democracy in the third world. There is always suppression even if it is underground."

### *Government Activities in the Community*

Sirba villagers complain that the villagization programme was not useful, because the allotted compounds are too narrow to allow space for back garden activities and an adequate area for a barn. They say that their livestock are more easily affected by communicable diseases. As a result, 92 households have demolished their houses and constructed new ones in their previous localities or in other areas. Only 86 households still live in the villagized settlements.

### *NGO Activities in the Community*

FAO provided biogas in 1992. The village has also been provided with a solar pump. Sirba was one of

the "show" villages during the time of the *Derg*.

### *Future*

The people still living in the villagized settlements would like to return to their old homes. The community centre would like additional NGO help for their health centre.

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### **GLOSSARY**

<i>Arata:</i>	An exchange of labour for oxen.
<i>Areqi:</i>	Distilled liquor.
<i>Ato:</i>	A respectful title for a man.
<i>Awraja:</i>	An administrative boundary before 1991.
<i>Belg:</i>	A short rainy season usually occurring during February/March/April. The harvest from this season takes place in July and August.
<i>Birr:</i>	The currency of Ethiopia (9 birr= approximately £1).
<i>Derg:</i>	The name of the military government that ruled Ethiopia from 1974-1991.
<i>Enset:</i>	False banana. The roots and the inside of the trunk and branches are eaten often after being left to ferment in the ground.
<i>Equb:</i>	A rotating credit and savings association.
<i>Fitawrari:</i>	A military title.
<i>Idir:</i>	A burial society.
<i>Mehber:</i>	A religious society which meets on a Saint's day; each member takes a turn to host the group providing food and drink.
<i>Meher:</i>	The main rainy season - in most places from June to mid-September. Crops sown during this period are harvested from October to December.
<i>Senbete:</i>	A Sunday association which meets on the grounds of a church. Members take turns providing refreshments.
<i>Tef:</i>	A millet-like cereal.
<i>Tej:</i>	Alcoholic mead.
<i>Tella:</i>	Home-made beer.
<i>W/ro:</i>	A respectful title for a woman.
<i>Weyna dega:</i>	The temperate zone at intermediate altitude
<i>Woreda:</i>	An administrative unit in the old administrative divisions until 1991.

### **ACRONYMS**

AMC:	Agricultural Marketing Corporation
FAO:	Food and Agriculture Organization (United Nations)

MoA: Ministry of Agriculture  
PA: Peasant Association  
PC: Producers' Cooperative  
SC: Service Cooperative  
WPE: Worker's Party of Ethiopia

Sirbana Godeti

							Crops												
							Mesqerem	T'eqemt	Hedar	Tahsas	T'er	Yakatit	Magabit	Miyazya	Genbot	Sane	Hamle	Nahase	
maize			harvesting		threshing	soil preparation							planting						
sorghum		weeding	harvesting			soil preparation							planting						
wheat		planting	harvesting													soil prep	weeding		
barley		planting	harvesting													soil prep	weeding		
millet			harvesting			soil preparation							planting						
field peas			harvesting			soil preparation											planting	weeding	
			processing																
fenugreek			harvesting			soil preparation											planting	weeding	
lentils			harvesting														soil prep	planting	
potato			harvesting										soil preparation		weeding				
														planting					
sweet potato		soil prep		weeding												harvesting			
		planting																	
onion		weeding	harvesting													soil prep	planting	weeding	
chat				soil preparation								planting				planting			
																	harvesting		
grass																harvesting			
trees													planting					planting	
cow peas			harvesting															soil prep	
																		planting	



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Women's activities														
		(September)												
		<b>Mesqerem</b>	<b>T'eqemt</b>	<b>Hedar</b>	<b>Tahsas</b>	<b>T'er</b>	<b>Yakatit</b>	<b>Magabit</b>	<b>Miyazya</b>	<b>Genbot</b>	<b>Sane</b>	<b>Hamle</b>	<b>Nahase</b>	
Women's agriculture														
Men's fields														
	maize													
	tef													
	beans													
	field peas													
Fuel availability														
	wood													
	dungcakes													
Water availability														
	people	rain	water source								rain water			
	cattle	stream 1 hour from the place												
Credit needs														
		in kind or money - double is the interest												
Festivals														





### Sirbana Godeti

