

**Department of Sociology and
Anthropology**

A Thesis in Social Anthropology

**The Role and Status of Women in the
Food System of the Konso of Southwest
Ethiopia**

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Acknowledgement

To complete this research on time, many individuals and organizations have supported me morally, intellectually and materially. Primarily, I would like to express my deep gratitude to my advisor, Yared Amare (Ph.D.), without whose unreserved advice and assistance, it would have been difficult to finish the study. The research fund was covered by Addis Ababa University School of Graduate Studies. Thus, I am thankful for the university which supported me in order to conduct the study and Wolayita Zone Works and Urban Development Office that gave me three years long sponsorship. I am also indebted for Ato Amare Mengiste, the head of Farm Africa Konso who facilitated fertile ground in order to conduct my field work and all the project workers who welcomed me warmly with a continuous help and my intimate friends Alemayehu Dogamo, who is the member of Ethiopian Languages Research Center and Tadewos Beyene, who assisted me in typing the paper and editing typographical errors. I am grateful for my wife, Genet Haile, who supported me morally, psychologically, in reading and transcribing the braille copy into the ink-print, and who shouldered the responsibility of household management, which includes taking care for our daughter along with her career.

Ultimately, since it is difficult to cover in this short acknowledgement the moral, intellectual, technical and material assistance I got from governmental and non-governmental organizations and dear friends during this study, generally I express my thanks to all.

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Abstract

This ethnographic field work was conducted from September 15 up to December 25 among the Konso of Southwest Ethiopia. The main objective of the study is to analyze the role and status of women in the food system. With this aim, the study examines the Konso social organization as a basis for investigating women's role in food production, their access to scarce resources, role in food management and marketing, gender differences in coping strategies, the pattern of food preferences, aversions and intra-household food consumption and its impact on them.

The methods used to conduct the study include: participant observation, focus group discussion, in-depth interviews with key informants, individual case studies, a structured questionnaire and photography.

The finding of this study reveals that hoe-farming and oxen-drawn ploughing are the dominant ways of farming although their relative importance differs from place to place. Regardless of technological changes, women play a vital role in crop production. Hoeing, manuring, planting, weeding, harvesting and crop transportation are the major agricultural activities carried out by women. The tasks conducted by men are ploughing with oxen, terracing, house and granary construction, honey processing and cattle herding.

Though women undertake more work, the tasks of men are often considered of higher value. The finding shows that in areas where the oxen-drawn plough is used, women's role in production is lower as compared to hoe-farming village. This seems due to the technological, social, cultural and economic changes that the Konso underwent.

The data show that despite women's important role in food production, they lack full participation in grain management, marketing and decision-making regarding food resources. With regard to food management, women have the right to take grain from the granary only for daily household consumption. Therefore, women are less able to decide not only over food grains in the granary, but also on processed foods. Goods of greater

quantity, better quality and higher cash value are marketed by men while the others are marketed by women. The marketing of even small amounts and low value assets take place only with the decision of men. In addition to the lack of rights over food management and marketing, women and children are more likely to be vulnerable during food-insecurity as compared to men.

The study shows that despite women's significant role in food production, they have very limited access to scarce household economic resources. The denial of women's rights to resources emerges from women's marginal status in Konso society due to male-dominated inheritance system that prevents women's access to scarce resources and gender ideology that considers men to be superior by birth. The deprivation of their rights to resources is also reflected in the consumption of food. Thus, almost all protein-rich foods are consumed by men, which leave women deficient in protein. In general, the strong position men hold socially, economically and politically has limited women's access to and control over resources.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Statement of the Problem

This is an anthropological study of women's role and status in food production and utilization among the Konso. For this purpose, it focuses on the organization of households in the food system of this society. Cross-cultural variation in household systems is considerable and the process that determines the household structure in a given society is quite complex. Moreover, the critical decisions that influence women's overall life are taken within the household. The household is also a key unit to easily understand the social and cultural factors, which affect patterns of who controls the income and the status and role of women in the food system.

Some authors have defined food systems as all food related processes and their accompanying institutional mechanisms as found in production, intermediate processing, distribution, and processing for final consumption and serving of food, where these processes are exclusively local or are part of an international food exchange system (Potter, 1985 cited in Addis, 1989:112-113). Others also defined the food system as the process that embraces the complex of factors which determine food production, distribution and consumption for a particular population group and defines the way each element relates to the rest (ibid).

The role and status of women particularly in food systems received little attention until 1970s (Keesing, 1981). Since then however, many studies have shown that women play an important role in African food production systems (Bryson, 1981: 32). Studies of peasant gender roles show that people think of the house as females sphere and the fields as males domain. Nevertheless, researches conducted among Betsileo agriculturalists in Madagascar show that women play a prominent role in agriculture contributing more than 50% of the labor devoted to rice production (Kottak, 1994: 374). Furthermore, other studies also show that women do as much as 70% of agricultural work and spend more time doing paid and unpaid work more than men do in Africa (Boserup 1970, White 1984, FAO 1987). According to the United Nations Reports, it is also estimated that women accomplish 70% of food crop production, 100% of food processing, 50% of animal husbandry, and 60% of marketing (Long, 1985). Recent studies also reveal that women do almost equal or more than men to achieve household food security particularly in rural areas (Dejene, 1989:136, Saba 1991:90, Watson, 1998:86).

However, Boserup (1970) has proposed that women's contribution in food production diminishes with advancement in agricultural technology. Similarly, by examining the data collected from various ethnographic sources, Goody (1976) has contended that women's role in food production declines with the progress in agricultural technology. Mead (1976) also maintained that in many societies the advent of animal plough agriculture has undermined women's traditional role in subsistence production.

Despite women's quite important role in the food system, the marriage patterns, inheritance systems, land-holding arrangements and other aspects of the social structure limit women's control of resources (Bryson, 1981:32). This contrasts with many commentators' suggestion that women's participation in decision-making increases with their increasing economic contribution to the household (Brown, 1991:294).

On the other hand, others inclined toward the view that the structure of social relationships also influence women's role in decision-making in addition to their participation in productive work (Blau and Ferber, 1992:19). "Since many social characteristics are determined in whole or in part by gender, it affects entitlement" (Sen, 1981). From her Gojjam experience, Poluha (1980) noted that although women have no less contribution to the income of the household, their husbands (the decision-makers) influence them. While studying Wolayita political history, Chiatti (1984) stated that husbands alone are responsible for decision-making within the household. Saba (1991:96) also noted that women's power to make decisions that affect the household, particularly in the allocation of key resources is limited.

Based on such observations, this study therefore, tries to investigate primarily the role and status of Konso women in the food production, management, processing, marketing and variation in coping strategies with gender differences at length. It also gives considerable emphasis to understand factors that affect women's control over available resources and income. How decision-making process with regard to food grain management and marketing varies on the basis of gender differences at the intra-household level is also considered.

Anthropological studies conducted in relation to food reveal that whether it is viewed from archaeological, historical, sociological and biomedical perspectives, food is a basic concern for all human societies (Messer,1984:205). Social anthropology, specially under the influence of Durkheim and Radicliffee-Brown as contended by Seymour-Smith, developed the study of the moral value of food and its use as a symbolic element in social relationships where it helps to maintain the social structure (1986:121). As Malinowski puts it, only a synthesis of facts concerning food can give a correct idea of the economic organization of people, of their domestic life, of their religious ideas , and ethical values (in Pelton and Pelto,1983:173). Generally speaking , food defines man's culture.

On the ground of this debate, this study seeks to exhibit how food consumption marks gender role and relations in the food system within the household. By examining socio-cultural aspects of the food system, the research attempts to uncover society's basic values, aims and attitudes with respect to gender in Konso. Finally, the attempt is made to explore intra-household food allocation, food preferences and aversions, food restrictions and its impact on women's life in this society.

1.2. Research Site Selection

This ethnographic field work has been undertaken among the Konso of Southwest Ethiopia. The first rational for choosing Konso as a research site stemmed from my first academic field tour observation of Konso with the sponsorship of Sociology and

Anthropology Department Graduate Study Program in May, 2001 . In the few days I spent visiting Konso, I was so impressed with the Konso people's way of life, that I decided to carry out my research in Konso. The specific study villages, Tokatu-Laga and Kolme, were selected due to their relative accessibility since there are very few all weather roads that connect peasant associations to the capital, Karat.

Secondly, the two study villages, with their distinct features in farming technology, varying gender roles in the food system, settlement patterns and cultural elements were selected to represent the hoe-farming and oxen-drawn ploughing areas of Konso. Accordingly, in Tokatu-Laga, people practice hoe-farming using manual hand tools while in Kolme, oxen-drawn ploughing is practiced. It was therefore possible to conduct a comparative investigation of gender roles in the food production system.

1.3. Objective of the Study

A. General Objective

This research focuses on analyzing the role and status of women in the food system of the Konso.

B. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this research are the following:

1. To describe Konso social organization as a basis for discussing women's role and status in the food system.
2. To explore women's access to scarce economic resources and income.
3. To examine women's role in food production, management, processing and marketing.
4. To examine gender differences in coping strategies.
5. To investigate gender differences in intra-household food consumption, Konso conceptions of food preferences and restrictions.

1.4. Methods of Data collection

To conduct this study, various anthropological research methods were employed, which included: participant observation, focus group discussion, in-depth interviews with key informants, individual case studies, a structured questionnaire and photography. Since it was difficult to obtain necessary information about the history of the people (origin), kinship, clan and lineage systems, I have relied heavily on accounts of elderly informants.

Participant observation was used in collecting data on social relations and activities, gender roles in the food system, conceptions about food and dietary practices. In this regard, both sex groups were the target of participant observation. In-depth interviews were carried out with people of different sex, age and status groups who were assumed to have reasonably better knowledge on: socio-cultural aspects of food, food aversion and preferences, women's status within and across households and how gender differences

result in food-insecurity (hunger) for women. With regard to key informants interviews, ten from each sex group were taken to understand general issues like mentioned above enmeshed in the social organization of Konso in relation to food.

I have also conducted individual case studies using interviews and continuous observation to collect data on: households' life history, patterns and practices of food consumption, intra-household food distribution; gender roles in food production, processing, management, marketing; access to economic resources, coping strategies, participation in decision-making processes and other issues. In order to examine these issues, ten households were involved. Through focus group discussion with both sex groups, information on gender ideology, gender relations and control over resources was gathered. During this field work, in focus group discussion both sexes participated in terms of their sex difference and in groups.

To support this study with some quantitative evidence, structured questionnaire was conducted to collect data on: how both sex groups view themselves, gender roles in food production, management and marketing; coping strategies, access to scarce economic resources and decision-making processes. To construct the literature review of the study, relevant library materials were referred to. Furthermore, to support the final finding with reliable data, documents from governmental and non-governmental archives were analyzed since this method helps partly to recognize the magnitude of the problem under study (gender ideology and relations, access to food resources; gender roles in food

production, management, marketing; and intra-household food consumption) and partly to understand the gap to be bridged.

1.5. Significance of the study

This study will contribute to the understanding of women's significant roles in food production and the factors that restrict their status in terms of access to resources, food management and consumption. The study also adds information to the scarce knowledge we have on the socio-cultural aspects of food production, management and use in Ethiopia in general and in Konso in particular. Furthermore, it is expected to create awareness among policy makers, agencies and other concerned bodies in order to enhance their effectiveness in improving women's status, food production and security among the Konso and other societies.

1.6. Limitations of the Study

This ethnographic work was conducted among the Konso. Its purpose is to understand gender-based-production relationships, access to resources, food management and consumption. However, the research has at least two main shortcomings. In Konso, it is likely that each village has its own cultural distinctiveness that makes it different from others. Due to time constraints, I was not able to visit more than two sample villages which represent different geographical and cultural zones to comparatively exhibit Konso culture and women's status and role in food system. It appears therefore, difficult to claim

that this study is a complete work that could fully explain people's way of life throughout the region.

Secondly, the field work was conducted from September 15 to December 25, 2001.

Among the Konso, this is the time when people harvest the first-round product, weed second-round product, clear and prepare the land for the new sowing year to come. As a result, though I was able to observe gender roles in weeding, food transportation, threshing, storing, harvesting, land clearing and preparation, it was impossible to investigate crop sowing and rituals that take place during sowing/planting period around February. Most of the information regarding sowing and gender roles in its rituals were obtained via informants, focus group discussion and individual case studies.

1.7. Organization of the Thesis

This paper is organized into six chapters. Accordingly, the first chapter in its introductory part deals with the statement of the research problem, objectives of the study, the rationale for the research site selection, the data collection methods employed and significance and limitations of the study. The second chapter focuses on the description of the study environment which includes the physical environment, the climate type the region experiences, the major agricultural calendars and its social and demographic characteristics in general.

On the third chapter, the attempt has been made to investigate the origin of Konso people, their traditional political structure, the judiciary system, their kinship, clan and lineage organization, the family and the emic view of gender and the arrangement of various work groups that operate on the basis of gender, age and clan. The status of women and the position they currently hold socially, culturally and economically is described. The fourth chapter explores the nature of Konso agriculture and the role of women in crop production. The variations observed in their productive role as a result of farming techniques change is also discussed. It also discusses the extent of their access to scarce household economic resources and the fundamental reasons that prevent women from controlling and using valuable resources despite their important role in crop production.

Women's role in grain management and marketing is presented in the fifth chapter. Furthermore, the nature and impact of gender variations in coping strategies and is explained. Konso conceptions regarding food, food classification, preparation, preservation, and gender differences in the pattern of dietary habits and practices is also discussed in this chapter.

Finally, the sixth chapter attempts to briefly summarize the focal points of the whole text. Generally, the socio-cultural and politico-economic factors that undermine Konso women's status and role in the community despite their significant contribution in the food system has been dealt with.

CHAPTER TWO

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA

2.1. Introduction

This ethnographic field work was conducted in Tokatu-Laga and Kolme villages among the Konso ethnic group, who are a Cushitic speaking people of Southwest Ethiopia.

Konso is located 595 k./ms south of Addis Ababa within Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State. The Konso land is bounded to the North by Gamo Gofa Zone, to the Northeast by Burji Special Wereda, to the South and Southeast by Oromia region, to the West by South Omo Zone and to the Northwest by Derashe Special Wereda. These are the borders that have been fixed by the Federal Ethiopian Administration recently.

According to the Wereda Bureau of Agriculture, Konso Special Wereda has 45 Peasant Associations (P.As) currently. The entire population of the Special Wereda is 203,227, of which, about 55% are female (C.S.A, 1999). Although the residents' subsistence is based on agriculture, some are engaged in handicraft, daily labor and trade. The Konso are known for their soil and water conservation and terrace construction which in fact appears to be indigenous to the community. In order to deal with the significant level of erosion, most informants claim that terrace construction was commenced by an individual named Kala who was said to have lived near Tokatu-Laga village. However, the real date for the beginning of soil and water conservation and terrace construction is not yet known.

The Konso practice hoe-farming where a one-toothed wooden stick locally called *silbota* and a two-toothed wooden hoe known as *bayra* are used. Oxen-drawn plough

agriculture, which is a recent development, is also used in some areas in addition to hoe-farming. This will be discussed later in detail. The region is extremely mountainous and almost all the villages are located on the hill tops. Although the terrain appears to be inconvenient for farming, "by making terraces, the Konso are able to cultivate their land intensively" (Hodson, 1927:40).

In Konso, there are at least two types of house construction models (*bifta* and *roka*). The former type is an old or traditional house model made of stone and the latter type is a recent development made of wood and mud thatched with grass. Houses with iron sheet roofs and walls of wood and mud are also becoming common at present. Such houses are considered as indicators of wealth along with other key household resources.

Each house is set in a relatively small compound with a boundary fence that separates the individual house from its neighbors. The compound is divided into two main parts. The lower part near the main gate is called *arahata* whereas the back part is called *oyda*. The dividing line between *arahata* and *oyda* is made from stone known as *kawatta-arhata*. The animal shed is located in the *arahata*, whereas the *oyda* is the residential place. Animals are not allowed to go into the *oyda*. If an ox accidentally jumps to the *oyda* from its shed, it is believed that the act will bring misfortune to the head of the household (husband) and the animal will immediately be slaughtered. The *arahata* also serves as a traditional sewerage system locally called *fuuna*. Flood passing through the *funna* can flow in side any body's compound and even house. This happens in villages where the settlement pattern is compact. Since the individual houses are located closely, there is no

room for complaints about the flow of the sewage. An individual who complains and resent this can be punished by community elders.

Within the individual compound, men and women have separate sleeping huts or rooms within the hut. Older sons also have their own hut in the same compound. Granaries, cooking and grinding kitchens, poultry coops, wood stores, and *reqa* or a house where secret and precious materials are kept etc are some of the structures situated within the individual compound. The spare land within the compound will be covered with a variety of crops, herbs, *shelaqita* (a cabbage like vegetable that serves to mix with food), condiment, papaya, guava and other vegetables. This individual compounds are located within walled village. The walled villages in which the Konso live, appear to have a residential town structure. Hallpike stated that, "the Konso are organized into a number of autonomous walled towns. The towns are governed by elected councils of elders" (Hallpike, 1970:258).

Currently, in Konso there is one secondary school, one junior secondary school, thirty-six primary schools, and one vocational training center which is not functional. There are two health centers and five clinics but no hospital, one semi-digital telephone station is also situated in the capital, Karat. In terms of infrastructure, Konso appears extremely poor although there are few dry weather seasonal roads which connect different Peasant Associations to Karat, the capital.

2.2. Physical Environment

2.2.1. Geography

Konso land is mountainous and hilly except the limited plains found around rivers and in the low lands. Almost all parts of those mountain ranges and hills are covered with impressive terraces built of basalt stones. The terraces are approximately from one to five meters width. The rivers draining the region are either permanent rivers or dry rivers that flow seasonally. Among the permanent ones, are the Sagan river that drains the South and Southeast border, Woyto (Tullaya) which drains the Western border and Delbenna that drains the central part of Konso springing from the high Derashe Ala mountain-ranges. A variety of springs including hot ones are also found throughout the region. Some of the springs are said to have medicinal value.

2.2.2. Climate

The elevation of Konso Special Wereda ranges from 550 meters in Woyto plains near the Borena (Oromia) to 2100 meters Aylota mountains near Derashe Special Wereda. The region has a total average rainfall of 750 millimeters. The rainfall pattern is thus limited and highly variable throughout the region. The temperature varies from 25-30 degree centigrade with annual average temperature of 27 degree centigrade. The soil type chiefly

found in Konso is a black and red notosoil (Konso Special Wereda Bureau of Agriculture).

2.2.3. Flora and Fauna

Since the area experiences rain shortage and deforestation, the vegetation in the region tends to have a semi-desert feature. The major types of vegetation in Konso land include varieties of Acacia, Juniperus Procera, Eucalyptus, Gervelia Robusta, Copresis Lustanica and newly introduced vegetations to the region.

The wild animals that used to live in the wereda in the past include lions, buffaloes, elephants, ostriches, etc. which are non-existent at present as a result of deforestation. Gazelles, antelopes, wild-pigs, monkeys, apes, hares, porcupines, hyenas and the like are some of the wild life currently found in Konso. A variety of big and small birds also inhabit the region.

2.3. Agricultural Calendar

There are at least two contradictory outlooks regarding the seasons of the region. The first group of informants believe that the region has two main seasons (*bona* or dry season from September to February and *katanna* or rainy season from March to August). Others however, contend that Konso experience four seasons (*bona* or dry season from November to February, *katanna* or rainy season from March to June, *masana* (post-

harvest time from July to August), and *hageya* (second- harvest period from September to October). During *bona*, people clear and prepare the land for another round of sowing. Since rain is scarce at this time, the farmers prepare the soil by applying manure. Planting and weeding are conducted during *katanna*. Once the crops mature, people start harvesting at the end of the *katana*. *Katana* season is also known for its severe shortage of food when people often tend to seek direct food relief from governmental and non-governmental organizations. Migration for wage-labor in the neighboring towns and plantations is also common during this time. In many instances, people apply different coping mechanisms during this season which will be discussed in detail later in relation to women's role in coping strategies.

Masana is a relative leisurely time in Konso, although women commence clearing the land soon after harvest. Since *masana* is a post-harvest period, people enjoy it by organizing a feast on the traditional ceremony called *hardufanda*. *Hageya*, the fourth season, is a time when the second-round sorghum product begins to mature and is ready to be gathered. However, most informants uniformly agree that the region has two main seasons and twelve months which are arranged by the lunar system of counting days, weeks, and months. The following table shows the Konso months.

No.	The Konso Months	Gregorian Equivalents
1.	<i>Seseyisha</i>	September
2.	<i>Partulda</i>	October
3.	<i>Kishaa</i>	November
4.	<i>Woldindalayta</i>	December
5.	<i>Boringa</i>	January
6.	<i>Sagaoyiba</i>	February
7.	<i>Saganuma</i>	March
8.	<i>Muranu</i>	April
9.	<i>Pelelita</i>	May
10.	<i>Dela</i>	June
11.	<i>Harda</i>	July
12.	<i>Olxoksha</i>	August

Table 1: The Names of Konso Months and their Gregorian Equivalents

2.4. The Settlement Pattern

Although it appears that there can be slight differences from one region to another, observation has shown that there are two notable types of settlement patterns in Konso.

A. Compact settlement

In some areas within Konso Special Wereda, people have settled in highly concentrated traditional villages. One of the study sites here referred to as Tokatu-Laga, is such a settlement group that has such compact settlement situation. Both the village and the individual houses in Tokatu-Laga are surrounded with a stone wall. The walls are made of thick basalt rocks which are about 8 to 10 feet wide with half a meter height. The winding gangways which stretch across the village often connect in the public place within the village called *moora*. At the *moora*, the elderly males are mostly seen playing different traditional games, discussing various community and private issues, spinning cotton, and refreshing themselves and others issues. There are also varying sizes and shapes of stones brought to the *moora* at different times by age grade groups as a memorial gift to the public as part of a traditional physical exercise.

In addition to serving as a public meeting place, the *moora* is a sacred site where rituals are performed. According to Watson (1998:88), "there are sacred and profane *moora*. They are essentially a male space, women are not encouraged to use them and do not take part in the meetings". However, my informants contended that old menopause women

can enter the *moora* and dance with men during certain celebrations. Usually, one can observe a number of sacred poles called *olahita* and a variety of skulls and skins of wild animals hanging on the *olahita*. These are gifts of age grade groups to symbolize the heroism of that specific generation. Each village (*paleta*) thus, has from 14 to 20 *moora*. The number of households within the village compound differ from one village to another. For example, Tokatu-Laga (the study village) has about 600 households.

Every younger generation of the '*paleta*' had an obligation to build its own village as an extension of the mother-village by constructing stone walls as its boundary. The building of surrounding walls, however, is not common at present. The village can have one or two exits and entrances. The entrances of individual compounds and houses are built in a way that people could only enter through them. Since an individual house has no door to shut, wooden poles are placed across the main gate of the individual compound, when the household retires for the night.

There are reports that indicate "the average distance of farm plots closer to living places is estimated to be around 60 minutes walking distance while the distant farm plots are around 78 minutes (Farm Africa 2000)." My own finding shows that the time it takes for people to walk to their farm plots ranges from 60 to 180 minutes. This is mainly due to the fact that the farm plots are fragmented.

B. Dispersed Settlement

In dispersed settlement areas, the distance from one household to another ranges approximately from 300 to 800 meters. In these villages, there are no surrounding stone walls as in the compact village. In comparison to compact settlements where people walk long distances to their farm plots, in dispersed settlement areas farm plots are located at relatively short distances from houses (i.e., from 30 minutes to 1 hour walks) each day. The study village (Kolme) has such a dispersed settlement pattern. This walking distance to their farm plots holds true solely in relation to highland farm plots. Lowland plots however are located in distant areas near the Borena (Oromia) and Tsemako (South Omo) borders. It requires from 6 to 10 hours walk to get to the lowland plots on average. However, people in Kolme have houses in both (highland and lowland) areas. Therefore, male children and fathers in turn engage in lowland farming on a weekly basis and female children also in turn prepare food for their father and brothers and conduct weeding in the lowland areas. In the absence of female children, mothers assume this responsibility particularly if the household is polygamous. Sometimes, male children and fathers carry the prepared food with them while they go to the lowland farm. Generally, the structure of individual compounds and houses appears to have characteristics similar to that of the compact settlement areas.

2.5. Land Use

Almost all Konso villages in both compact and dispersed settlement areas are located on the face of hills and mountain-ranges. This might be to minimize the risk of malaria and to defend themselves against their enemies particularly in the past. Even though they

reside on hill tops, they make use of both highland and lowland farm plots. Since almost all people are engaged directly and indirectly in farming and animal rearing simultaneously, land is a precious and scarce economic resource. Accordingly, the land of Konso at the community level is divided into three major parts each with its own merits and purposes.

2.5.1. *Paleta*

The term *paleta* appears equivalent to the English term village. Within each *paleta* there are a number of *kantas*, sub-*kantas* and sub- sub-*kantas*. The term *kanta* is similar to the term neighborhood. Each *kanta* and the sub-*kanta* has its own administrative head who is responsible for conducting certain tasks such as mobilizing people to repair village walls, collecting food items needed for ritual with the order of clan heads and *timba* (village administrator) and others. The sub-sub-*kanta* comprises of 15 to 20 households though its number differs from one sub *kanta* to another. This sub-*kanta* level is chiefly concerned with transporting a sick person to a health center. Burial of the dead is the exclusive responsibility of the sub-*kanta* which consists of 2 to 3 sub-sub *kantas*.

The village sites appear to be easily defensible since they can be reached only via the narrow and winding rocky paths. The compounds where the *paleta* located are "the bases of their social organization (Hallpike, 1968:258)." Outside the *paleta* compound, there is some land covered with the *kinchb* plant called *dina* which serves to extinguish the

occasional accident of fire within the *paleta*. It also serves as a latrine which is strictly segregated by gender.

2.5.2. *Konssita*

It is widely believed among the elders that the name Konso is derived from the term *konssita* which means, "favorable land for crop production." As the name itself indicates, this land is often under cultivation and is located immediately outside the *dina* forest land. *Konssita* is the closest land used for agricultural activities. All the individual fragmented farm plots (*dula*) are found under *konssita* holding. In the *konssita*, each household has its own trees and other varieties of plants and crops which are owned individually.

2.5.3. *Komayda*

Komayda is common land found away from the residential villages and it means land that is remote. Since *komayda* is a common land covered with natural forest and where wild animals live in, people herd their cattle and hang their beehives. No individual can claim lasting ownership over this land. Thus, any individual can plant crops there by clearing the forest on a temporary basis. When the land one has been ploughing is fallowed, another individual can subsequently plough the land for his personal use and the first person has no right to claim the land as his own plot. From *komayda*, the community members cut wood for house construction, firewood and for any other craft

work, cut grass for thatching their house and fodder for their animals. Currently, however, with the alarming increase in population and the deforestation that has occurred due to the need for productive agriculture land, the *komayda* is shrinking and being transformed into *konssita*. As a consequence, grazing land and forest coverage is declining etc.

Broadly speaking, the land of Konso has a total area of 3191 square k.ms (319056 hectares), out of which 24,000 hectares is already cultivated land, 52,000 hectares is grazing land, 2056 hectares is covered with natural forest, 76,000 hectares under miscellaneous cover and 75,000 hectares are potentially cultivable land, while the remaining 90,000 hectares is unfavorable for cultivation (Konso Special Wereda, Bureau of Agriculture 1997). The use of wood, for fuel and charcoal production, and the variety of craft works provided for tourists by individuals and household consumption, house construction, etc, are leading to the decline in common and private owned forest to only 0.84% of the total area.

2.6. Demographic Characteristics

The Konso are an agricultural people, apparently of mixed negroid and Oromo stock and who speak a Cushitic language (Hallpike, 1968:258). Judging from their language and many aspects of their culture, Herbert S.Lewis (1973:193) also categorized the Konso among the closest relatives of the Oromo. Observation in this study has shown

that most people of Konso either speak the Oromo language or understand it in addition to their own language. According to the community members, the Konso language is known as *Afa Konso*. As far as the population composition is concerned, the Special Wereda is comprised of 79% Konso, 17% Gewada, 2% Amhara, and 2% others. According to this extensive socio-economic survey, about 85.5% of the population is illiterate, of which 90% are females (Farm Africa 2000). Men comprise only 10% of the illiterate persons in all surveyed peasant associations.

The significant level of female illiteracy is associated with the deeply-rooted clan ideology and the marginal position women occupy in the society. Among the Konso, an individual who has not had a male child does not feel that he has had any children at all even though he may have many girl children. It is widely believed that a person who has given birth to a girl child is considered to have delivered "a flying-bird." The symbolic meaning of the "flying-bird" shows the fact that girl children belong to another clan rather than their own due to exogamous marriage. In this regard, in my opinion, it does not appear that it is only the lack of awareness on the part of men that makes them refrain from sending their girl children to school. But it could be the clan-oriented ideology and exogamous marriage practiced in the region which drains the reproductive and productive labor and knowledge resources of women to another clan rather than their own which might have negatively influenced women's chance of getting an education. Furthermore, since girls assist their parents in tilling the land and undertaking domestic activities, parents are mostly unwilling to send their baby girls to school. In some cases, according

to Farm Africa (2000), girls themselves prefer to engage in agricultural activity to education which they think has no significant use in comparison to farming.

The quality of health service and the level of its utilization, as is the case throughout the country, is quite low. The major diseases which prevail in the region include malaria, gastroenteritis (including amoebae, ascariasis, strongloid and others), upper respiratory tract infection, yaws, gastritis, a variety of eye diseases, protein deficiency (malnutrition), anemia kalazar (liechmaniasis), anthrax of cutanus type, sexually transmitted diseases and others.

2.7. Conclusion

The compact walled residence towns and the indigenous technologies are the major physical features the Konso have in common. Since the region is divided into different service cooperatives, each village more or less has its own cultural traits that the villagers share. Due to resource depletion, as a result of rapid population growth and the increasing demand for agricultural land, the flora and fauna are currently at risk. The vegetation coverage seems to have a semi-desert feature and big animals which used to inhabit the region have almost totally perished.

As long as the people use intensive cultivation and intercropping, the quality of farm land is getting poorer from time to time. This environmental deterioration has exposed the region to recurrent drought attack. As observation from two study villages (Tokatu-Laga

and Kolme) has shown, the level of infrastructure is not yet developed. There are no all-weather roads except some seasonal roads that connect a limited number of peasant associations to Karat, the capital. Girls school-enrollment ratio is by far less than the boys which in fact is characterized by late age entry. Health conditions are also quite low and most people tend to use traditional medicines more than the modern health service. Generally, though it appears that there are certain changes in terms of social amenities such as health and education due to efforts exerted by governmental and non-governmental organizations, further work needs to be done to bring about significant socio-economic change.

CHAPTER THREE

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

3.1. Introduction

This chapter looks at some main themes of the Konso social organization. The origins of the Konso, their traditional system administration, leadership and judiciary is discussed from the vantage point of the Konso culture and the community elders at the first phase. Konso kinship and clan organization, patterns of marriage, family structure and gender ideology is the second theme of the chapter. The organization of different work groups that operate across gender, age, clan and neighborhood lines is also discussed.

3.1.1. Myth of Origin

According to elders, at the beginning of creation, there was a gourd plant growing in the wild. As the gourd grew bigger, its first fruit broken into half parts and there came out a man and a woman. Again, the other fruit broke into half parts and there came out two men. The first of the men had crop seeds in his hands while the second had a loom in his hands. The man with crop seeds became a farmer (*etenta*) whereas the man with the loom became an artisan (*hawuda*).

Despite this longstanding mythological explanation, based on the *kara* calculation that makes use of generation poles and stones, the elderly people contend that their forefathers had come to present Konso land from different neighboring areas some 600 *helitta* or years ago. Accordingly, some elders have the view that the Konso had come from Liben (Borena) while others forward the idea that the Konso are from Gidole (Derashe Special Wereda) and Gedeo areas. All informants uniformly believe that all the areas the Konso stemmed from were outside present Konso land and the movement is said to have been gradual. According to this discovery, it appears that there are indications that the Koyra (who are said to have been indigenous settlers) had occupied the present Konso land. When the Koyra leave the land for their present holding, some weak and old people remained there in present Konso land as war captives. These people according to the elders' contention spoke the Konso language as new comers. They were also engaged mostly in non-agricultural activities such as tannery, blacksmithing, *enset* processing and other related craft works.

Furthermore, the term Koyra refers to the people who practice circumcision, since the Konso don't practice circumcision particularly, in the past. It is also widely believed that the present Konso land had been occupied by the Koyra (at present Kore) people. In the conflict over the land, the Konso are said to have held the upper hand over the Koyra and chased them away to the northeast direction. The Konso in fact consider all other ethnic groups as Koyra except the Borena who are their intimate neighbors and with whom they share certain cultural elements. Among the Konso, the Amhara are referred to

as *qaweta*, derived from the Oromo word *qawe*, which means, the fire-gun. This is mainly due to the fact that the Amhara for the first time are said to have come with rifles.

Although elders assert that all the Konso had come outside today's Konso land, there are at least two conflicting arguments regarding the first person who is believed to have arrived in Konso. A considerable number of elders think that the first person to come to present Konso land was a man called Kala, who said to have come from Gondar (North Ethiopia) and who was a clan head or *poqalla*. Contrary to this assumption, other groups of informants deny the former statement and forward the opinion that Kala (the clan head) was indigenous to Konso land. Justifying their assertion, the former group of informants argue that the place where Kala's family currently settled is said to have been the land of *poqalla* (clan head) known as Irgayda who was the first settler. An alternative story told by them is that generations ago, Kala's family settled on the land displacing the local clan head Irgayda. They further view that Kala's family so far has only about 19 generations according to the Konso genealogy.

Some authors like Shacko (1994:83) argue in favor of the latter group of informants that there is no debate that the *poqalla* families among the Konso are indigenous. He further claims that even if someone assumes that the first Kala came from Gondar or another Amharic speaking area, there stands out an important socio-cultural feature to be appreciated: the Kala family and their descendants have been so absorbed into the Konso system of social life that no elements of the culture of origin, in whatsoever content and form, are left traceable. Shacko concludes that since the Konso culture doesn't allow an

outsider to become clan head, all the *poqallas* including Kala are original to Konso. In a similar manner, Hallpike (1972) argued with doubt that it appears unlikely that the first Kala came from Gondar or Shewa. Although one can leave room for further historical investigation, I share the idea that the *Poqalla* families are indigenous to Konso. Because, though all the Konso clans are believed to have come out side of their present land, the Konso definitely tend to share certain cultural elements with their neighboring groups such as Borena and Derashe. Moreover, it also seems that there is no tangible indication that certain Konso clans or clan heads have come from the North.

3.1.2. Traditional Administration and Leadership

Similar to the myth of origin, there are also different views regarding the local administration of Konso. The first group of commentators insist that there were *poqalla* (leaders) for the whole Konso community while others disagree, stating that each Konso village had its own *poqalla* (leader). The term *poqalla* has multifaceted meanings. In previous ethnographic works the *poqallas* have been understood in their religious role or priesthood (Hallpike, 1972) and as clan and lineage heads (Shacko, 1994:81). But later studies realized that they are at the same time economic, political, cultural leaders and are simultaneously priests, large land owners, land lords and clan heads (Watson, 1998:8). The former argument views that the entire Konso land was administered under the leadership of two known *poqallas* (kala and Quufa). Kala's administrative area is said to have stretched from the Northern tip of the region towards the Sagen river direction to the Southern tip in the Duuro area. Whereas Quufa's administrative boundary extends

from Sagen river in the Southeast to the Woyto (Tullaya) river in the West and as far as Fasha in the North.

These leaders had direct contact with the Amhara governors appointed by the central government and they took an intermediary position between the Amhara governors and the local people. They were also said to have been ruling before and after the Italian invasion. As far as their capital is concerned, Quufa's seat was in Fasha, Kaho Village, and Kala's seat was in Karat, Kamole village. Under these leaders there were sub leaders such as *timba* (leaders of *paleta*), *porshota* (*Kanta* or neighborhood leader) and *hela* (community members who serve as a military men). The leader of *hela* is also known as *senkeleta*.

A. *Timba*

The term *timba* literally means drum. The drum represents an individual who governs a given *paleta*. The drum is a symbol of the position and the administrator is the drum holder. All the cultural and political matters of a given village come under the administrative role of the *timba* or drum holder. Since the Konso are governed under the age-grade system or generation grade (Hallpike, 1972:180), the *timba* can be chosen from age groups. According to Hallpike, the Konso generation-grading systems are complex institutions. They differ from age-grading systems in that one's position in the system at birth depends on that occupied by one's father, and by the automatic promotion of everyone at the end of a fixed number of years. Since the Konso systems are based upon

generational status and a fixed cycle of years, there is an inherent difficulty in maintaining some sort of correlation between the grades and the average age of their occupants, which does not arise in other age-grading systems. Thus, because of the difficulties that arise in the Konso age-grade systems, Hallpike conflates both age-grade and age-set systems to define the generation groups.

In the Konso age-grading system, everyone, as soon as an individual is born, he is placed in a grade whose rank is solely dependent on the grade of his father (Hallpike, 1972:181). The transition of power from one generation to another happens every 18 years, during, which the drum remains in the home of the governing age-grade group. The *senkeleta* (*hela* leader) is also chosen from that specific age group where the *timba* is elected. There is no special criterion by which the *timba* is chosen. Since he is chosen randomly, and there can be three or four drum holders from the same clan and no drum holder from another i.e., they do not systematically represent each clan. However, each person holds the drum for only one year except the Pata, in *kalkusa* generation, and Telliya and Mayle families in the *hirba* generation.

A leader who holds the drum for more than one year is called *anda*. The first holder in each generation holds it for three successive years. In the *hirba* generation the first drum holding family (Telliya) and the 16th family (Mayle) retain the drum for one more year which is unusual in the *kalkusa* generation. The basic reason why these families hold the drum for an extra year is the fact that they are the main *poqalla* families who could lead

and administer the whole nine clans. Since the other drum holders are the *poqallas* of a single clan, they can't hold the drum for more than one year.

Each drum has its own name. For instance, the Tokatu-Laga's drum is called *Aybo*. The residents shout *Aybo Pane*, let the *Aybo* shout, as they carry the drum to the new holder's home. The leadership responsibility and power also moves from one household to another each year as the drum moves. When the drum transfers from one holder to another, the would be holder prepares the local grain beer (*chaka*). All the people of the *paleta* come to the *moora* and the elders conduct speech and prayers for a good harvest in the coming year, peace and prosperity to the community. This ceremony takes place during pre-sowing time around February each calendar year. The house where the drum enters thereafter is referred to as *tiga timba* (*timba's house*).

The *timba* are administrative and in some cases ritual leaders and one *timba* has the responsibility of administration only over one *paleta*. The power and the right of his authority stems out of the interest and decision of the community as he consults the community to make a decision on any public matter. *Timba* is responsible to carry out tasks investigating the causes of crime in the community. He approves the punishment passed by the community over a criminal. Rituals related to the election of *hela* (military men) are also performed by him. Generally speaking, although *timba* had the above discussed administrative roles and functions, his power seemed to have significantly declined due to the modern political intervention unlike the clan heads who still play a role in Konso society.

B. Poroshota

The *Poroshota's* position is below *timba* and has a special role. *Porshota* is elected on clan basis after extended consultation among clan members. A person who is considered ethical is given the *porshota* position. His main task is organizing community labor to carry out tasks such as repairing the building of *paleta* and *kanta* compounds and its surroundings, as well as terraces on common lands. As people report areas that need to be repaired, he orders people to undertake the task on a given day.

However, individual can start repairing the damaged areas without *porshota's* order. He places the first stone on the wall site, after which people start to work. A person who does repair the wall without his order will be taken before the *timba* and will be punished for breaching the law. In the same manner, an individual who refuses to undertake the task will be taken before the *timba* to be punished. The *porshota* also has special responsibility to collect foods to be sacrificed for gods and submit it to the *timba*. The sacrifice of foods is mostly performed during crisis like shortages of rain, war, sudden accidents, occurrences of epidemics, etc. The offerings of food for each misfortune differ based on the order given by diviners. A person elected to the *porshota* position must be mature and willing to assume the responsibility. Age and interest are thus the criteria for the election of *porshota*. Even at present, the *porshota* carry out their administrative functions.

3.1.3. The Judiciary System

In terms of judiciary process, the community's authority and decision-making power over criminals appears to be determinant and the possibility of appealing to the higher *poqalla* (local king) does not seem realistic. In many instances, it is definitely the *paleta* members who appear to have a significant decision-making power and right. The *timba* and clan heads only have the responsibility of approving what the community members agreed upon rather than deciding cases on their own right.

My observations which are confirmed by a number of informants show that the *timba* has an impregnable authority and power over criminals only because his authority is based on the decision of the community with whom he discusses before making decision. If the community believes that the crime a person committed is believed to have happened correctly, they beat the criminal's home and the man with the *Kinchb* branch (which the society considers as a cursing tree) and order the criminal to leave their land for another area with all his family members. He no longer can turn back to the village and no person is also allowed either to use his home to live in or to build his own home in the place where the criminal's house had been built. This is due to the fact that the guilty man is believed to be a cursed individual for his bad deeds and the home where he used to live in is also thought unclean.

In the case of theft and rape, the criminal is not chased out at once unless he commits the act recurrently neglecting the *poqalla* (clan head's) advice. The following is a judiciary procedure concerning Teygine as narrated by Kayola, aged 85. The story goes as follows:

Case No. One

Teygine. Sex male

There was a man called Teygine, aged 40, who used to live in Galgale Qolmale *paleta* in Kolme area. Teygine was found guilty of stealing a variety of goods, raping somebody's wife, etc. All the *paleta* members held a meeting in the *moora* under the leadership of elders. Kayola says that the assembled *paleta* members decided that the man should be deported from Konso land for his misdeeds. The elders then reported the community's decision to the *paleta timba*. Accepting the community's decision he ordered the *paleta* members to beat Teygine with the branch of *Kinchb* tree, chasing him out of the land. Teygine's home was destroyed and his family members were thrown out of Konso land. Even though the wreckage of Teygine's house is there, still no man could use it. The debris of the house will never be used even as a firewood since it is the cursed man's property and thus remains there forever. However, his closest relatives can build another house in his plot other than the place where Teygine's house had been located and plough the land for their personal benefit.

As shown in this case, the community members in common have the power and right to decide the type and degree of punishment to be passed up on a criminal. The village administrator and clan heads although seemed to have symbolically considerable authority, they still accept the community's decision and approve it rather than passing punishment up on the criminal using their own authority and right.

Nevertheless, before deportation, less rigid judgement can be given. With the decision of the people, another physical punishment (i.e., lifting *Reqa's* pole, which is the biggest Konso house, can be loaded over the criminal's hands). He carries it for a long while until his hands get swollen. On the other hand, if somebody kills a man, members of the *paleta* hold a meeting in the *moora* on the matter. If the murderer is found to be guilty, he will

also be beaten to death by community members and buried in a separate cemetery known as *pe7ateta* outside the village.

Another serious type of crime is a crime committed against the community and the criminal is called *akatuta*. Such crimes include: giving out the community's plan for raiding another village or ethnic groups particularly in the past, exposing the community's decision with respect to arms and land fees to the government, etc. Every villager participates in the search for the guilty party. Such a systematic way of searching for a criminal is referred to literally as 'birds-information,' i.e. the secret information about somebody's *akatutaship* which can be obtained mostly from his closest friends, family members, relatives, etc, in a confidential way. *Akatuta* can also be investigated with the assistance of diviners through different rituals including the sacrifice of sheep. The elders and the diviners pour the sheep's blood on the gangway and order the villagers to walk on the passage. Sitting in front of the split blood they carefully watch the people and if somebody appears to be hesitant while walking over the blood the elders and diviners try to suspect that the hesitant person is *akatuta*. At the time, if he accepts and confesses his mistake, the community members can warn him not to commit such a crime again.

Generally, in one way or another, the judiciary system appears to be accomplished entirely on a community basis and approved by the *timba* or (*paleta* leader) and *poqalla* (clan heads). Although there is modern political structure, the traditional political system seems still play dominant role in the Konso judiciary system.

3.2. Kinship, Clan and Lineage

A person's place in many societies, his rights and duties, his claim to property largely depend on his genealogical relationships to other members which are linked ties at kinship and descent (Mair, 1970:62). The Konso are a patrilineal society who trace their descent line through males. However, for the Konso according to Hallpike (1972:87), kinship is not an all pervading mode of relationship. Rather, he has the opinion that the obligations of kinship are comparable to one's relationships with neighbors (what he calls fellow ward-members or town-members). Though it appears that the lineage has limited significance and property is owned individually, kinship ties are marked by mutual assistance such as support for members during bereavement, counseling and others.

Particularly during mourning, all close patrilineal kin groups take part in the bereavement ceremony until it is over. All close kin members of the dead person use the mourning symbols (unproportional hair-cut, growing nails, restricting from anointing butter their face and hair, etc) except married female members. In this regard, what is paradoxical is that married women do use mourning symbols for their husband and children, not for their parents and siblings. This indicates the women's distance to their kin groups after marriage.

Among all the clan members, the relationship between *abuya* (mother's brother) and sister's son appears to be very close. In every matter concerning the sister's son, the *abuya* often has precedence over all clan members. When conflict occurs between sister's son

and any outsider, if his father's clan members hold a meeting to settle the matter, the person responsible to take part in the meeting from his mother's side is *abuya*. The eldest *abuya* is preferable in this specific case. In fact, in all matters among the Konso, eldest sons are given priority over all male siblings for matters related to the clan, household and other issues.

The closeness between the sister's son and *abuya* derives probably from the fact that the sister is supported by her brothers even after marriage. If conflict occurs between a husband and wife, she boasts of her brother's ability to defend her from any attack that could come from her husband's side. When a sister enters into conflict with her husband, brothers take part in reconciliation. Following the son's parents, mother's brother is accountable in all matters to his sister's son. In the absence or death of the eldest *abuya*, his immediate brother undertakes the role on his behalf. If the sister has no *abuyata* at all, the closest *kafa* member could carry out *abuyata*'s duty. The *abuya* gives a huge bull or billy-goat to his sister's son on his marriage. Moreover, the sister's son hides the girl he has abducted at his *abuya*'s house until the elders settle the conflict between the bride's and bridegroom's family caused as a result of abducting the girl. To indicate the prime importance of *abuya*, among the Konso there is a proverb "*abuwa birtuta*" which means, the *abuya* is like the sun.

What appears paradoxical is that despite this tight relationship between mother's brother and sister's son, marriage is practiced between sister's son/daughter and mother's brother's son/daughter. In principle, the marriage might not be thought contradictory since sister's

son reckons his descent line on his father's side and belongs to another clan group.

Furthermore, although the sister is proud of her brother and the sister's son maintains a close relationship to his mother's brother, the sister does not use the mourning symbols such as unproportional hair cuts, avoidance of anointing butter and restricting wearing bracelets on their neck and head etc, on the death of her brothers.

In Konso, clan is the largest kinship unit (Hallpike, 1972: 87) which constitutes a number of lineages based on patrilineal descent. Clan membership is acquired by birth and adoption. There are nine clans which trace their descent line patrilineally. Each clansman considers clan member as his brother or sister. The lineage is the smallest kinship unit which diverges at fifth or sixth generation from the main clan and through which people maintain close ties to their immediate members. Some clans have lineages whereas smaller clans have no lineages.

The Konso word equivalent to clan is *kafa*. The nine exogamous patrilineal clans are *Paasanta*, *Tokmaleta*, *Keeritiitta*, *Mahaleta (Saganota)*, *Eelayta*, *Sawdata*, *Arkmayta*, *Ishalayta*, and *Tiksayta*. Each clan has its own totem and special character (also see the following table).

No.	Clan	Totem	Special Characteritics
1.	<i>Pasaanta</i>	lion	magician
2.	<i>Tokmaleta</i>	sheep	unfailing courage
3.	<i>Sawdata</i>	elephant/monkey/rat	destructive
4.	<i>Arkmayta</i>	falcon	intercession to the sky and God for rain
5.	<i>Tiksayta</i>	gravel	greedy
6.	<i>Keertitta</i>	fox	anger, but generous
7.	<i>Ishalayta</i>	hair	happy and playful
8.	<i>Mahaleta</i>	hyna	glutton
9.	<i>Eelayta</i>	fiber of the neck	anger and skilled craft workers

Table 2: The Konso Nine Clans, their Totem & Special Characteristics

Among the nine clans, some show closer associations with each other. Hallpike (1972:88) considers these relations as a clan alliance. There are four such clan alliances which excludes *Tiksayta* :

1.Keertitta-Pasanta

2. *Arkmayta-Ishalayta*

3. *Mahaleta-Sawdata*

4. *Tokmaleta-Eelayta*, (Shacko, 1994:81).

The associating clans intermarry in some areas and avoid marriage in other areas. In Tokatu-Laga, the study village for instance, *Tokmaleta* and *Eelayta* do not have a marriage relationship. But, in Kolme another study village, these clans intermarry. Informants could not explain how the marriage avoidance relation between two different clans came out. Among the Konso clans, *Keertitta* and *Mahaleta* have a relatively greater population in comparison to the rest while the smallest clans are *Eelayta* and *Tiksayta*. Although the nine clans more or less appear to show equal respect to each other, the two populous clans (*Keertitta and Mahaleta or Saganota*) seem to have better acceptance in terms of arbitrating conflicts, administration and in overall social life.

All the clan members in common look down on the *hawuda* (artisans). The *hawuda* occupy a marginal position in both social and economic life . They are almost totally engaged in craftwork such as blacksmith, tannery, weaving, pottery, and the like. They were highly ostracized and no clan member could eat food, intermarry and participate in social life with them, particularly in the past.

Although it appears that there are changes (eating the food together, intermarriage particularly with tanners and blacksmiths, etc) in their life-style at present, potters still maintain distant relations with the rest of the clan groups. A reason given for the distant

relationship maintained so far is the fact that potters grind the soil with which they produce pot and thus are considered feminine (*orrotta*) since grinding is the special work reserved only for woman. As a result, even today they tend to be less accepted than other artisans who tend to intermarry with other clans although to an insignificant extent. The main factor for the relative above mentioned changes observed in the life-style of *hawuda*, appears to be the introduction of Christian education and exposure to the rest of the world through trade, migration and modern education to some extent.

Since clan members are related to each other, endogamy is unusual. However, the sub lineage of *Keertitta; Malla*, intermarries with other sub-lineages (*Kantayta, Sellata* and *Ikitayta*). This is a recent development as witnessed by the statement of the members of the rest of *Keertitta* (Shacko, 1994: 81). Moreover, cross-cousin marriage is also practiced in Konso. A person can marry his mother's brother's daughter/son, or his fathers' sister's daughter/son. But, one is prohibited from marrying his mother's sister's daughter/son, or, father's brother's daughter/son. As uniformly agreed by informants, the basic reason for cross-cousin marriage is to maintain all the resources under the control of close relatives.

Each clan has clan-head family. The clan head families are entitled to the position by birth or in the principle of succession. In the same manner, each sub-clan or lineage has its own clan head. Each clan head has a bracelet which symbolizes his status. The bracelet which is worn on the wrist of the right hand is called *Tuma*. The *Tuma* holders are the *poqalla* or clan heads who used to govern the nine Konso clans as a whole. Below the *Tuma* holders, there are also other sub-*poqalla* (clan heads) who wear a bracelet in the

same way on the wrist of their right hand. The bracelet is known as *mugula*. The difference between the two bracelets lies on the power of leadership. The *Tuma* holders, therefore, are the higher clan heads (*poqalla*) since they have authority over the nine Konso clans compared to *mugula* holders who are responsible for the leadership of a single clan. *Mugula* holder administers only one clan.

The clan headship (*poqalla*) status is acquired by birth rather than achievement. In the principle of succession, a person can claim the *poqalla* position after successive 5 or 6 genealogies. The eldest son of the *poqalla* will be candidate to *poqalla* status and the candidate is locally called *turayta*. Once he has become a candidate (*turayta*), he can unquestionably claim the *poqalla* status soon after his father's death. The coronation to the *poqalla* status will be accompanied by the special ceremony carried out by the *paleta* members. In the death or absence of the eldest son (*qarta*) of the *poqalla* family, the *poqallaship* will pass directly to his immediate younger brother *kussita*. The *poqalla* who were responsible to govern entire clans and worn *tuma* were said to have lived on the hill tops isolated from the common residents.

Although there are indications of the presence of *tuma* holders who led in the past at least half of Konso, it appears that they had been limited to administering only one *paleta* that incorporate many *mugula* holders who represent different clans. Both the *tuma* holders and their subordinates (*mugula* holders) are not only secular leaders, but also sacred leaders. In Konso, all leaders appear to conflate both sacred and secular leadership and functions. After the conquest of Emperor Minelik in 1897, the *poqalla* or clan heads were

given feudal positions such as *balambaras*, *grazmach*, *kegnazmach*, etc. in an attempt to incorporate the traditional Konso political structure into the imperial government.

Clan heads (*poqalla*) experience a variety of restrictions. A clan head can not consume the food prepared by any individual or even by his own wife. But he consumes the food prepared by the virgin girls of his own clan. The plots where the foods prepared for him grow should be separate. The *poqalla* are said to have special spiritual energy through which they can directly communicate with the celestial bodies (angels) in the particular house called *akita* reserved for the purpose. Moreover, they had counselors called *Sara* who used to advise the leaders on various administrative, justice, ritual and other related matters. Below them in the hierarchy were a number of sub-rulers.

As far as the function of clan heads is concerned they perform significant activities which form the heart of clan unity. Primarily, the clan heads (*poqalla*) often perform rituals (pre-sowing ritual carried out by the clan heads to indicate that it is time to start sowing, *hardufanda* or post-harvest feast, and the post-harvest food offerings for the lineage spirit (*karaya*), etc.) particularly during pre-harvest and post-harvest times. The purpose of the rituals is to wish a good harvest and to offer sacrifices as a thanksgiving for the lineage spirit. These rituals form the basis of the clan heads sacred and secular powers.

.Counseling and arbitration of conflicts also are part of clan-heads functions. Help provided to the weak, e.g. marriage to a clan member of a widow to protect the property and children against others and compensation payment for marriage when a clan member marries somebody's wife, are some of the vital functions of the clan members when agreed by clan heads and elders. Supporting a clan member by contributing certain

amount of money for burial through the clan centered *idirs* are an important function of the clans. The commencement of clan-based *idir* is a recent development.

Clan members also assist members by pooling their labor during mourning, specially if the time is harvesting, sowing, mowing, weeding, etc, through the *kafa* work group, which will be discussed latter on. The *kafa* or clan *idir* members sometime slaughter a bull in relation to different celebrations such as *meskel*. The purpose of the feast is to strengthen the clan relationship, which appears to be loosening due to modernization and other related factors, according to my informants.

3.3. Marriage

Although the Konso are patrilineal clans that practice exogamous marriage, there are rare cases where sub-lineages of some clans (*Keertitta*) perform indogamy as discussed above in kinship, clan and lineage section. Furthermore, cross-cousin marriage is also common among the community members. In Konso, marriage in the past was conducted with the agreement of the parents of marrying couples. This is due to the fact that the marriage contract involved not only the marrying couples but also their parents, and it was impossible to marry without their parents interest and agreement. At present, however, the marriage agreement more or less is initiated by the couple. The reason why parents

arranged marriages in the past was to avoid intermarriage between clan members, which was expected to result in misfortune due to anger of the lineage spirit (*karaya*).

In marriage arrangements undertaken particularly by the parents, it is not the girl's beauty which is considered. Rather, it is the presence of infectious and fatal diseases (tuberculosis), epilepsy, evil-eye, whether the girls' parents are from a cowardish family (clan) who retreat during war rather than ferociously attacking the enemy, or whether she is from a clan known for homosexuality, whose dead bodies are believed to easily swell and break down or bounce up (*boka*) after they have been buried, vulnerability to smallpox and others. If the boy's family is free from such deficiencies, they select the girl whose family is in the same status. The boys' parents then secretly talk to the girl's family through mediators (elders). Once the boy's parents realize that the girl's parents have agreed with their request, the boy and his friends take the girl by force to his home while she is returning from market, fetching water, or any other place they come across her. The act is not taken as an abduction since the girls' parents have an agreement with the boys' family. The reason why the boy takes the girl by force is not to pay all the bridewelh required.

Due to the recent development of initiation of marriage by marrying mates, the strict pre-conditions for marriage which used to be required in the past are loosening currently.

Mate selection mostly happens during the time when youths are engaged in night play at the *moora*, or protecting crops from birds, etc. To show that they have agreed on the marriage question, the boy would give her clothes, shoes, and the like particularly at

present. Marriage often takes place during the post-harvest and pre-harvest time. Once he abducts the girl with his friends, the boy hides somewhere around his close relatives or friends and sends elders to settle the matter with the bride's family peacefully. However, in the marriages initiated by marrying couple, abduction takes place mostly with the willingness of the girl though there are cases where it is performed without her consent.

During the marriage, fathers do not give any thing to the eldest son since he is the main heir and who takes care of his parents when they retire. But, if the marrying son is one of the younger sons, the father gives him a cow, an ox, land, grain, a sleeping skin, and builds him a new house. The girl's parents claim bridewealth from her husband in exchange for her reproductive and productive labor capacity. As far as their preference for a marital partner for the girl and on behalf of the girl herself, it is based on the wealth of the boy and his family such as the large number of farm plots, heads of cattle, *shelaqita*, their ownership of apartment like house (*reqa*), houses with iron sheet roofs etc. At present, educated individuals and traders are also preferred. Literate males however, tend not to prefer illiterate girls. There are indications that educated married males are even divorcing their illiterate wives according to informants. Traditional marriages are also giving way to church marriages as a result of the spread of Christianity, particularly of the Protestant denomination which accounts "50% of the total population (Farm Africa, 2000)" in the region.

Nevertheless, many men in Konso usually marry more than one wife either with the consent of the married partners or if the husband wishes to do so. The former type of

polygamy takes place when the first wife is either unable to deliver a child or if a child she has had will never grow up because of biological and health problems. After the partners discuss the matter, the wife may allow her husband to marry another wife so as to get children who could increase their family and clan size. Immediately after marriage to a second wife, he divides the farm plots into two for each wife. Since the marriage has taken place with the agreement of the partners, it will not result in conflict between the husband and the first wife. However, polygamy also takes place on the basis of the free will of the husband. Frequent conflicts can result from this marriage particularly between the co-wives on one hand and between the husband and the first wife on the other since it may have emerged from the sole interest of the husband.

The secret of polygamous marriage and delivering many children is supported by the desire for maintaining and sustaining the descent line of the family and the clan. Men thus often strongly desire polygamy. Although there are conflicts among the co-wives and husband, women also appear to accept it as well. This is because of the fact that remaining unmarried is a great shame among Konso community members and women thus prefer to marry even a man who has a wife (wives) as a means to escape from cultural sanctions. For men, having more than one wife is taken to be a sign of wealth. Since descent line is reckoned through male members, a person who only has a baby girl basically does not think he has children. Thus, these all factors are important forces behind polygamy in Konso.

As far as the bridewealth is concerned, the bridegroom had the obligation to give bridewealth payment to the parents of the bride. Once a husband pays bridewealth for his wife's parents, he has full rights over his wife and she is considered as a personal property of her husband. Even in case if he divorces her, another husband who marries the divorced/separated woman has an obligation of returning the bridewealth her previous husband had paid for her parents. Unless the second husband returns bridewealth, both of them can enter into conflict. On behalf of a girl's parents, the bridewealth is taken as a compensation for they give him a reproductive and productive labor.

Since a woman is thought to be the property of her husband, she has tacit obligation to contribute in labor and to submit to what her husband orders her to do. As a result, she has no control over scarce resources such as land, livestock, house and grain in the granary and at the time of divorce also her husband gives her no valuable goods including her own children. Although the amount and type of bridewealth paid differs from one region to another, generally it includes an ox, billy-goat, butter, honey, cultural scarf, certain amount of money, etc. Valuable items of bridewealth (an ox, billy-goat and cash) are given to the father while the other minor items (butter, honey and cultural scarf) are given to the mother of the girl and close relatives (uncle and aunt). The animal can be a male calf and it can also be given to the girl's parents after a while or after the couple bear from 3 to 4 children. The goat and cash however, is given before the bridegroom takes the girl home.

In one-way or another, the first marriage and bridewealth payment is fairly low. But, when somebody marries someone's wife after she is separated from her husband, the

ransom payment is very expensive (from 2 to 3 thousand Birr). Unless the second husband pays compensation to the first husband, they can enter into conflict, which can even involve the clan group of the two individuals since clan members contribute a certain amount of cash for compensation paid to her previous husband by their clan member. The compensation payment takes place even at present if a person marries a separated and/or divorced woman.

3.4. Wedding

Among the Konso, the wedding is the process by which the marrying couple publicize their partnership to their kin groups and to all *paleta* residents (as it maybe the case elsewhere). One can observe two kinds of weddings: *sargeta guta* (the large wedding) and *sargeta shaka* (the small wedding). In the case of *sargeta guta*, the boy may have abducted the girl with his friends, hiding her somewhere in the home of his friends and close relatives. As discussed above in marriage section, abduction happens either by force or as a boy secured the girl's willingness. They slaughter a goat and spend from 6 to 7 days eating the meat with *dama* (dough ball). Furthermore, the reason why the bridegroom takes the bride to his closest relatives (particularly mother's brother home) is to secure their assistance during the wedding since the bridegroom's parents may lack the economic capacity to support their son. During this time, no sexual relation will take place between the partners.

As they return to the groom's home, his friends contribute a certain amount of money to buy the grain beer. The girl on her behalf calls her escorts who will help her by grinding grain and preparing food. All the escorts (from 5 to 7) must be her own relatives.

Drinking the *chaka* and eating the *dama*, the couple, his friends and the bride's escorts spend about 5 consecutive days dancing and chanting. On the fifth day, the groom's friends and bride's escorts return to their home having eaten meat bought by the groom's friends. This is the primary most common or the largest wedding among the community members. No parent and kin group except the bride's escorts whom she chooses from her close relatives could participate in the wedding ceremony.

The following wedding (*sargeta shaka*) lasts about three successive days immediately after the largest (*sargeta guta*) wedding, as an extension of the first wedding. This wedding however, is not taken as a separate or second wedding. In terms of food and drink served and the general process, no significant variation is observed between the two weddings. The ceremony takes place in the bridegroom's home where the first wedding is performed.

There are however, slight differences in the weddings from one village to another. Accordingly, in some areas (Kolme, one of the study sites) and Fasha, it appears that there is little variation with regard to entire weddings. When the wedding ceremony is over after eight subsequent days as discussed above in this section, the people who have been attending the ceremony turn back to their home. In the same way, the bride also returns to her parent's home without having sexual relations with the groom.

The wedding ceremony in these areas is thought as a contract that establishes formal agreement between the partners on the one hand and between their parents on the other rather than a simple wedding celebration. This is one of the differences observed in relation to weddings between the two study villages. During certain ceremonies when the boy's parents slaughter animals or prepare any other good quality food, the bride is invited to the groom's parent's home often with her escorts. In such a way, the bride can spend from 3 to 4 years. The reason why she stays in her parent's home is mostly until she is mature since the marriage arrangement takes place at an early age in some cases. This varies from weddings in Takatu-Laga village where the bride remains in the groom's home after the wedding ceremony has been completed. In Kolme, the bridegroom having prepared another ceremony invites the bride again which is considered the last wedding whereby she remains there as a wife. This ceremony takes place after a long while once two weddings are performed.

When the last wedding is over, the bride spends from 3 to 4 months in the groom's home without performing any tasks eating good quality food. Although the bridegroom eats food with the bride, he undertakes his usual task (farming). During this time, she can't visit her parents, participate in mourning or go out of the compound. Preparing *chaka* mixed with honey (quality grain beer), she invites her parents after a 3 to 4 month stay in a ceremony referred to as *chaka dolen doya* which means, acquaintance ceremony particularly in the past. At present, she does not wait that long.

After this ceremony, she walks around the village with the brides who married at the same time. During the tour, they visit the neighbors, relatives, friends etc. together. Even though the Konso are not concerned with the issue of virginity, she has the moral obligation to put on the black male goat's skin and to hold the brideship stick made of either wood or iron. The stick symbolizes that she is married and honorable. The bride receives this stick from the hand of the clan head (*poqalla*). The clan head anointing the stick with butter puts it on the skin laid on the ground. Before the brides receives the stick, he delivers a speech saying "Oh, baby girls if you are confident enough that you have not committed sexual relation so far with any male, please take this stick." The confident bride who has had no sexual relations, picks the stick and puts on the black male goat's skin, wears a variety of bracelets, and anointed with butter, walks around the village.

The brideship stick is believed to symbolize the bride's virginity (fullness) whereas the butter symbolizes fertility of the girl. The girl who has had sexual relations never touches the stick. If she takes the stick knowingly while she is not virgin in reality, it is believed that she will die in pregnancy without delivering a child because of the anger of the lineage spirits. When she moves within the village with out the stick simply putting on the skin, every resident who looks at the bride laughs at her considering that she is a rude girl. It is only during this time that virginity is desired. Generally, it appears that through such mechanisms the society tries to maintain the girl's virginity by encouraging them to avoid premarital sexual relations.

3.5. The Family Structure and Relations

Although there are scholars who stress the difference between the family as a unit organized around kinship ties and the household as a residential unit (Yanagisako, 1979:163, Robertson, 1991:9 and Jonson, 1995: 136), many scholars argue that the relationship between family and household is always something which requires detailed social and historical analysis. Accordingly, some authors believe that both terms are one and the same and cannot be used separately (Kottak, 1994:342). Among the Konso, the notion of family and household appear to overlap. Significantly, a Konso family or household is composed of spouses (husband and wife) and their children of both sexes. When the head of the family is the eldest son, the family or household often includes grand parents. This is mainly due to the fact that the eldest sons are the main heirs of their fathers' land and house and take care of their parents once they are retired. But when the head of the family is the younger son, the family excludes grand parents, comprising only of spouses (husband and wife) and their unmarried children.

In Konso, since birth and adoption have a more or less equal share for one's membership into a family, other non-kin dependents are also considered as household members. Such dependents can be either kinsmen who have blood relationship or non-kin individuals. Thus, the notion of family and household in Konso constitute both kin and non-kin people and appear to form extended-family system whereby grand-parents reside in the same house with their children and grand-children. The non-kin member can be any individual who is not the clan member and/or adopted by that specific family. With

regard to household structure, the husband occupies the position of the head of the household. Since the wife is the main food crop producer, she is seen as his supporter and responsible for the household issues after her husband. In terms of decision-making concerning the household, male members of the household play the dominant role. The husband is involved in all private and public issues representing the household at the community level. He directs all household members (males and females) including his wife to perform even the daily routine activities related to agriculture conducted by females. Without his intervention, no valuable item can be sold, borrowed and/or purchased. He negotiates to buy or sale a house, land, and livestock and food grain (the scarce economic resources) of the household. As long as the husband is the head of the household, he performs offerings to gods and lineage spirits (*karaya*) who can send either blessing or misfortune. He thus, represents his family both in the physical and spirit world.

Contrary to this, women cannot occupy influential positions in their household except domestic activities. Even a widowed woman is unable to negotiate representing her family on any matter at the community level although she is presumed to be the head of the household. Moreover, she is not able to actively participate in various socio-cultural and political cases at the community level on behalf of her family. But, her deceased husband's brothers or her closest relatives or male members of her clan negotiate on her behalf despite the fact that she is the head of the household.

This reality clearly shows that women occupy marginal positions within the community in general and within household in particular. This is due to the fact that all the scarce household economic resources are owned only by men. Moreover, the socio-cultural and jural positions men occupy at the community level empowers them to control the productive and the reproductive capacity of women. For instance, if a woman wants to purchase meat from market, she is unable to bargain on her own right since negotiating in public is reserved only for men according to informants. She reports the matter to either of the mentioned affinal and consanguinal relatives who are able to bargain and purchase the meat with her own money. However, this happens only until her male children become mature. Once male children of a deceased man reach adolescence, they assume all the administrative responsibilities on their father's behalf.

Since female children depart from the household at marriage, they are not given priority within the household. Even in the presence of their father, male children have precedence over girls in terms of property ownership, food consumption, etc. since they are the main heirs and representatives of the household, specially after the retirement of their father. All female members of the family including their mother fear them and show them respect, particularly the eldest son. Although female members of the household show respect to male members, the males in turn owe love to them.

Thus the male members in general and the father and eldest son in particular are influential within the household. An individual who has given birth only to baby girls

feels that he has had no children. This is mainly due to the fact that sons are heirs of their family, whereas the girls will leave their family for another clan as a result of exogamous marriage. Furthermore, once a girl marries, she does not even adopt mourning symbols at the death of her parents and siblings except her husband and children. As a daughter, she has no right of inheritance from her parents. Daughters thus occupy a marginal position in the overall life within the family.

In the polygamous household men are often partial to either one of the wives. In most cases, the husband neglects his first wife who has given birth to many children. After he marries his second wife, he spends much of his time with her if she can provide him with better food and shows strong love for him to win his support. If the first wife resents his partiality, he can beat her and reduce her share of food provisions. As living within the same compound aggravates the conflict between co-wives and their husband, he builds another house for the second wife in another compound. Each of the wives plough their own plots separately. The amount of land of the first wife however, is relatively greater than the other wives, according to all my informants, because she is thought of as the founding mother of the household who has ploughed the land for a long time to get it to its present state of fertility. Although the first wife disagrees with the allocation of land to other wives, she has no right to object against division of the land or to take her case to the elders, since polygamy is a common and normal practice accepted by the society. Even though people settle disputes caused as a result of polygamy within the household, according to the statements by the Konso Special Wereda Women's Department Head,

there are cases where women try to appeal to the courts or Wereda Women's Department at present.

In terms of agricultural activity each wife is assisted by her own children, unless she has no children, in which case she works alone. The wives are also assisted by their husband in activities considered hard such as terrace, house, granary construction and ploughing with oxen. He can however allocate more of his labor to the wife whom he loves more and who in turn respects him. Even if he doesn't contribute any labor to a wife, he can claim food from all of them. The respect wives owe to their husband is measured by the quality of the food and *chaka* they provide him, apart from subordination.(being under full control of their husband). The obedient wife often serves him with a thicker *dama* (dough ball) and *chaka* (grain beer) mixed with (cows, sheep, oxen, goats) blood or honey.

In this respect, the new wife who has no children and a lower work burden can provide him with better food and drink and can win his favor easily. Since the first wife has many children she is less able to serve him best quality food and drink. The *dama* will be thinner than that prepared by the new wife as all informants agree. Thus, the first wife is less able to gain her husband's heart and win his support. The partiality he shows to his second wife in terms of food grain provision could result in frequent hunger in the first wife's household where his labor is not fully used, particularly if the first wife has no children who can support her in food production. The occurrence of hunger can be low in the house where he contributes in labor. Many husbands however, tend to lean towards

the new wife according to informants. This happens mostly until she gives birth to a child and loses the opportunity of marrying another person.

The first wife is relatively less burdened in agricultural activity since she is supported by her children. She can also be supported by work group (*uganda*) members for she has a long acquaintance with the villagers in contrast to the new wife who mostly depends on her own labor for agricultural tasks. Nevertheless, the new wife has greater opportunity to gain the assistance of her husband. At the death of the husband of the polygamous household, each wife maintains her own plot. But, the greatest portion of the farm plot often goes to the first wife who is the mother of the eldest son i.e. the main heir. If the other wives go to another village in marriage as a result of their husbands death, the first wife can add their land to hers. If they have had a male child before they marry another person, he will inherit the land after he becomes mature. Female children of all wives have the right to use the land only until they marry. They are only working on it as part of their mother's household. However the greatest portion of agricultural activity is mainly undertaken by women with their female children and to some extent male children. Husband's contribution is mostly limited to house, granary and terrace construction. Although he doesn't contribute much labor in terms of food production, he participates in the social life at the community level as a representative of all his wives, which is considered an important task. He is thus given priority in all household matters and respected by his co-wives. The precedence given for male members within a family over females is also seems to be reflected at the community level according to the data

gathered during the field work. In the following section attempt will be made to analyze gender ideology and power relations in detail.

3.6. Gender Ideology

Anthropological analyses approach the study of gender from two different but not mutually exclusive perspectives, namely, symbolic construction and social relationships (Moore, 1988:13). However, the particular perspective taken by an individual researcher tends to determine the type of explanation related to gender. Thus, in many societies, both sex groups occupy different culturally defined positions due to existing socio-cultural variations. The literature however, reveals that women in Africa generally hold marginal positions culturally, socially, economically and politically. Since gender relation is reflected and embedded in the social organization of a given society, it is key to understanding and analyzing production relationships and control over resources, it is valuable to look at gender ideology and power relations

In Konso society males by birth are considered superior to females. This outlook emanates out of culturally long-lived views that God naturally endowed men with an energy of being superior both physically and spiritually. The husband/father represents his household in different social, cultural and political matters in his own home and at the community level. He also offers sacrifices and invocations to a variety of gods in general and to the lineage spirit (*karaya*) in particular on behalf of his household. Among the Konso, women are thought to have a weakening effect both emotionally and physically

on men. Sexually mature women are therefore, forbidden to sit near the *ulahita* (sacred pole) even when there is no sacrifice. The *mooras* are for men, and women simply have no place in them (Hallpike, 1972:287).

In Konso, almost all parents associate the birth of a female child with a symbolic term "the flying-bird" and do not consider that they have a child. This is mainly due to the fact that female children are unable to inherit their parents' property (land, house, livestock, crops) as male children do. Unless a person has male children, the deceased individual's property is passed over to his closest male relatives and/or other male clan members as decided by clan (*kafa*) elders. Thus, male children are considered administrators of the household after their fathers' death. They are also expected to defend the community in general and their parents in particular from enemies, as well as being responsible to take care of them during old age (retirement). Therefore, when parents give birth to males, they are often pleased.

As a consequence of precedence given to males by the community, they always appear to maintain superiority sentiments. According to informants, women themselves also tend to have feelings of inferiority because of the mere fact of their gender difference. This pressurizes them to accept their husband's authority over them. The following case shows how women view men and themselves in Konso community.

Case No. Two

Galiso. Sex female.

Galiso is in her late 40s or early 50s. She contended that "men think of themselves as God and we women are also absolutely inferior to men by birth. We women are weak both physically and spiritually at birth and we think of men as a God too though the situation varies from one

household to another." During our discussion, Galiso posed an exciting question that "since men are preferred by birth to women, how do you think that women can have superiority or an equal position to men?" Galiso further explained that while she was in her parent's home, her brothers had privilege over her and her sisters in terms of food consumption and other things. Galiso herself also gives priority to her male children over females. She says that unless a person has male children, no female child can inherit her father's land, livestock, house, etc. Thus, Galiso even at present, wants to have male children who are the main heirs of her household.

This case reveals that men occupy dominant position socially, economically and politically among the community members. Women themselves are also convinced and accept male's superiority over females. As a result of this fact, the women who try to deviate from the already existing way of life (who tend to resist their husbands' authority) are thought to be *almaleta*, which means a woman lacking ethics even at present. The data gathered through the structured questionnaire dispatched during the fieldwork on how people view themselves in their community reveals that males are thought to be superior to females by birth. Accordingly, 95% of respondents from both sexes believe that women are inferior to men by birth. Only 5% from each sex group asserted that both males and females are equal to each other. Of the latter, the male respondents gave a creationist explanation for the equality of men and women. They forward the view that "all human beings as a whole without age and gender differences have a soul. The souls of all people are equal. Since people as human beings carry souls, we must be equal to each other before God." Although the respondents from female groups share similar view, they seemed to hold a more biological explanation. Thus, they extend the view that "all people in the world live in the same land (earth) and have similar physical and other traits. Therefore, there is no natural difference among people and we are all equal before God." According to the data gathered at the time of this field work on both sex groups, 67.5% attribute gender inequality to the natural law which was fixed by God. About

32.5% associate this gender-oriented notion of superiority and inferiority with the cultural elements accepted by the society from antiquity.

Men play significant leadership roles in traditional (such as the clan (*kafa*) based organizations, *kanta*, *idir*) and modern organizations (Kebele leadership) in which women have no role. At present it appears that there are slight changes with regard to women's position however. The introduction of modern education, contact with outsiders, the effect of religious changes particularly from primal belief to Christianity, modern political interventions and other related factors are thought to be among the major causes of change in women's life. As a result, according to the Konso Special Wereda Women's Affairs Department, there are a few women who participate in the formal (Kebele and Special Wereda) organizations committee membership and leadership currently. However, informants confirm that even those women who appear to participate in formal organizations at the committee level are constrained from full involvement by the men in their household. Some women couldn't even participate in the formal organization (Kebele meetings) simply because of resistance from their husbands and their fellow Kebele male leaders. The Special Wereda's Women's Department more or less shares this view. But, women do not have any leadership role in traditional institutions at all. The Konso culture therefore, can be considered male-dominated at all levels.

3.7. Inter-household Relations

In the social life of Konso, the interaction a given household establishes with its neighbors has a considerable place. There is a long standing proverb *kanta kafa qara qaba*, which means, the neighbor is more important than clan. This is to signify that the *kanta* members solve one's problems quicker than clans who will arrive late since they reside in a distant areas dispersed throughout the Special Wereda. When crises happen within a given household, close neighbors first visit the household. During the mourning time, all the neighboring people have the responsibility for burying the dead. When the crowd returns home from burial, they receive the guests and provide food. They also fetch water, supply livestock with fodder and clean the house of the family until the funeral ceremony is over. Inter-household support is also clearly observed in the assistance provided by the *kanta* members. If a widowed woman who lacks an able-bodied man power requests assistance, the *kanta* members assist her particularly during harvest, sowing, weeding, mowing, etc, together either with her close relatives or her deceased husband's relatives. They can also repair her house or construct the new one with the initiative of the neighborhood (*kanta*) *idir*.

In the past, in the times of food-insecurity an individual who had extra food grain would support other community members reserving the amount of food supposed to be enough for his household consumption. The allocated food is returned to the lender when the borrower's crops ripen. In the past, there were individuals who used to lend money with interest to neighboring households. Currently people lend money from *kanta idir* at a reasonable interest. This type of money lending is mostly allowed for sick people.

Women giving birth eat *dama* which is made of sorghum flour mixed with shelaqita. A person who lacks this vegetable can borrow it from neighboring households who have enough and he will also reciprocate in the same manner when neighbors face the same shortage or crises. If a person faces shortage of wood for house construction or grass for thatching roofs he can borrow from *kanta* members. *Kanta* members also transport the sick to health centers. If unfortunately a fire occurs in residential areas the male members of the village who mostly pass the night in the *moora* extinguish the fire with villagers. Therefore, neighborhood (*kanta*) relations are an important component of social organization among the Konso.

3.8. Organization of Work Groups

The Konso are certainly a hard working people and are proud of their keen interest in work. It is common to see even old men spinning or sewing a broken gourd's cup while sitting in the *moora*. Women are always in their farm plots sowing, weeding, harvesting, cutting grass from dawn to after-noon. Kids of 4 to 5 years are seen taking care of their younger siblings until their parents return from the farm. Able-bodied men often

construct terraces, granaries, individual compound's fence or moving to the lowland either to hang beehives or to farm the lowland plot. Girls and boys altogether spend their time engaged in agricultural activities such as digging the land with the hoe, ploughing with oxen, weeding, harvesting, looking after animals cutting grass for fodder, etc.

Generally speaking, no individual sits idle except at the relative leisurely time (at August to September). Even during this time, women clear the land for the next round sowing and weed the sorghum expected to give second-round product. Each activity is often accompanied by chanting and dancing. There are also special shouts and songs which are thought to give strength and courage to the worker. Thus, people undertake agricultural activities either individually or in group. Due to labor-intensive agricultural practices, most households rely on supplementing their own labor with extra-household labor which could be pulled in the form of occasional favor from a friend or relative, or through work groups (Watson, 1998:148). The work groups can also be organized on the bases of gender, age, clan, neighborhood and friendship. Each of the work groups have their own merit, purposes and also help as a survival strategy to secure extra income.

3.8.1. The *Hayya* Work Group

The nature and organization of this work group in fact differs from one village to another though the variation appears to be slight. *Hayya* members are composed of both sexes and the same age groups. Since the married women have household responsibilities, they are not able to take part in such work groups. However, unmarried girls often participate

in the *hayya* work group. Both married and unmarried men can involve in this work group. Each *hayya* group can have from 15 to 20 members. Once the group is formed, its members cast a lot whose purpose is to nominate a cashier, to identify the would be house where they will be slaughtering an ox and where to prepare *chaka*. By involving in works on daily labor basis, its members pull in extra income. They also limit the amount of money to be paid by the employers. The amount of payment will be less for the employer of their group member than outsiders. The tasks carried out by the *hayya* work group members include: weeding, harvesting and crop transportation. Depositing the money earned from labor work, they buy and slaughter an ox in relation to certain celebrations such as *meskel* (the celebrating date of the finding of the true cross, i. e., September 27). During that specific day, driving their ox within the *paleta*, they chant and dance appreciating their ox saying "our ox is as huge as a mountain; no red meat rather white and fat," and others. At the same time they disdain another *hayya* work group's ox. The insult goes as follows: "your group's ox is lean and about to die, it is not fat and you don't have money to buy as fat an ox as ours." In a like manner, the other work group members also insult theirs.

The song sang during this time is special and they clap with a piece of rectangular wood called *kawula*. Once the dance and chanting is over, they slaughter an ox in the house which they fixed at the beginning when the work group is formed. Thereby, until they finish the food and drinks, the group members feed and pass the night in the house where they slaughtered an ox. To prepare *dama* to be eaten each member contributes a certain amount of flour. Putting on their head an ostrich's feather, they chant and dance drinking

chaka. In case, if one of the members has no interest of participating in the ceremony, he can get his share from the deposited cash. However, during the chanting, they insult the exempted person and he also remains silent since it is common in Konso. Before they start eating, each of them give a certain share of the meat to their family. The chanting and dancing continues until the food and drink is finished. No individual other than the group members can participate in the feasting.

3.8.2. Uganda Work Group

The attempt has been made to portray the prevalence of slight differences in cultural elements through out the Konso. Accordingly, in some areas *uganda* work group is referred to as *fadeeta*. The latter term is derived from the word *fade*, which means calling. According to the statement of Watson (1998:148), *fadeeta* implies assistance or a "pulling together". *Uganda* or *fadeeta* is also referred to as "gang" work group (Amborn, 1989) or it can be equated with Donham's *mal7o* or "festive" work group (1985). Unlike other work groups *uganda* mostly involves tasks such as building houses, weeding crops, transporting crops to the residential site, etc. Fixing a given day, an individual who wants to organize the *uganda* work group calls the people. Although there are non-kin group members (neighbors), mostly relatives are preferred for the *uganda* work group. Relatives in the remote areas can also be invited to the *uganda* work group. The caller in turn has also an obligation of participating in the *uganda* work group when he is called by his relatives and/or neighbors. During crop transportation, each individual called to the

work brings his own sack to carry the crop. A person who has a donkey also brings it though the use of donkeys as pack animals is not widespread in Konso.

Depending on his economic capacity, the individual who arranges the *uganda* work group prepares *chaka*, cooks beans and *dama*. The more he is powerful economically, the more food and drinks he will supply for the *uganda* members. The drinks served both in the work place and in home when the work group members return to eat the *dama* prepared. However, the quality and quantity of the work done depends largely on the quality and quantity of the food and drink provided. In case, if the individual who calls the work group is wealthy, he adds honey in the *chaka* (which makes it good quality drink) or slaughters a goat for the work group. The poor however can serve only *chaka* without honey for the work group members. No payment is given for this work group members either in cash or in kind except the food and drink provided, rather, it is a mutual labor pulling group to assist each other. No individual is forced to go to the field since it is a social event. If a person invited to take part in the *uganda* work group remains unwilling, the host individual can also be absent if the absentee organizes a work group. But, if the absentee has a tangible evidence why he become absent, he apologizes for the incidence and thus convinces the individual who arranged the work group. Unlike *hayya*, the *uganda* work group can be composed of different age groups and its number is not limited like others. Moreover, both sex groups can also participate without any restrictions.

3.8.3. *Parga* work Group

This work group is composed of only young girls. But, there are certain cases where young males can also participate in the *parga* work group. This happens mostly when a given *parga* member is absent due to certain reasons. In this regard, her brothers can replace her and cover her portion of work solely for that specific date which could be an exceptional case. Similar to the *hayya* work group, *parga* constitutes from 15 to 20 members. It can have also below 10 individuals in some cases. The *parga* members undertake their own group member's work free of charge in turn as long as it is organized basically to carry out agricultural tasks co-operatively. Secondly the work group earns an income working with payment for non-group members on a daily labor bases. The payment can be given either in cash or in kind (such as crop, butter, honey, goat, etc.). The division of income can be done in two ways (i.e., if the payment is in cash or any other item which may last long, they deposit it with the individual whom they have chosen as a cashier at the beginning by casting a lot. But, if the item appears to be not long-lasting, they share it on the date when they received the payment). This process of sharing locally is known as *qondita*. In relation to certain annual celebrations, the *parga* work group members prepare feasts with the money they earned through labor work and enjoy by chanting and dancing. The *parga* work group consists of people from the same age and sex groups.

3.8.4. Allumala Work Group

This work group is composed of only male members. However, girls can also participate occasionally in *allumala*. They take part only substituting their brothers who were the members of this work group when they become absent due to a given reason. The *qondita* or sharing income on daily basis is also practiced in the *allumala* work group like that of *parga*. They carry out tasks such as weeding, harvesting and crop transportation particularly during peak labor time (from February to July). All the *allumala* members working together deposit the money they earned from labor work with the individual whom they nominated as a cashier. During post-harvest period, particularly around September, they buy an ox to fatten it. On the day of the feast, embellishing their body parts with a white soil locally called *annada*, putting an ostrich's feather on their head and wearing a variety of traditional white bracelets around their wrist, the work group members start dancing. The work group members wonder around the *paleta* driving an ox to be slaughtered particularly during the feasting day to show that their ox is fat and to indicate the strength of their work group. If in case they have extra money, they prepare *chaka* with honey in addition to the slaughtered ox. The *allumala* members begin eating at night and in the next morning they distribute a little amount of the meat to their household members like that of *hayya*. Until they finish the food, they eat, chant, and dance in the house where the ceremony is organized.

As feasting is completed, the *allumala* members run to the forest to kill a wild beast together with other fellow group which is feasting in another place. This process is known as *botaa*, which means coming out of that specific group where they used to attend a feast to meet the wider society. In the hunting ceremony, non-*allumala* members

can also participate. If the killer is a non-*allumala* member, he directly moves to his own home. But if the killer is an *allumala* member, all the work group members enter into the *moora* chanting and dancing. Cutting the skull of the killed animal, they hang it on the *olahita* or sacred pole. Hunting takes place only after they finished the food to be eaten. This is to show that their work group is the known *allumala* within the *paleta* and thus this will be the end of the life of their work group.

To begin the new work group, the members must talk to each other again and if a person is not interested to retain his membership, he can withdraw from the group. Although different age groups take part in *allumala* work group, it is mostly constituted from people of similar age groups. The number of group members range from 15 to 20. Since there are variations in cultural elements from one village to another, in some areas the *allumala* is referred to as *hayya*. In Jarso area for instance, the work group members do not hunt wild beasts and they complete the whole process only with feasting. Ultimately, an interested individual can either continue with the work group or join another one.

3.8.5. Kafa Work Group

The *kafa* work group is made of both sexes and all age groups. This means, all able-bodied persons can participate in the *kafa* work group. This work group entirely constitutes individuals who have consanguinal relationship. This work group operates on the basis of mutual assistance consists of only one clan group on the spot at the time when need occurs. The works carried out by *kafa* work members include repairing and building houses of the sick and widowed, assisting their lineage members in agricultural activities specially during mourning, etc. The *kafa* work group's assistance is limited only to members of the same clan. No outsider can participate nor be assisted by the *kafa* work group. This work group collects a certain amount of money from its members monthly which will be given to the household where mourning has occurred to prepare *chaka* for the mourners who attend the funeral ceremony.

The mutual assistance based on labor pulling is carried out particularly during weeding, harvesting and crop transportation. Unlike the *uganda* work group where the individual provides the work group members with food, each of the *kafa* work group members bring the food and the *chaka* from his own home. This is due to the fact that the individual whose farm is ploughed might not provide food and drinks since he is in bereavement.

3.8.6. Kanta Work Group

This work group more or less shares common characteristics with the *kafa* work group. The *kanta* work group is grounded on co-operation of neighbors and comprises individuals from a certain locality. Among the Konso, it is widely believed that *kanta* is greater than *kafa* or locally "*kanta kafa qara qaba*" which means, before the *kafa*, it is the *kanta* who solve somebody's problem. The *kanta* work group also pulls financial assistance to support the individual members. Like the *kafa* work group, *kanta* work group members are engaged in agricultural activities to support the individuals facing a problem (i.e., the sick). Unlike the *kafa*, *kanta* work groups also undertake tasks for money for somebody who needs a large amount of labor. The group members deposit the cash they earn by working for non-group member. During certain celebrations, the *kanta* work group members slaughter an ox. Unlike the other work groups who feast in the house where they slaughtered the ox, *kanta* members eat the meat with their family in their own home.

Both male and female participate in *kanta* work groups which is composed of different age groups. As opposed to the *kafa* work group, the *kanta* work group is composed of able-bodied individuals of different clans. Generally speaking, although the work groups are organized on the bases of age, sex, clan and neighborhood, all work groups serve to pull better income. Moreover, it serves to strengthen the unity of group members as in the case of *uganda* work group.

3.9. Conclusion

Cultural values that are embedded in the social organization of a given society often transform over time. Similarly, some changes are observed in the Konso people's way of life in the past few years. The Konso had a very tight administrative and judiciary system which was the basis of social control. Despite the interventions of the modern government, people tend to rely more on the traditional system. Most of these judiciary procedures are undertaken at the community level. However, women had no meaningful role both in the traditional and formal political institutions. Despite this longstanding tradition, it appears that there are slight changes in their way of life currently. Though it seems insignificant, women started participating in formal political organizations (Kebele leadership) according to the statement of Konso Special Wereda Women's Department. In the past, in case of conflict or divorce, women used to appeal either to the community elders or simply submit to their husbands. As a result of the change, when they enter into conflict with husbands, they have begun to appeal the matter to the Konso Special Wereda Women's Department or courts at present.

Moreover, the deep-rooted gender ideology where women are considered inferior to men, has affected women's full ownership over their own productive capacity. Generally, women's consciousness whereby they attribute the reason of their inferiority to God's will has also contributed a lot to the continuity of their status.

Even though kinship and clan relations are an important bases for mutual assistance, counseling, arbitration and others, kinship is not a wholesome relationship base for a person's political upward mobility. Furthermore, with respect to inter clan-relation, some changes have also been manifested. For instance, in antiquity, artisans were highly despised group of people. At present, people eat, drink and even intermarry with them. The spread of Christianity particularly of the Protestant denomination (which accounts 50% according to the survey of Farm Africa, 2000), modern political interventions, education and others are some of the factors that engendered change in interclan relations. The traditional way of marriage arrangement by parents of a couple is leaving room for church marriage and the couple's personal choice at present. The above reasons might also have contributed for this change.

Since the Konso are patrilineal groups, they practice exogamous marriage. However, as witnessed in the case of the sub-lineages of *Keertitta*, there are cases where indogamy is practiced. Furthermore, cross-cousin marriage is also common among the community members. With regard to bridewealth, the payment given by a husband to the girl's parents gives him full right to control his wife as his own property. Since a marrying girl has an obligation of contributing her reproductive and productive labor to her husband, she loses all her rights for her parents have received bridewealth payment and submit to her husband. The patrilineal descent system and the exogamous marriage practiced in the region along with the deep-rooted gender-oriented thinking has contributed to the decline of women's rights over scarce resources at marriage. Although there are slight variations from one village to another, there are generally two types of weddings (*sargeta guta* and

sargeta shaka), the later being an extension of the former. Within the family also male members have precedence over females in terms of inheritance and food consumption. This gender-based thinking is also reflected at the community level as illustrated in the gender ideology section. In Konso, there are various work groups organized on the bases of gender, age, clan and neighborhood for economic and social purposes. Generally, it appears that modern education, religion, modern political involvement and migration have brought transformation in the social organization and in the already existing way of life.

CHAPTER FOUR

WOMEN'S ROLE IN FOOD PRODUCTION AND ACCESS TO RESOURCES

4.1. Introduction

Women all over the world are engaged in productive work (agriculture, commercial and wage labor) (Moore, 1988:43). They are also engaged in reproductive (motherhood) and domestic work (O'brien and Gruenbaum, 1991:179). Despite this, the actual extent of women's contribution to household income has been consistently underestimated (Boserup, 1970:ii). Furthermore, despite women's important role in food production, they lack access to resources. Although property ownership gives status and power for decision-making within the community, studies conducted among the Mbum Kpau in southwestern Chad show that within the household "a man controls revenues of his wives and unmarried sons" (O'Laughlin, 1974:137). A study conducted in Konso further confirms that 85% of household income is controlled by men (Alemtsehay and Worknesh, 2000:8).

Based on this argument, this chapter investigates the socio-cultural and politico-economic reasons why women's role has been underestimated despite their vital role in food production in Konso. The chapter also examines the role of Konso women in food production, their limited access to scarce household resources and cash incomes at large. Before dealing with these themes, it seems logical and valuable to look at the nature of agricultural activities in the region.

4.2. Konso Agriculture

The Konso are agriculturalists that largely depend on land tilling and livestock rearing for subsistence. According to the report of Farm Africa (2000), 87.1% of the population in Konso is engaged in farming. The agricultural system is intensive, based on the application of manure and intercropping. They use wooden hoes (*silbota* and *bayra*) to till the land. Intercropping appears to be important in the community's strategy to solve food insecurity. Oxen-drawn plough agriculture is also practiced with either 1 or 2 oxen. Informants forward that the use of single ox for ploughing is more favorable and easily manageable than that of two oxen.

In Konso, farm plots are always under cultivation. Fallowing is not practiced because of the scarcity of farm land. Though they do not practice crop rotation, most informants agree that when rain is available the land is productive each agricultural calendar year. The productivity of the land is attributed to the longstanding application of manure and the use of compost from plant leaves and sorghum stalk as a traditional fertilizer. Agricultural experts also suggest that the intercropping of pulse crops often fixes

nitrogen. Moreover, the soil women carry from roadsides during terracing in addition to soil made available by floods from uncultivated land in the environs of the arable land might also have contributed to the fertility of farm plots.

Various crops which include varieties of sorghum, maize, pigeon pea, different types of beans, wheat, barley, millet, some tuber plants and *shelaqita* (a plant which is believed to have medicinal value particularly for blood pressure and malaria) are grown in Konso. In addition to other key household economic resources, the number of *shelaqita* plants grown by a household is considered an indicator of wealth. Oil crops (sun flower, leen-seed, castor-bean and others) and cash crops like cotton, coffee, pepper, *chat*, *teff*, etc. are also grown in the region. The socio-economic survey conducted by Farm Africa (2000), reveals that in terms of agricultural output, sorghum stands first with 41.9% followed by maize 26.0%. During the rainy season (*meher*) however, maize is the most important crop comprising 56.9% of the total production obtained in *meher* and 30.3% in the *belg*. But according to Konso Special Wereda Bureau of Agriculture (1997), in years with low rain fall, sorghum accounts for 73.7% of food production.

The decision as to what food crops to plant according to informants, however, is based on a number of factors such as popularity, adaptation to weather conditions, resistance to pests and birds, medicinal value of the crop, early maturity, suitability to health, social value attached to the crop, taste and color. Accordingly, sorghum is the staple food grain most widely grown in Konso. There are "at least twenty-four varieties, though not all in the same area" (Hallpike, 1972:22). In Tokatu-Laga, the main study village, red sorghum

(*shulayta*) is the most preferred type whereas in Kolme white sorghum (*bichita*) is desirable as well. Some of the sorghum varieties require a longer growing season while others need protection against pests and birds. Sorghum is more drought-resistant than maize and people make use of it for many purposes. Its straw serves as fodder, fuel for fire, helps to make tied ridges and to tie up stones during terrace construction, as compost for traditional fertilizer, and its flour is used as a mixture for most foods. The food prepared from sorghum flour is served across all age, gender and status groups.

4.3. Women's Role in Food Crop Production

Unlike many African agricultural communities, men and women work together in the fields in Konso (Hallpike, 1970:32). Although the division of labor is more egalitarian than in some societies, the main labor burden falls on women (Watson, 1998:86). Despite the importance of women's contribution, among the Konso, any task undertaken by men is thought to be of higher value. This belief is adhered to by most people of both gender groups according to informants. In Konso, with crude generalization, it seems that no strict gender-based division of labor is observed, though there are some gender-specific tasks. For instance, only men are engaged in honey production, terracing, house and granary construction and other social matters at the community level such as *paleta* meetings and attending rituals, etc. Farming is one of the main activities undertaken by both sexes from clearing the land to harvesting.

As farmland is scarce in Konso, no plot remains fallow throughout the year. Clearing of land and preparing it for replanting, therefore, begins immediately after the year's first-round product is harvested. As the product is gathered, women start cutting the straw of sorghum, mainly for two reasons. The first is to clear the land for the sowing to come while the other is to get a second-round product through the process of *hageya*.

Hageya is the process by which the sorghum stalks are cut approximately to about 5 to 10 centimeters long. The remaining part therefore regenerates to give product for a second time. People sometimes reduce the number of regenerating sorghum stalks to obtain a better product. After *hageya*, women uproot the sorghum stalks from the ground to tie terraces in order to keep tight. Along with land clearing and preparation, dung is also deposited on selected parts of the farm to use as fertilizer. In this regard, women's and children's labor plays a significant role. Both male and female children of five and more years of age transport the dung to a storage place around the village. As land clearing and preparation is completed, women and girls transport it to the farm site for fertilizer. Men however, never carry manure since it is considered to be women's task exclusively.

The building of terraces is another important aspect of land preparation, which is completely reserved for men since it is presumed to require hard labor. Observation has shown that though it is thought to be the sole activity of men, women also contribute a considerable amount of labor by providing stones to fill the terrace, soil to substitute the eroded gaps during rainy seasons and sorghum stalks to tie up the stones of terraces. In areas where the oxen-drawn agriculture is practiced, such as Kolme, women and children

prevent the oxen from stepping upon the terrace and breaking it while husbands plough. Male children of eleven and above also plough the land with oxen. Since the plot is on the hill side and covered with terraces, it is impossible to plough the land with oxen from corner to corner. Women and female children therefore, till the remaining unploughed land with hoes. Once terrace repairs are over, men have a relative leisurely time until sowing starts. But women visit the farm every morning either to cut grass for animals or to collect mature cotton and other crops which are intercropped.

The role of men and women in food production is different in hoe-farming from oxen-drawn ploughing areas. The variation might have been caused as a result of a recent introduction of new technology (oxen-drawn plough) to the region. According to informants the oxen-drawn plough was introduced to Konso some 30 to 40 years ago during Emperor Haileselassie's regime by the people who came from Shewa as tax collectors. Then after, this new technology expanded across the region. As individual case studies depict, oxen ploughing has helped the people to make farming easier and boost productivity. According to most informants, with the introduction of the new technology, the work burden of both sexes has eased to some extent in oxen-drawn ploughing areas. The introduction of the single oxen plough is not more than a decade old. The following case reveals how the introduction of oxen-drawn ploughing has reduced women's work burden in comparison to hoe-farming.

Case No. Three

Kabidano. Sex male

Kabidano is the father of six children and aged 76. Kabidano believes that as compared to hoe farming, oxen-drawn ploughing has fostered productivity and eased women's and men's burden. Before oxen-drawn ploughing was introduced, Kabidano and his wife together used to work from dawn to dusk. But at present, he and his male children go early to the farm with oxen and plough until late afternoon. Kabidano ploughs with either two oxen or a single ox. Though Kabidano ploughs with one ox in highland areas, he uses two oxen in lowland areas.

Later around 9 to 10A.M., either his wife or female children appear at the farm to plough the corners of the terrace with a hoe. However, apart from ploughing with oxen, the rest of the agricultural activities of the highland plots are undertaken by his wife and female children. Kabidano and his two male children, engage in farming lowland plots, honey processing and cattle herding. His female children assist in weeding and preparing food in the lowland while the males are ploughing.

As indicated in this case, in areas where oxen-drawn ploughing is practiced, the burden of both sex groups lessened in comparison to hoe-farming. However, women tend to work more than men even in oxen ploughing areas since they are expected to engage in domestic activities in addition to farming with hoes, weeding, harvesting and transporting crops to the settlement site.

Among the Konso, the year's first planting is often accompanied by a variety of food offerings and prayers conducted either by individual household heads or clan leaders (*poqalla*). Sowing begins around February when it starts to rain. There are slight variations from one village to another in the rituals performed at this time. In Kolme during planting, among the crop varieties to be sowed, a person often picks white sorghum (*bichita*) followed by red sorghum (*shulayta*), millet (an ancient crop), maize (newly introduced crop) and a variety of beans. Nevertheless, no household member could plant simply by picking a crop when it begins to rain before prayer is conducted.

Since an aged person is preferable for prayer, either the grandfather/mother or father/mother (particularly when the head of the household is the eldest son) take the seed to be sowed, and plants only one saying, "Oh *Wa7a* (God), I am about to start the yearly

sowing, please send your blessing." The prayer is repeated after each seed type is scattered. Once the prayer has been conducted, any household member can plant the seed. In the absence or death of the household head (husband), women can perform the pre-sowing prayers, representing their household before the spirit world, particularly in Kolme. This practice is unusual in the other study village, Tokatu-Laga. Informants claim that since women play the leading role in food crop production, if in case the husband's mother is alive, she conducts the prayer even in the presence of the household head (husband) as it is expected to be done by the oldest person with out any gender distinction. Women's involvement in pre-sowing rituals symbolizes their considerable role in food production. They perform the rituals only related to food crop production in Kolme, unlike men who could conduct prayers and invocations in almost all spheres of social life that require rituals.

In Tokatu-Laga, the main study village, the year's first planting begins with the sole order of the clan leader (*poqalla*). During the planting season, all clan members come to the clan leader's home. The clan leader plants the sacred pole (*olahita*) within his home, and sows grain around the sacred pole to indicate that all the members of the clan can begin sowing. The clan head thereby begins to announce the completion of rituals by putting a ram's sexual organ (slaughtered for this purpose) with *mugula* (clan headship bracelet) on the wrist of his hand and walking around the village. This process is locally known as *madasha*. By the next day, the clan leader distributes pieces of the slaughtered ram's meat with *dama* and *pagana* without salt to all clan members within the village. Each clan member is given three pieces from each item. Informants couldn't explain why salt is not

added to the food offered to the lineage spirit (*karaya*) and why the number of food-items distributed by the clan leader is limited to three pieces from each item. The variation in pre-sowing rituals performed in two of the study villages might be attributed to the technological differences in the farming system, i.e., hoe farming in Tokatu-Laga and oxen-drawn ploughing in Kolme.

Women perform most of the weeding, which is considered a less arduous task though the degree of participation varies from hoe-farming to oxen -drawn ploughing areas. In Tokatu-Laga, a hoe-farming village, weeding is undertaken by women with limited participation by men. However, in Kolme (another study village), weeding is carried out entirely by women both in the highland and lowland farms. Men in Kolme are engaged in ploughing both high land and lowland farms with oxen, herding animals, honey production and the like. Male children also support their fathers in these agricultural activities.

As discussed above, in terms of planting and harvesting, the offerings and prayers are performed at the individual level in Kolme. In Tokatu-Laga, they are performed under the leadership of the clan head (*poqalla*). Unless the individual household head in Kolme and the clan head in Tokatu-Laga respectively perform the offerings and invocations each year or they do not attend the procedures of the rituals properly, it is believed that the lineage spirit could make them ill or die. Informants view that in the absence of the father, the eldest son of the deceased man can offer the invocations particularly in Kolme. If the deceased man has no male children at all, a male clan member is chosen by the clan

elders to offer the sacrifice on behalf of the deceased man. Unmarried male members of the household can never offer the sacrifice and conduct prayer representing the household before the lineage spirit. The post-harvest food offering is locally known as *manqa*.

When harvesting begins, women and their husbands cut the sorghum, uproot beans, and store it temporarily in the farm. While returning home at dusk, both of them carry food crops to their settlement site. Almost all informants agree that women carry double the amount men do, since they use their back unlike men who use their head. During crop transportation, people organize work groups (*uganda*) that comprise of both males and females, particularly of close relatives and friends. This extra-household labor assistance is required during peak-labor times such as sowing, weeding, harvesting and transporting the crop. The work group organization is a reciprocal arrangement though it is not obligatory as the topic is dealt with in detail in chapter three. The following case illustrates typical patterns of participation in agricultural work by different household members.

Case No. Four

Hageya. Sex female

Hageya goes to her farm daily to support her two daughters in agricultural activities. Hageya's two daughters undertake sowing, weeding, harvesting and transportation of the grain to the settlement site with work group (*uganda*) members. In the work group, Hageya serves work parties *chaka* and cooked beans sometimes in the field, before and after the work is completed. Hageya's five year old son transports manure to a nearby place where it is deposited temporarily. Later, Hageya and her two daughters transport the manure to the farm site. Her husband Kurshalle doesn't carry the manure considering it as women's duty. Hageya's husband and her male children till the lowland farm. With his sons assistance, he also stores the crop transported by Hageya and her daughters to the settlement site. He always participates in *paleta* meetings or sometimes goes to distant lowland areas to hung beehives. Along with farming, Hageya and her

daughters carry out domestic activities such as cooking, cleaning the house, etc. Though all adult household members could cut grass for animals, it is mostly the task of Hageya and her female children. After returning from farming, Hageya stays at home to supply hay for animals each day. Before she gave birth to a child, Hageya and her husband were looking after animals in turns. She says that now it is her children of both sexes who look after animals and protect crops from birds and other wild beasts.

As this case shows, almost all agricultural tasks are undertaken by women. Though men carry out limited activities such as honey processing, tilling in lowland farms and participating in community meetings, their tasks are considered of higher value than that of women. This happened due to the longlived gender-oriented thinking that gives priority for males than females. Furthermore, women's activities are limited to the works undertaken in home garden and near the settlement sites. But tasks undertaken in distant places are left for men.

Storing which is considered hard work that needs as much labor as terracing is exclusively left for men. Culturally therefore, women are not allowed to undertake storing. According to informants, the granary is seen as *r`eqa* (a secret and sacred house in which precious and valuable goods are kept and out of reach of children of both sexes and daughter-in-laws). The association of the granary with *reqa* might be a means of controlling food grains, which are a scarce household economic resource to be kept only in the hand of men. Moreover, women are less authorized to use grain without the prior permission of their husbands' except for daily consumption.

With respect to threshing it appears that there are certain differences between the two study villages. In Kolme, food grains are threshed in large quantities and the work is done by men. In Tokatu-Laga, however women undertake the threshing at small amounts of food grains each day for daily household meal consumption and to prefer *chaka*. In

general, women significantly participate in food crop production (sowing/planting, weeding, harvesting, transporting and threshing) in both study villages. But the question is, do they have equal access to scarce household economic resources as a result of their quite important role in food production? In the following sections, attempt will be made to portray women's access to resources. The following table shows the major agricultural activities carried out by both sex groups.

Major Activities		Women's Role	Men's Role	Remark
Agricultural Activities	Domestic Activities			
Land preparation		*	*	
Manuring the plot		*		

Hoeing		*	*	
Ploughing with ox			*	
Terracing			*	
Sowing/planting		*	*	
Weeding		*		
Harvesting		*	*	
Crop transportation		*	*	
Storing			*	
Treshing (small quantities)		*		
Treshing (large quantities)			*	
Marketing high value goods			*	
Marketing low value goods		*		
Herding large stock			*	
Herding small stock		*		
Supplying fodder		*	*	
Feeding animals		*		
	Preparing and servin meals	*		
	Manual grinding	*		
	Collecting fuel wood	*		
	Preparing <i>chaka</i>	*		
	Fetching water	*		
	Looking after children	*		
	Cleaning house & shed	*		
	Taking meals to field	*		
	Churning & milking		*	

Table 3:Major tasks undertaken by men and women

4.4. Women's Access to Land

In Konso generally, there are nine exogamous patrilineal clans. The society abides by the traditional rules established by the founding fathers of the clan (*poqalla*). Inheritance is one of the longstanding principles by which a person gets control of scarce household economic resources. At the death of the household head/father, land (an important economic resource) is allocated through family ties. Access to land depends on the status of an individual within the social group. Thus, from the plot distributed to the males the largest share often goes to the eldest son (the main heir) who supports his parents until the end of their life. The younger sons look for alternative means to earn their living in addition to the insufficient land share they are given. Land is allocated only to male children when they marry.

While male elders may have privileged access to land, women have no right to land at all (Berry, 1993 cited in Watson, 1998:6). According to my informants the reason why women are denied the right to land ownership is due to the fact that they leave their family and clan for another group as a result of exogamous marriage. Female children are expected to obtain their share from the individual whom they marry in the future. If a man dies without having a male child, his unmarried female children can use his land only until they marry. After their marriage, the land is directly transferred to their father's close relatives and/or in their absence to clan members. Moreover, after marriage, they are denied not only the right to inherit his land but also to use it. The reason for the prohibition of girls from inheriting land is that since she marries into another clan, she would alienate the scarce resource (land) of her family to an alien clan group. The outlook behind this belief is that the one who inherits the land is not the woman, but her

children who in fact belong to another clan. When she dies, she leaves the land for her children (i.e., for another clan).

The sole inheritance female children might get from their parents is a certain bracelet from her mother at her mother's death. Rarely they can also inherit an insignificant amount of cash from their mother. Sometimes, father temporarily gives *shelaqita*, coffee and others for his daughter to use temporarily. However, it will be returned to her parents or in their absence to her father's clan at her death. Furthermore, the view that women can inherit land from their husband also appears somewhat hypothetical. In case when a woman enters into conflict with her husband, he chases her away. He neither allows her to marry another individual nor remain with him. Thus, she cannot claim any land or any other resource including her children in case of divorce. If the husband dies particularly before a woman gives birth to a child, she is deprived of the right not only to inherit her husband's land but also to use it. Unless a woman delivers a child, she is thought to be a member of another clan (an outsider) unlike the woman who has given birth, who has the full right to control her husband's property (land, livestock, house and grain in the granary) until her male children get mature and start to assume the responsibility on behalf of their deceased father. Thus, it is presumed that the woman who has not given birth to a child can go at any time anywhere since there is nothing binding her to her husband's clan (i.e., children).

However, if her previous husband's clan members want to continue the marriage relationship with her clan group, she is forced to marry a person from her deceased

husband's close relatives or clan members and made to cultivate the land. The male-centered land distribution and inheritance system therefore, leaves the life of women at risk because it denies women the right to own their fathers' or husbands' farm land in cases of divorce. Kalle's case is an example of women's access to resources and living conditions outside marriage.

Case No. Five

Kalle. female

As of the last two years, Kalle lives alone divorced from her husband Gallabo. She leads her life by collecting and selling fire wood, engaging in agricultural labor work and occasionally trading *chaka* (local drink) particularly if she gets credit from her neighbors. Currently, Kalle is sheltered in the home of her neighbors. Though she has parents, Kalle doesn't want to live with them because she considers herself inferior to all her family members. Moreover, Kalle thinks that she wouldn't be able to make any money even from the sale of the firewood she collects as she has an obligation to serve her parents once she starts living with them. Occasionally, Kalle pays a certain amount of money (Birr. 2 to 3) to the owner of the house where she lives in now. Kalle feels that she is inferior to all the people as she has no access to land, house, livestock and any other resource that could help her change her living condition. Although Kalle is in her late 30s, she appears helpless since she has no supporter. As she says, the only resource Kalle has at this time is her labor power. Since there is no scarce economic resource (land, livestock, house, etc.) and individual that assists her, Kalle believes that in case she dies, the *idir* members can bury her. *Idir*, therefore, appears to be a source of hope and insurance for individuals like Kalle who live alone after divorce.

As the case study clearly portrays that women are denied the right to own scarce household economic resources. As a result, women completely depend on their labor to lead their life particularly after divorce.

4.5. Women's Access to Livestock

Among the Konso, livestock are the most important form of wealth. Sale of livestock is a vital supplement to meager household incomes. The use of animals for ploughing

increases productivity. Animal power is used for pumping water and post-harvest processing. Income from livestock also includes the sale of manure for fuel, for fertilizer made from animal excrement, bone, feather or horn. Livestock also serve as a means of transportation (Richer Harvest, 1969:76). Moreover, animal skin is used as a mattress in Konso. Livestock also have social value, i.e., during marriage a bridegroom gives animals to the parents of the bride as bridewealth. At the time of bereavement, animals are slaughtered for mourners. The Konso believe that animal blood is thought to cleanse the *moora* specially if it is sprayed by *shorogota* (traditional priest) as a sacrifice to the lineage spirit.

Among the Konso, most households own animals such as cows, oxen, goats, sheep and chicken. Goats constitute the largest portion of the animals reared, followed by sheep, cows and oxen. The Konso who reside in the peripheral lowlands own a large number of animals and appear to be agro-pastoral. However, according to the survey conducted by Farm Africa (2000), in Konso, 92.8% of households possess from 1 to 2 cattle on average. The information obtained from Konso Special Woreda Bureau of Agriculture (1997) shows that *aba-gorba*, *aba-senga*, *Tb*, *desta*, etc are some of the major livestock diseases. *Aba-gorba* claims the life of large portions of animals herded in the region. Donkey is not commonly reared in Konso. Since Konso land is mountainous, donkeys cannot climb the settlement sites on the hilltops. Moreover, informants claim that people do not want to provide fodder to donkeys who give insignificant service.

In many places, the care of small animals such as chicken, guinea pigs and goats is predominantly the work of women and children. Even in the areas where the herding and care of animals is largely men's work, women may be responsible for processing milk, collecting fodder, drying cow dung for fuel and caring for lactating, young or sick animals (Richer Harvest, 1969:77). Similarly, in Konso women often clean the animal shed and carry the manure to the place where it will be deposited until the manure gets fermented for use as a traditional fertilizer. Children of both sexes starting from 5 years of age engage in this activity as well.

For the fodder supply, both men and women cut grass from the home garden. However, since women visit the farm plot everyday, they supply the greatest portions of animal fodder. Furthermore, women provide fodder to and take care of animals kept at home as they spend most of their time in home. However, it is also common to see men milking animals and churning the milk, in the absence of males women can also milk animals. In the lowland (Kolme), looking after animals is the exclusive task of men since women cannot defend them against the attack of wild beasts and robbery from neighboring ethnic groups.

Despite women's considerable contribution in terms of caring for animals, they have no ownership rights. Sometimes, if the father is benevolent, he may give his married daughter child an ewe or female goat to feed her children with milk, though this is unusual. But when one moves further lowland (Kolme), it is common to see the women

own chicken, which is rare in other parts of Konso. This might have resulted from the fact that people in Kolme have a great deal of cattle as compared to the rest of the region.

Part of the justification for prohibiting girl's ownership of animals among the Konso is the longstanding belief that if parents give a cow or heifer as inheritance to their married daughter, and if in case that cow delivers many calves, she is believed not to have the opportunity of giving birth to a child. One of the functions of marriage in Konso is getting as many children as possible which they consider an asset for the family and clan members as a whole in order to continue the descent line. If the married woman doesn't give birth to a child, divorce can occur. Her parents therefore, are not willing to give a cow to the married daughter and her husband's parents to receive it as well. During the study however, informants couldn't explain what relationship a cow's reproductive status has with a woman's reproductive status. They rather claim that this belief has persisted since the days of their ancestors'. However, the main reason could be the reluctance to give scarce household economic resources to another clan in the name of inheritance.

Usually, the eldest son remains in the home of his parents throughout his life time and inherits parents' home, farm, livestock and others. At his marriage therefore, no special endowments are given to him. But if the marrying son is the younger one, his father gives him a cow, an ox; grain in stocks, land, a sleeping skin and a new house. In comparison, when the marrying child is a female, her parents claim bridewealth from her husband in exchange for her productive and reproductive capacities. Except in the case of Kolme

(where women own chicken) generally, women have no possession over livestock both before and after marriage in the other study village, Tokatu-Laga.

During this fieldwork in Kolme, one of the study sites, I met a woman named Katana who benefited from the goat credit provided by Farm Africa Konso. I asked the woman if she considers the goat as her own property and in case of divorce she might take the goat with her. She responded, "culturally women are not allowed to share any property, even children who are their womb's product in cases of divorce". This statement therefore, clearly shows the status of women and their access to scarce resources in Konso society.

4.6. Women's Access to Other Income Generating Activities

In Konso, people derive extra income both from agricultural and non- agricultural activities. Coffee and honey production are some of the most important means of extra income for each household. A person who owns from 20 to 30 beehives is considered a wealthy man in the community. Since *teff* is not used for daily household consumption except on certain occasions (particularly at present), its sale is also thought to be another income-generating activity in addition to the sale of small animals (such as sheep, goats, chicken). Many households derive extra income from the sale of firewood, grass, spun cotton, sale of *chaka*, *araki*, *chat*, local shoes (*barbaso*), and agricultural labor work. Even though a certain amount is used for household consumption, the production of *chaka* is an important source of income for most households. *Araki* processing, however,

is a recent happening which might have been introduced as of the last 30 to 40 years according to my informants.

Though trading is not a socially prestigious activity particularly for women, there are indications that women travel relatively long distances for trading within the Special Wereda. They also carry crops, baskets and certain processed foods from one village to another for sale. For instance, Kaleso, late 50s, goes to Jarso, Gidole and other areas to sell *araki*. While returning home she buys baskets and sell them in her village. This case seems to depict that women have started to be involved in long distance trades within the Special Wereda and neighboring towns. Men, in many instances, prefer women to engage only in agriculture. However, girls not yet married can engage in 3 to 4 hours walk trading such as selling crops, *araki*, baskets and others. The income-generated from women's trade is entirely controlled by husbands or fathers.

However, anthropological studies conducted in West Africa (Kumar, 1978, Guyer, 1981, Tripp, 1982, Dwyer, 1983) have revealed that increases in women's incomes have been associated with the improvement in household food consumption. The main reason for this correlation, according to these studies seems to be that women more than men tend to spend their incomes on food and other household necessities (quoted in Baer, 1991:113).

Trading is thought to be an unprestigious activity and appears to reflect social stratification among the people. The *hawuda* (artisans) are engaged in non-farming activities such as traditional skin processing, pottery, iron melting, weaving, butchery and others. With regard to the social and economic life, the *hawuda* hold a marginal position

within the Konso community as discussed in the section of kinship, clan and lineage. Since they lack farm land as a result of social and economic sanctions imposed on them, the *hawuda* are mostly migrants and traders. Even though men are hostile to women's trade, *hawuda* women carry out this task. However, women can never use the profit they obtain from trading on their own right without their husbands' permission. Women hand over all the money they secure from trade to their husbands. Generally, it is the husband who gives the ultimate decision in all private and public matters in his household and entirely controls the income. The control of cash generated from women's trade by husbands is applicable for all the women throughout Konso. The following case indicates differences in levels of control over income that women have within and outside marriage.

Case No. Six

Kaleso. Sex female

Kaleso is a *hawuda* (artisan) woman who lives in Tokatu-Laga. She has 5 children, 3 males and 2 females. Kaleso leads her life by selling *chaka* and *araki* though she is in her late 50s. Since she is separated from her husband, Kaleso currently owns no land, house, livestock and other scarce resources. Kaleso's key economic asset at present is only the *kanta idir*. She says that if she is sick she is able to get a loan from the *idir* and in case she dies, the *idir* will bury her. Kaleso has no supporters as her children remained with their father. As a result of divorce, her life has become difficult. She pays rent for the house she lives in. Kaleso says that while she was with her husband, she had no control over the cash income derived from both farming and non-farming activities. It was only her husband who used to control the cash income. As she was with her husband, Kaleso was only able to order her children to carry out domestic activities. But now, she is able to decide on the money she earns from *araki* and *chaka* sales.

As explained in this case, husbands control almost all the incomes generated by married women from non-farming activities. Unlike the married women, the divorced ones control the money they earn from trade on their own right. However, as indicated in Gadaya's case, in female-headed households, the eldest son controls all the incomes

derived from trade. Thus, even if women earn the money through trade with their initiative, the money in one way or another is possessed by men.

According to the information gathered through structured questionnaire, 92% of the respondents reported that husbands control cash resources generated from other income generating activities. Eight percent of the respondents reported that eldest sons control the income generated from non-farming activity. The latter case is applicable only for female-headed households, as shown in Gadaya's case. However, on the contrary in Kolme, women make use of the income they generate from non-farming activities (*chaka* or *araki* sale) on their own right according to informants. But this is unusual in the main study village, Tokatu-Laga. Since they purchase salt, seasonings and other related things for household consumption with the money they earned, it doesn't seem that they use the income for their own purposes.

4.7. Conclusion

In Konso, women bear the greatest burden in agricultural activities. Women conduct the largest portion of land clearing and preparation. To maintain fertility of the farm, women transport manure with the assistance of female children to the farm. Men, with a little support by women, carry out terrace construction and repair, which is thought to be a tiresome task. In areas where the oxen-drawn plough is used, women and children

prevent the oxen from breaking terraces while a husband ploughs the land. Weeding, harvesting and transportation of crops to the settlement site are carried out almost entirely by women with a little involvement of men, particularly in Tokatu-Laga. In Kolme also, women undertake weeding in both highland and lowland farms. Women also cut grass for animals each day as they spend most of their time in farms.

The relative technological change in farming system has reduced the work burden in food production particularly of women. As a consequence, women in hoe-farming areas bear more responsibility and burden compared to women in oxen-drawn ploughing areas (Kolme). Even though women shoulder equal or a greater burden in agricultural tasks in addition to domestic activities, tasks undertaken by men are considered of higher value due to deep-rooted gender-based thinking. Despite women's quite important role in food production, they lack access to scarce economic resources such as land, livestock and other incomes. While men have power to decide over all matters within the household and at the community level, women are subordinate to the authority of men. Though they couldn't achieve control over scarce resources and decision-making rights, there are indications whereby women started trading particularly in Tokatu-Laga. Although they involve in trading, all the incomes earned out of it are owned by men.

Part of the justification for the denial of the women's access to resources is the patrilineal descent system through which only male clan members could inherit scarce resources. Since women are expected to own and use their husbands' property, they have no rights to inherit from their family. But what is paradoxical is that despite the seemingly

expectation that they could control their husbands' property, it is only the husbands and mature male children who have access to scarce resources because of the patrilineal descent system. At the time of divorce, women have no right to own and use any property from their husbands and their family as well. In general, the strong position men hold socially, economically and politically has limited women's access to and control over resources.

CHAPTER FIVE

WOMEN, FOOD MANAGEMENT, COPING STRATEGIES AND CONSUMPTION

5.1. Introduction

The pattern of grain management, eating habits and the ways of dealing with food shortage vary from society to society depending on ecological and cultural differences. The nature of intra-household relation is defined by the age and gender variations in the control and management of the amount of grain, responds to food crises, and the distribution of food. In this chapter therefore, the attempt is made to analyze how intra-household grain management; coping mechanisms; food consumption, classification and preservation; foods aversions and preferences are patterned on the basis of gender, age and clan.

5.2. Grain Management

There is no dispute that access to scarce resources empowers an individual over decision-making within the household and at the community level. In Konso, food grains are one of the key household economic resources. A person who has 3 to 4 granaries of grain and who can provide food to his household throughout the year is considered a wealthy person according to informants. However, all the household grain stocks are controlled by the head of the household (husband). Women are not able to use large amounts of food grains without their husbands' permission except for daily household meals consumption. Taking grain from the granary without husbands' permission causes disagreement, which ends with either anger or beatings or in some cases with divorce. Women, therefore, do not dare to breach the existing tradition. Moreover, they have also

convinced themselves on the normativeness of this way of life. In the presence of the father, male children also have no significant control over the management of food grains. Though daughters are the basic food producers, they have no or little right over food grain management.

For instance, we have seen that Hageya has the right to take food grains from the granary only for daily household meals consumption though she is the wife of Kurshalle and the main food producer. If there is a need for the use of large amounts (i.e., more than daily consumption), it is her husband who decides on when to use and in what quantity to use it. However, she confesses that most of the time they consult on the matter with her husband, though her husband makes the ultimate decision. But, the matter holds another form in the case of widowed women as stated in Gada's case. Once the head of the household (husband) dies, his eldest son immediately begins to assume the responsibility of controlling the household's key assets. Neither his mother nor his wife have the right to use any food grains without his permission except the small amounts of grain only for daily household consumption as they prepare food for the household each day. Gada's case is the best example for this analysis. In this regard, in female-headed households like that of Gada, it is the eldest son who controls all the household scarce economic resources including food grains in the granary. As revealed in the case of Kalle and Kaleso, divorced women lack the ability and access not only to manage but also to use food grains even for daily consumption. Because once they are chased out of their home as a result of conflict, and since they have no control over any household resource, their

life is completely at risk. The male-dominated gender-oriented thinking that makes males superior to females limits the women's power over grain management.

5.3. Marketing

Although the characteristics of markets vary from one society to another, they more or less have a similar purpose. In Konso, markets appear to meet primarily subsistence needs. Every household visits markets at least once or twice a week, depending on the availability of food for household consumption. People visit markets not only within the Special Wereda but also outside Konso either to sell their products or to buy food grains particularly when food supply runs out. Hadson (1927:40) stated that the Konso used to take the clothes made from cotton to the markets at Mega, Gardula, and elsewhere.

In Konso, there are two main types of markets: weekly and daily markets. The weekly market gathers once or twice a week. People visit this market from far and near villages, neighboring Weredas and towns. Goods sold in this market include: livestock, honey, food grains, cereals, commercial crops (such as cotton, coffee, *teff*, etc.), a variety of drinks (*chaka*, *araki* and others), fruits, vegetables and different clothings smuggled via Moyale.

Merchants with lorries often visit the weekly market to buy different items and to transport to Jinka, Arbaminch, Gidole and other towns. But, daily markets gather every day particularly in the afternoon. Edible foods such as cooked beans, fruits, and *chaka* are

sold in the daily market. Peasants returning home from the farm always visit this market to drink *chaka* specially in Kolme. In Tokatu-Laga however, the daily market is not as common as in Kolme since people can get *chaka* each day within their walled residential towns.

Gender also influences control over marketing. Accordingly, men are able to sell livestock, honey, food grains, commercial crops, butter, *ch'at* and others. For instance, Kabidano, the father was the only person who could sell valuable household assets such as livestock or it is he who can decide on all household matters except domestic activities. But women are able to sell only small amounts of grain such as sunflower, cotton, fruits, *araki*, *chaka* and in some areas (Kolme) chicken and eggs. Observation shows that though women are the chief food producers, they have little or no right to sell any household asset or food crop on their own decision. The following is an illustrative example of lack of female control over marketing.

Case No. Seven

Koyte. Sex female

In the capital, Karat market, I came across a woman who was selling eggs. She appears to be in her late 30s. She had only two eggs in her hand to sell. I asked the woman the price of the egg and she responded fifty cents. After a certain amount of negotiation, I convinced her to sell an egg with forty cents. Though she agreed with the price, she couldn't hand an egg to me and didn't want to receive the money. My assistant and I could understand that there is certain suspicion and asked her what happened. "Nothing", she responded and told us that she is waiting for her husband whether to sell it with the said price or not. Interested by the matter, my assistant and I waited in patience for her husband. After a while he appeared. Koyte, after consulting him, sold an egg of the price we asked too.

This case definitely portrays that women lack the capacity to control and manage not only large quantities of crop but small items as well. Although women have a significant role

in food production, they have little or no control over almost all household resources when they are either with their husbands or even divorced. In male-headed households not only women but also unmarried children of both sexes can not sell any item by their own decision unless the male head of household allows them to do so.

In female-headed households, the control over marketing transfers to the eldest son. The eldest son acts on behalf of his father after his father's death. While sons are young, in many instances, they consult their mothers to sell any household assets including crops. As soon as the eldest son gets married however, he begins to assume responsibility over marketing of all items. For instance, as explained by Gadaya, the widowed woman, as her eldest son was a child, he used to abide by her decisions. After he married a wife, he started controlling all household responsibilities on behalf of his deceased father. He is thus able to sell every household asset when it is needed unlike Gadaya and her daughter-in-law who cannot sell anything without his permission. This is due to the fact that male children by birth are superior to females and as a result it is they who should bear all the responsibilities after their fathers' death.

Though women and children sell crops or any other items according to the order of husband/father, they however can't make use of the money for their own benefit without his consent. In contrast, he is able to use the money for his own purpose without seeking any permission from his wife, for he is the head of the household. If a woman shows resentment towards her husband when he uses the money, the disagreement may result at in insults, beating and even divorce. Informants state that in Kolme, unlike Tokatu-Laga,

women market eggs and chicken in addition to small amount of crops. They can use the money earned from the sale of the chicken for their own purposes (e.g. purchasing a variety of jewels). For instance, Okalle, 58, says that since she and her sons own chicken, they can sell it by their own decision. Her husband doesn't prohibit them from doing so. Okalle buys either salt for household consumption or certain bracelets for her own purpose.

The information gathered during this fieldwork shows that 85% of female respondents, responded that they are not allowed to sell food crops on their own right. Male respondents which comprise 15% forwarded the idea that once the crop is stored in the granary, controlling and managing the food crop is the wife's responsibility. Men according to this group of respondents are thus less able to sell by their own decision though they are household heads. This implies that grain marketing requires consultation between a husband and wife. However some of the latter respondents are the Kebele Council members who more or less have a political orientation. On the contrary, 85% of male respondents view that they are able to sell any household asset independently, as they are household heads. Similarly, 15% of female respondents stated that they could sell food crops on their own decision. However, this group of respondents are composed of separated and widowed women who have young children. Generally, it is fair to claim from the available data that men market valuable assets including food grains independently while women are unable to do so though they are the main food producers. Moreover, 92.5% of the respondents reveal that in male-headed households, a husband/father own the cash earned out of the sale of any household assets. While 7.5%

of the respondents composed of some widowed women have depicted that in female-headed households the eldest son controls the money earned out of the sale of household assets on behalf of his deceased father. In one way or another, male members control key household economic resources and the cash in both male and female-headed households. Though women are the chief food producers, it appears that they have no right to possess household resources and earn money, merely because of the gender bias.

5.4. Women's Role in Coping Strategies

Acute shortage of land, scarcity of rain, excessive rain, marginal land, scarcity of oxen, shortage of manure and limited availability of tuber plants bring about frequent food shortages in Konso. According to the statement of elders, famine in Konso has a long history. Informants stated that long ago there occurred a severe famine in which both people and animals were said to have died. At the time people were forced to eat pieces of traditional shoes made of skin (*hoba*), sleeping skins, bodies of dead animals, cattle dung, feces and others. Among the people who used to eat such items, some had died and others got sick. Children who couldn't manage to eat stiff materials made of skin were given *pagana* (a tuber plant). Since then, there have been recurrent drought attacks including the one in 1985 and the last few years. As a result of these droughts, people in Konso have resorted to marginal foods to sustain their life. However, before resorting to foods not normally eaten, alternative coping mechanisms are utilized. Gadaya's case is the best example to illustrate the danger of famine and coping strategies.

Case No. Eight

Gadaya. Sex female,

Gadaya, aged 59, is a widowed and a mother of seven children. She was cultivating her plots alone since her children are too young and her husband was murdered a long time ago. When her husband was alive, Gadaya used to cultivate many plots including lowland farms. After his death, she was unable to cultivate all her holdings since there was no adult child to support her. As a result, most of the plots remained idle and honey beehives unprocessed in the forest. Her eldest daughter accompanied her while undertaking agricultural activity. Particularly during food shortages, Gadaya used to earn income by sending her eldest daughter as a laborer to Aylota, the nearby village. Gadaya herself was also earning money by taking up wage labor around the village which helped her to buy food for household consumption. At one time she borrowed grain from her younger brother who lives in Tokatu-Laga village. She repaid the loan by working for about three consecutive days on his farm.

Gadaya recalls that she had sold her two sheep as a result of drought. She also collected wild fruits and roots from the nearest plots and forests to feed her children. Gadaya says that at some point she couldn't even find these wild fruits nearby. Therefore, she gave her children the sorghum and bean stalks grinding and cooking them. But now, she thanks God for she has adult children of both sexes and she leads a life similar to other members of the community. As a result, the size of her farm has increased. Her eldest son has started hanging beehives to produce honey. Before her eldest son got married, Gadaya had control over all household resources including crop in the granary, land, livestock, cash and others. But now it is Gadaya's eldest son who controls all the resources as male children assume the responsibility on behalf of their deceased fathers.

Gadaya at present is unable to decide on valuable matters within the household and can't sell or purchase any household resource without her eldest son's permission. Her daughter-in-law as well lacks the opportunity to decide on any household matter except on insignificant daily routines. Although Gadaya and her daughter-in-law sell small quantities of grain, both of them hand over the money to Gadaya's eldest son, for he is the head of the household.

Informants view that the reduction of the amount of food consumed daily and allocated per individual is the first mechanism to respond to food shortages in almost all households. For instance, Hageya, cooks two *kimbos* (one kilo gram) of sorghum for her seven household members when food grain is sufficiently available. If food grains are available, she cooks twice a day. However, when the amount of grain in the granary decreases, Hageya reduces the amount of food to be cooked to one *kimbo* (1/2 kilo gram) and her cooking frequencies to once a day as well. In some cases, she is not even able to cook sorghum flour instead she cooks unground maize with shelaqita only to sustain their life. If the food grain reserve is enough, Hageya brews thick *ererota* (unfermented grain beer). When she is running short of grain she brews a thin grain beer. Even in the drought

period, Hageya gives this thin grain beer first to her husband before he goes to farm and she keeps some for him until he comes back. But the remaining household members are given *hola* (a drink prepared from the coffee leaf).

Generally, as this case clearly shows, the amount of food to be served and cooking frequency varies depending on the availability of food grains. The amount of food allocated per individual also varies depending on the amount of grain a household has. However, as shown above, women and children are more susceptible to hunger during food shortages.

At the time of drought, the search for wage labor either within the Special Wereda or outside Konso is common. The type of wage labor works usually available include: agricultural activities, collection and sale of grass and fire wood, transportation of crops from the farm to the settlement site, fetching water for *chaka* traders and others. Wage laborers purchase food with the money earned out of such employment. When conditions worsen, most people particularly men migrate to neighboring towns either permanently or temporarily. The cause of migration however is not only attributed to the search for wage labor, but also to trade and crime. Those who migrate because of economic crises move to the nearby towns and cotton plantations to earn off-farm income. The migrants can be either married or unmarried men. In the absence of husbands, women shoulder the responsibility of managing the livelihood of the household. As a result, women are often exposed to hunger. Women migrants are insignificant and even those who migrate travel on a daily basis to the neighboring villages within the Special Wereda.

For instance, Gadaya, the widow, used to undertake wage labor around the village in exchange for grain. Though her children were kids, she used to send her eldest daughter to the nearby village (Aylotta) to engage in agricultural activity for wage labor. Gadaya bought food from the market with the money her daughter earned. The situation however holds another form in male-headed households. For instance, Hageya's husband Kurshalle was purchasing food grains from distant places and engaging in wage labor to earn income. Hageya herself was also involved in wage labor within and around the village. They used to buy grain for household consumption with the money they earned from wage labor. In this regard, as compared to male-headed household, where both Hageya and her husband are able to gain income as discussed above, in female-headed households like that of Gadaya, life is more difficult. This is mainly due to the fact that in female-headed households it is only women and her children who engage in cultivation as opposed to male-headed households where husbands and their wives engage in farming. Moreover, it shows that coping strategies vary in male and female-headed households. In the case of male-headed households, a husband can travel long distances looking for wage labor for better payment. In case of female-headed households, since women shoulder the responsibility of the household they can not go long distances looking for better payment. Thus, they are often confined to wage labor available only within the village.

In male-headed households both the husband and wife engage in wage labor to derive income for the household. Whereas in female-headed households, only women participate in wage labor and as a result are less able to meet the food demands of their

household. In female-headed households, particularly if there is no able-bodied child who supports a woman in wage labor, the situation might be worse than in female-headed households where there is an adult laborer. As shown above, while Gadaya's children were kids she suffered from shortage of able-bodied labor. But now, since she has children who support her, the situation has changed for the better. In some cases however, widowers are also vulnerable to hunger due to the lack of labor power. For instance, Kusse, 46 who lives in Tokatu-Laga village, divorced his wife five years ago. Since there is no wife who could farm the land, Kusse was affected by hunger. As a result, he migrated to Arbaminch and returned to Tokatu-Laga after two years. This case shows that even in male-headed households, women are the major food producers.

Nevertheless, during economic crises, in male-headed households a husband's labor is more important than that of all other members. According to the available data gathered through questionnaire, 65% of respondents stated that the husband's labor plays a significant role in alleviating food shortage, in purchasing grains from remote areas and earning income through wage labor. Twenty two percent however stated that women's labor is more important during such crisis. The latter group of respondents are composed of separated, divorced and widowed female-headed household members according to this data. Thirteen percent have contended that children's labor contributes by far better than other household members. This group of respondents also constitute old widowed women. By and large, women and children are more vulnerable to food shortages than men within a household. Female-headed households are also more susceptible in comparison to male-headed households.

Food sharing and borrowing on individual basis and at the community level, dependency on direct governmental and non-governmental relief, the sale of domestic animals, giving land on a contract basis, reducing family number and selling land are some of the alternative coping strategies. Thus, the people who have the economic capacity sometimes rent land particularly in lowlands on contract and plough it temporarily. Since only men undertake lowland farming, it is male-headed households which have the advantage of lowland farming. For instance, Gadaya, the widowed woman couldn't plough the lowland farm as a result of her husband's death. Therefore, female-headed households may not be beneficiaries of the lowland plots to be rented on contract basis.

Moreover, during food crisis, people sometimes reduce family size by sending children to close relatives temporarily to lessen the burden in the household. Okalle, 58, sent her two children to her parent's home during the drought. However, the children returned soon after the drought problem was over. Though it is unusual, according to informants, having exploited all the alternatives people sometimes tend to sell their land. People sell either part of their plots or in rare cases the whole plot. Watson (1998:87) stated that though buying and selling land is a simple straightforward practice, it is disapproved of, and usually only resorted to as a last option, as land is the main source for livelihood and also the main form of wealth. However, even in this case it is only men who are able to sell their land. Since women have no right to act on behalf of their households to sell land, close relatives of the deceased husband and clan members may not agree on the sale of the land.

After all coping alternatives are exhausted, people tend to resort to eating marginal foods.

The following table shows the marginal food items consumed during the drought time.

No.	Local Terms of the Plant	Scientific Terms
1.	<i>Pagana</i>	Arisaema Species
2.	<i>Karsata</i>	Dobera Gelabra
3.	<i>Hankalta</i>	Blanites Egyptica (Desert Data)
4.	<i>Mara7ita</i>	Portulaca Quadrefolia
5.	<i>Hinkikata</i>	Ximenia Americana
6.	<i>Kanbnta</i>	Berchemia Beclor (Wild Almond)
7.	<i>Kabutayta</i>	Rhus Natalensis

Table 4: Some of the marginal plants consumed during drought

According to informants, the labor of men seems more important during drought seasons when they are forced to gather these marginal foods from nearby and remote plots and forests. For instance, Hageya's husband Kurshalle used to travel long distances to gather these fruits and roots. However, female-headed households have less access to the marginal foods during drought, because it needs traveling long distances if it is unavailable in the nearest forests and plots. As discussed above, Gada, the widowed woman, found it hard to travel alone for such long distances in fear of possible dangers. As a result, she could only resort to eating the stalks of sorghum and bean plants. Generally, based on the available data, it is fair to claim that female-headed households are more vulnerable to food shortage than male-headed households.

5.5. Anthropological Theories On Food

Theoretical developments in anthropological studies of food have followed developments in anthropology in general (Mennel et al, 1992:6). Thus, in anthropological studies of food, functionalists have been concerned with how food symbolizes patterns of social relations and plays its part in the maintenance of social structures (ibid., 8). Supported by her observations of the South African tribe (Bemba), Richards (1939) contended that the production, preparation and consumption of food reflect the life cycle, inter personal relationships and the structure of social groups. Similarly, the structuralists argue that

taste is culturally shaped and socially controlled (ibid.). According to structuralists, food has meaning and expresses hierarchy, boundaries of inclusion and exclusion and transaction across boundaries (Douglas, 1984). They also assert that natural species are chosen not because they are "good to eat" but because they are "good to think" (Levi-Strauss, 1963:89, Mc- Clancy, 1992:5).

Harris (1987:57) states that structuralists have emphasized the discovery and appreciation of food ways including emic (learned components of social life), mental and superstructural (the functional, symbolic or behavior correlates or expressions of given systems of values and beliefs) dimensions. Generally speaking, functionalists focus on the idea that food maintains the social structure and group relation. In contrast, structuralists emphasize the meaning and aesthetic aspects of food and eating. Similarly, the nature of meals reflect the pattern of relationship within the household and the sequence of eating food also symbolizes status of an individual in the family structure among the Konso. Lastly, cultural materialists argue that bio- psychological, environmental, demographic, technological and political-economic factors exert a powerful influence on the foods that can be produced and consumed by any given human population (ibid, 58).

In the same way, gender variation in diets probably has a long history (Ross, 1987:19). As Jacquette (1985) has noted, although women produce most of the world's food, they cook and serve it, yet they are malnourished (quoted in Addis, 1989:107). Many anthropological works related to intra-household food allocation in one way or another show that there is unequal distribution and consumption of food within the household. In

this regard, as literature reveals women and children get the smallest share of the food allocated. As a result of this inequality, intra-household food distribution has been assumed to have a contributing effect for malnutrition and/or hunger for women and children (Esteric,1984:3). Ethnographic findings suggest that in areas where women and children are discriminated against in the distribution of food within the household, they may suffer even more in seasons of food shortages (Messer, 1984:151, Wheeler and Abdullah, 1988:437, Wandle and Holmboe Ottesen, 1992:90. Gender-oriented discrimination is observed in relation to the quality of food and the sequence of eating pattern. It is evident that males often consume more protein-rich animal foods than females in many societies. Furthermore, food restrictions are applied to women of childbearing age, those who are lactating and pregnant (Ross, 1987:19-21, Saba, 1991:90, Braukaemper in NCTPE, 1998:114, Yared, 1999:156-157). According to various ethnographic findings, the justifications for food taboos are cultural factors (fear of pain and death in child birth, the bearing of abnormal or unhealthy children, or even sterility), or (biological reasons (strength and growth, etc.) (O'Laughlin, 1974:302, Ross, 1987:21).

This chapter therefore, discloses the socio-cultural aspects of food in the Konso community particularly with respect to gender. It also examines how gender differences result in hunger in relation to food allocation at the intra-household level or, in its broader sense, how it affects entitlement of women to food. However, before dealing with the point under discussion (patterns of intra-household food consumption), it is important to look at notions of food classification and preparation among Konso community members.

5.6. Food Classification, Preparation and Preservation

In Konso, there is limited diversification in the types of foods classified, prepared and preferred. *Dama* (dough ball made of sorghum flour) and *chaka* (grain beer) are the main and common food and drink that are served across all gender, age and status groups.

Among the Konso sorghum is the staple food and almost no food is prepared without its flour mixture. *Shulayta* (red sorghum) and *bichita* (white sorghum) in Tokatu-Laga and Kolme respectively are the popular and most preferred sorghum types. Sorghum is served in the form of *dama*, toasted, cooked, baked and brewed in the form of *chaka* (grain beer) which serves as a drink.

Chaka has economic benefit particularly in earning extra-household income. It also has a symbolic meaning, that is, drinking *chaka* from a common cup is a sign of unity and its offering to a guest is also a sign of respect and sociality. Among the Konso, in any social occasion such as wedding, bereavement, group work(*uganda*), during post and pre-harvest feasts and others, this drink is served. It is also sacrificed with regard to beliefs as an offering for the lineage spirit and gods. During mate selection, since males choose a girl who is able to prepare tasteful *chaka*, it is considered as one of the marriage criterion.

People in Konso have a longstanding food preservation tradition by which meat and *chaka* are kept for a long time. Chaka is one of the popular drinks preserved among the community members. Despite its popularity, its preservation is a recent development. After the dough is made from sorghum flour, people store it from 3 to 4 days. The dough

is cooked and mixed with germinated barely and put in the sun to dry. The dry dough is ground and used by mixing it with boiled water. The preserved *chaka*, according to informants could stay safely for about a year.

Hayda is another preserved food made from cattle meat. It is a precious food usually served at special occasions such as weddings, feasts and rarely for household consumption. Since it requires the slaughter of an animal, the *hayda* is prepared and served mostly by wealthy households. After the animal is slaughtered, the meat is cooked and toasted until it gets dry. The dried meat is put in a big jar or a gourd. To prevent contamination, to maintain its taste and to have it stick to the meat together, fat and salt are added over the meat in the jar. According to informants, this preserved food can last from 3 to 4 years without getting spoiled. As the *hayda* is valued highly, and prepared rarely at a high cost, it is used economically and kept in the special house called *reqa* in which valuable goods such as cash, arms and others are put.

5.7. Intra-household Food Allocation and Eating Habits

Among the Konso, gender and age influence intra-household food allocation. That is, the quantity and quality of food distributed among family members. The first person to be

served food is the husband/father (who is the head of the household). The eldest son followed by his immediate young males have precedence in terms of food allocation after him. Daughters eat with their mother at the end. Since no specific time is fixed for breakfast, lunch and dinner, the husband is given *hola* (coffee prepared from its leave) with *dama* before he leaves for farming early in the morning. Depending on the availability of food grains, he is also given *chaka* additionally. When he feels hungry in the work place, he is given *chaka* which is taken to the farm site by his wife late in the morning. Men are often served better dishes such as *chaka* (grain beer) mixed with honey and/or blood, *dama* (dough ball) prepared with butter and/or meat, or others. Men are served food of the best quality in order to maintain their strength.

In the past, since the males were expected to be always ready for war, and the occurrence of fire accidents and conflict between villagers or clan groups and others currently, food is always reserved in their *sooma* (wooden-bowl) to be served before they left for the place of the incident. When the food already reserved for them is finished, fresh food is placed in the bowl. But what seems paradoxical is that food is always kept in his dish even when he is present at home. Furthermore, the reason given for why a husband is given large portions of good quality food is due to the belief that he undertakes arduous tasks that need more labor as compared to a woman does, although this may have no basis in fact.

Very young children are served in most cases separately, after their immediate older siblings. Since mothers spend most of their time on the farm, no special care is given for

children in terms of food. Children above one year of age are given food almost similar to that of adults. In addition to *chaka*, children who recently are weaned given porridge made of sorghum flour mixed with goat's or cow's milk without salt. Though unchurned milk is not drunk because of scarcity, children have priority over other household members according to informants. In terms of food distribution, female household members appear to be disadvantaged. Accordingly, mother/wife and female children eat together at the end from a common dish. For instance, Galiso, 49, gives priority to her eldest son and his immediate younger brothers after her husband. As she says she, her daughters and other small children often eat together from the common dish. Sometimes, Galiso eats after all household members are served or she eats 2-3 *dama* (dough ball) from her children's share particularly if food is not adequate.

Though sharing food from a common dish or drinking from the same cup reflects sociality among the Konso, a husband never shares food and drink from a common dish/cup either with his wife or with his children. Unlike men, women have less opportunity to get the best quality food. The sole opportunity by which women could get good quality food such as special *chaka* mixed with honey and/or blood and a *dama* mixed with butter is during child delivery. This is due to the belief that it helps them replace the blood they lost while delivering a child. Kudana's case indicated below clearly exhibits the intra-household food distribution and which gender group is given priority.

Case. No. Nine

Kudana. Sex female

Kudana, having prepared food, first reserves her husband's share in his dish (*sooma*). Later, Kudana also distributes her male children's portions in order of their ages. In this regard, her eldest son is given large quantity of food first followed by his youngest brothers, who get smaller portion of food than him. Kudana and her female children eat from *qotimbeyda* (a common dish). She says that she gives food separately to her last son, as he is unable to eat with his siblings for he is too young. Kudana says that she often reserves food and *chaka* for her husband, because he often engages in heavy tasks and participates in various community matters representing his household.

As revealed in the above case, men are often given priority with respect to food allocation over women. Since food distribution takes place in order of age, children are more vulnerable than adults.

When men visit weekly markets, they sometimes buy meat in groups to eat it there after contributing a certain amount of money. According to informants, women lack the economic capacity to do so and are traditionally sanctioned from buying meat from market though they may want. The only occasion where a woman could get meat is when her husband slaughters a certain animal in relation to some ceremonies or when she is giving birth. Unlike other foods, when meat is served it is the husband who distributes it to all household members particularly in the past. The following case illustrates to what extent the best quality food is consumed by men and how women are deprived from getting protein-rich foods.

Case No. Ten

Kuyenna. Sex Male

Kuyenna, 50, says that when he was young boy, it was his father who used to distribute meat prepared for all household members. Since his father was the head of the household, his father

used to get the best portion of the meat served. However, Kuyenna's father left a certain amount of his share to the young children as an expression of benevolence. But, his mother and sisters used to get the smallest portions of meat in comparison to the male household members.

According to some informants, the distribution of meat is also done even today by husbands. Based on the data obtained from this case study, it seems possible to claim that women are prevented from getting the best quality and greatest portions of protein-rich foods. Men in contrast, are privileged in every aspects of food consumption over women and children.

According to focus group discussions and as revealed by individual case studies, since intra-household food allocation is conditioned by gender and age, a husband/father and eldest son seem to get the best portion and quality of meat as compared to women, female children and infants. Men are also given food and drinks from different wives who compete to win their support and love. As women are denied the rights to control income sources, they lack access not only to good quality food but also to the favorite local drink (*chaka*).

Informants view that in the past women were not allowed to drink *chaka* outside their home except in relation to special occasions like work groups (*uganda*). Currently however, changes are being observed. Women even in the market drink *chaka* with the invitation of friends, relatives or by buying it themselves. Informants state that if husbands knew that their wives drunk *chaka* in the market, conflict might occur. In contrast, men have the right to eat meat and drink *chaka* outside their home as they wish. Nonetheless, observation shown that women often drink *chaka* in the neighboring houses and markets. They drink it in the market mixing it with blood.

Even during famine, the best portion of *dama* mixed with *shelaqita* is allocated to the husband. His wife however, eats only the sheleaqita without a mix of sorghum flour, a practice which in fact has a weakening effect on people. This is due to the fact that the labor of the husband is more important during food shortage as he can work as a laborer or collect food items not normally eaten from remote areas as discussed in Hageya's case. For instance, as shown above, it was Hageya's husband who used to get the thin *ererota* when returning from farm work unlike other members of household who drink only *hola*. In female-headed households, as shown in Gadaya's case, the eldest son is given priority over other household members. In general, in Konso, males have precedence over females with regard to intra-household food distribution. Women and children thus, appear to be vulnerable with respect to food consumption both when food grains are available and when supplies become scarce. This is due to the fact that of gender-based and biological thinking that men engage in more arduous tasks than women. Moreover, since males represent their household at the community level during community meetings and performing rituals, they are given precedence in every aspect including food consumption within the household.

5.8. Food Taboos

Food taboos exist in many societies throughout the world. Food restrictions happen in relation to cultural, social, religious and other related reasons. In Konso, there are

culturally sanctioned clan, gender and age-based food restrictions whereby men, women and children avoid eating certain foods.

5.8.1. Clan Food Restrictions

In Konso, there are nine patrilineal exogamous clans each of which has its own food prohibitions. Some clans (*Keertitta* and *Ishalayta*) refrain from eating similar type of food, that is, the heart of cattle. Though the nine Konso clans avoid eating certain foods, they are not aware why they prohibit their members from eating that specific food except the *Paasanta* clan. The *Paasanta* believe that *poqalla* (their founding father) who had eaten kidneys lost his teeth. From that time onwards, the consumption of kidneys has been prohibited among the *Paasanta* clans as a whole. The *Paasanta* clans also associate eating kidneys with committing sexual relation with their sisters, although nothing is known about how they relate eating kidneys to sexual relation with a sister. It might be to further strengthen the prohibition of eating kidney among the clan members.

The clans, who restrict themselves from eating certain foods, exchange it for other type of food with other clan members who eat that food. For instance, Kuyenna, 50, is a member of the *Tiksayta* clan. He says that during food crisis eating marginal food is common among the community members. *Kunita* (cabbage like plant consumed during food shortage), which is prohibited by the *Tiksayta* clan, is one such food, that is not normally eaten. Kuyenna says that he and his children of both sexes do not eat this food. His wife

therefore, exchanges the *Kunita* for *pagana* or any other food item with other clan members who do not avoid eating this plant.

Though women go to other clans due to exogamous marriage, they still avoid the foods not eaten by their own clans. But, they eat the foods prohibited by their husbands' clans since women do not belong to their husbands' clan. The following table shows the nine Konso clans and the food items they prohibited from eating.

No	Clan	Food prohibited
1.	<i>Paasanta</i>	kidney
2.	<i>Tokmaleta</i>	<i>egita</i> (tip of the ram's tail)
3.	<i>Sawdata</i>	pancreas and locust
4.	<i>Arkmayta</i>	camel's meat
5.	<i>Tiksayta</i>	<i>kunita</i> (cabbage like plant)
6.	<i>Keertitta</i>	heart meat
7.	<i>Ishalayta</i>	heart meat
8.	<i>Mahaleta</i>	tip of the small intestine

9.	<i>Eelayta</i>	fibrous part of the meat
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Table 5: The Nine Konso Clans and Food Items Prohibited from Eating

5.8.2. Food Restrictions on Men

In the antiquity people in Konso used to eat locust. Later however, due to some historical circumstances, men were restricted from eating locust. The legend told by Konso elders confirms this assumption. According to the elders, in the past, some men went to distant places looking for locust. The crowd left Konso land and entered a dense forest and were never able to return to their home. From this time onwards, men were said to have avoided eating locust. On the other hand, the *shorogota* (traditional priest who is the only circumcized person among the Konso) also avoids eating the meat of a castrated ox.

Informants believe that he is restricted from eating the meat due to the fact that a bullock is also a castrated animal and thus a *shorogota* considers the animal as his totem.

Moreover, a *shorogota* doesn't eat food in a mourning home. *Poqalla* (clan heads) often experience a variety of restrictions. A clan head can not consume the food prepared by any individual or by his own wife. But, he consumes the food prepared by the virgin girls of his own clan. The plots where the foods prepared for him, grow should be separate.

Another strong male-specific food restriction is the food taboo that exists between brothers. Since the Konso society is patrilineal, children often reckon their descent line through their fathers. After divorce, women leave their children with their father and

marry another husband who is from another clan member. The children born of the first and the second husbands do not eat food together though they are from the same mother. Furthermore, the divorced woman's son from her first husband doesn't even eat or share food with his mother from the same dish and also avoids even eating the food prepared by his mother. This food restriction applies only to male children of the divorced woman.

5.8.3. Women and Child Specific Food Restrictions

Some informants maintain that there is no or little food taboo in relation to child-bearing, lactating and pregnant women in Konso. Others however, contend that women are restricted from eating a certain food items particularly during pregnancy. Informants from Kolme state that a pregnant woman should avoid eating honey. They believe that if she eats honey, when an infant comes out from his mother's womb, the part of the child's body that first rests on land will have a black spot which is similar to birth mark. This taboo however is unusual in Tokatu-Laga, the main study village. Moreover, pregnant women are forbidden from eating food in a mourning home. Informants, nevertheless, couldn't identify the reason of this restriction.

In Konso, except the *poqalla* cemetery, no specific burial place is fixed. Every household thus, buries the dead member of the household around or on the household's farm plot and sows grain over the cemetery. Mothers in this particular case do not eat food grain grown on their sons/daughters cemetery. Among community members, children specially after one and a half years of age, eat more or less similar foods as adults although there

are cases where they are given softer foods such as porridge. Until this age, however, no salt is given to children. Since salt is thought to have a strong acidic content, it is believed that it might result in diseases such as diarrhea and stomachache.

5.9. Conclusion

In terms of food grain management and sales, women's rights are limited to selling very small quantities of food grains. Gender variation is also clearly reflected in coping strategies during food shortage. Reduction of the amount of meals per day and the amount of food eaten per individual is one of the longstanding strategies that the Konso households practice to cope with seasonal fluctuation in food supply. Individual case studies reveal that men enjoy a higher level of food consumption than children and women even during food crisis. Since women carry out both domestic and agricultural activities simultaneously, they can't go to remote areas to earn better wages during droughts. They, therefore, are confined only to their vicinities where they earn insignificant incomes. Even when people are forced to eat the foods not normally eaten, women lack the opportunity to collect the marginal food from distant forests unlike men who can collect walking long distance.

Although women are involved equally or more in agricultural activities as compared to men, they seem to hold marginal positions in terms of intra-household food allocation. The data obtained during the field work reveal that intra-household food allocation is influenced by gender and age differences, where husband/father and the eldest son are

given the best share and quality of food allocated within the household as compared to women and children. Women and children are less privileged in food consumption both when food grains are abundant or scarce. Furthermore, with regard to protein procurement, men tend to have advantage over women as they have relative better access to meat, cattle's blood, butter and others.

Though women in the past were not allowed to drink *chaka* outside their home, it is likely that there are certain changes at present for they can drink it in their neighborhood, work place, market, etc. Among the Konso, almost all foods restricted for clan groups, men, women and children seem to be different from the major agricultural products and do not appear to be very influential in the eating pattern and the type of foods to be consumed within the household.

Functional and structural theoreticians stated that the nature of food consumption reflects hierarchies. This fact seems to hold true in the pattern of intra-household food consumption among the Konso. As attempt has been made to discuss in this chapter, the quality of food given to male members of a household in general and to a husband or father in particular is better than that of women. Similarly, all male members are given greater quantities of food in comparison to females. Such differences apply even when food is scarce. This pattern of food allocation symbolizes that males need to maintain strength and are considered superior to females by birth and as a result, they must get good qualities and greater quantities of food.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study was conducted among the Konso of southwest Ethiopia with the aim of investigating the role and status of women in the food system. Furthermore, the attempt

was made to discover the position women hold socially, culturally, economically and politically despite their vital involvement in food crop production. Women's rights with regard to food grain management, marketing and their access to other scarce household resources (land, live stock, grain in the granary and cash incomes) has been discussed. Patterns of gender variations in coping strategies and how this difference is reflected in intra-household food consumption, and how the dietary habits and practices have affected women's entitlement to food have been treated. Ultimately, the reasons that constrained women from controlling scarce resources despite their considerable participation in food production has been explored.

Gender-based role in food production varies in different farming, cultural and technological systems. In Konso, since almost all except a few tasks are carried out by both sexes, and thus it appears that there is no sharp gender division of labor. With close observation however, there is a certain sex-based division of labor. Accordingly, land clearing and preparation is chiefly conducted by women either individually or in groups. Terrace building and repair, which is considered an arduous task, is undertaken mainly by men with limited participation of women.

Boserup (1970) proposed that women's contribution diminishes with advancement in agricultural technology. Similarly, in Konso the role of both sex groups in food production varies from the hoe-farming village (Tokatu-Laga) to the village where the oxen-drawn plough is used (Kolme). Variation in gender involvement in food production from one study site to another might have resulted due to the recent introduction of oxen-

drawn farming to the region. As a result, in Kolme (the village where the oxen-drawn plough is used), though women support men in preventing the oxen from breaking terraces, only men handle plough and till the land with oxen. In Tokatu-Laga, since the people use the hoe for ploughing the land, women participate in every step of food production equally or even more than men. According to the findings of this study, from the available data obtained during the field work, the change in farming technology (the introduction of oxen-drawn ploughing) has eased the work burden of both sexes relatively in terms of agricultural engagement. However, this doesn't mean that women undertake less tasks than men in the villages where oxen-drawn plough is used. Since almost all agricultural activities except handling the plough is carried out by women, it seems fair to claim that the greatest portion of farming is assigned to them.

With respect to weeding, which is thought to be an easy task, women work more hours than men as compared to other agricultural tasks. There are slight variations even in this regard between areas utilizing hoe-farming and villages using the oxen-drawn plough. In Tokatu-Laga (the hoe-farming site), weeding is done mainly by women with little participation of men. In Kolme (where the oxen-drawn plough is used), both in the highland and in the lowland plots, weeding is carried out by women. Harvesting is performed by both sexes in both study villages, but mostly by women. In Kolme, the lowland plot is mostly harvested by men with limited participation of women. In Konso, men appear to have a fairly leisurely time particularly during the post-harvest period, while women are fully occupied in agricultural and domestic activities even more than half a day.

Food crop transportation is undertaken by both sexes with the greatest weight on women. Thus women usually arrange extra-household labor during peak labor time in both study sites. Men store food stocks, which is often assumed to be hard work, in all study villages. In relation to crop threshing, there are also differences in gender-based division of labor between the two study sites. Accordingly, in Kolme, where people thresh food crops in large quantities, it is carried only by men. Moreover, men undertake clearing of the threshing field while coating the field is carried out by women. However, since in Tokatu-Laga, people thresh each day for daily household consumption in small amounts, it is carried out only by women.

In terms of livestock rearing, women have an important role in supplying fodder, feeding, watering, tending animals and cleaning their shed, etc. Although women take care of animals in the home, cattle herding is carried out exclusively by men particularly in Kolme since they travel long distances with cattle looking for pasture and water. In general, tasks undertaken by men are often thought to have a higher value than tasks carried out by women. This seems due to the fact that males are considered superior to females by birth and are thought to have strength. As the gathered data indicate, this perception is shared by women themselves.

Despite the women's vital role in food production, yet they have no decision-making power over scarce economic resources (land, livestock, grain in the granary, house, etc.). The fundamental reasons for the constraint of women's right to possess and use scarce resources lies in the social structure of the community. This is due to the pattern of

exogamous marriage, male-dominated inheritance system through which only male clan members access scarce resources and the gender-based thinking by which women are considered inferior to men by birth. Part of the justification for the denial of the women's access to resources is also that since women are expected to own and use their husbands' property, they have no rights to inherit from their family. But what is paradoxical is that despite the seemingly expectation that they could control their husbands' property, it is only the husbands and mature male children who have access to scarce resources because of the patrilineal descent system. At the time of divorce, women have no rights to own and use any property from their husbands and their family as well.

The data show that despite women's important role in food production, they lack full participation in grain management, marketing and decision-making regarding food resources. With regard to food management, women have the right to take grain from the granary only for daily household consumption. Therefore, women are less able to decide not only over food grains in the granary, but also on processed foods. As the individual cases reveal, men distribute cooked meat to household members. Goods of greater quantity, better quality and higher cash value are marketed by men while the others are marketed by women. The marketing of even small amounts and low value assets take place only with the decision of men. In general, the strong position men hold socially, economically and politically has limited women's access to and control over resources.

In addition to the lack of rights over food management and marketing, women and children are more likely to be vulnerable during food-insecurity as compared to men. The

available data show that at the time of drought, leaving their children with their wives, men migrate or go for labor work temporarily or permanently to distant places where they may get better wages. In contrast, since women bear the responsibility of taking care for their children and securing the household's livelihood, they engage in low paid wage labor in the nearby villages. Even in terms of collecting marginal foods, women tend to lack the capacity to gather them from the distant place unlike men who can collect them from the remote forests. The widower-headed households are also vulnerable to drought like that of female-headed households. This however, witnesses that women are the major food crop producers as compared to men. Furthermore, land sales are sometimes a final means of coping with hunger. Though men are able to sell land by their own right, women lack the ability to do so as their deceased husband's relatives do not allow them.

Although the decision-making power of men varies from one household to another depending on the type of the household, generally speaking, it is males who decide on most matters (land sales, the management of food grains in the granary, live stock sales, participating in community meetings and others) in every household. In male-headed households, a husband/father decides in all matters within the household while in female-headed households the eldest son does so. In both households, men control all cash incomes earned from farm and off-farm activities. Both culturally and jurally, women are subordinate to men in Konso. They are unable to negotiate in any matter on behalf of their household both within their own home and at the community level even at the death of their husbands. The impregnable authority that a husband/father has over all his household members including his children stems from the longstanding belief that men

by birth are superior to women. This deep-rooted gender-based thinking is grounded on the cultural view that males' superiority is the will of God.

Thus, the decision-making power in all matters as mentioned above within the household and at the community level is entirely in the hand of only men. Both in the household and at the community level, women have a limited role in decision-making. Generally, there is a weak relationship between the extent to which a given sex group contributes to food production and decision-making power and access to resources. As a result, a certain changes observed in the social organization of the society due to religious, modern education, political intervention and other related factors seem to be unsuccessful to bring a meaningful change in the life-style of Konso women.

The consumption of food always is governed by cultural rules at different levels of symbolizations that reflect the social context (status, bonds and hierarchies) among family, friends, clan and community members within the society. For instance, a restriction on eating the totemic animals/plants associated with a given clan shows the significance of clans in the structure of that specific society's institutions. Therefore, it could be said that the rules of food consumption within a society define the existing ethical and moral values.

Food consumption is also patterned by gender. The allocation and consumption of food within the nuclear family symbolizes institutionalized relationship where father/husband stands on top of the family structure. Thus, male members often have precedence over

females in terms of food distribution. A husband/father followed by the eldest son and other male members of the household are given the best quality and greater quantities of food as compared to the female members of the household. Furthermore, protein-rich foods are mostly consumed by males. Women have access to protein-rich foods only during child bearing. As a result, they may be in a constant state of protein-deficiency.

With respect to food taboos, it is believed that people may not be allowed to eat everything in any society. As a consequence, a particular food item is consumed and another can be prohibited. Among the Konso, almost all foods restricted for all sex and age groups are outside the staple food stuffs produced and consumed in the region and/or limited only to marginal foods and a certain part of the meat (not that important) except the salt prohibited to children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. As long as the people use intensive cultivation and intercropping, the quality of farm land is getting poorer from time to time. This environmental deterioration has exposed the region to recurrent drought attack. The rain shortage that characterizes the region in addition to population pressure and deforestation made the vegetation in the region to have a semi-desert feature. Therefore, actions should stress on the rehabilitation of natural resources in an integrated endeavour by governmental and non governmental organizations.
2. With regard to social services, the level of infrastructure is not yet developed. There are no all-weather roads except some seasonal roads that connect a limited number of peasant associations to Karat, the capital. Girls school-enrollment ratio

is by far less than the boys which infact is characterized by late age entry. Health conditions are also quite low and most people tend to use traditional medicines more than the modern health service. Generally, though it appears that there are certain changes in terms of social amenities due to efforts exerted by governmental and non governmentaal organizations, further work needs to be done to bring about significant socio-economic change.

3. The deep-rooted gender ideology where women are considered inferior to men, has affected women's full ownership over their own productive capacity and decision making. Women's cosciousness whereby they attribute the reason of their inferiority to God's will has also contributed a lot to the continuity of their status. This has negatively influenced women's active role in both traditional and formal political organizations. To change this gender-biased thinking, it needs basic education of females and public awareness.
4. The agricultural system is intensive, based on the application of manure and intercropping using manual hand tools. Oxen-drawn plough agriculture is also practiced with eithr one or two oxen. However, the use of single ox for ploughing is more favorable and easily manageable than that of two oxen. This new innovation should be encouraged and provided for those peasants who have no ox as one of agricultural inputs on credit basis by governmental and non governmental organization to boost food production and reduce food insecurity.
5. Although women are the major food producers, due to the patrilineal descent system through which only male clan members could inherit scarce resources, the strong position men hold socially, economically and politically has limited

women's access to and control over resources. To change women's life, legal intervention and consecutive public awareness to bring attitudinal change should be the target of change agents.

6. With respect to food grain management and marketing, women's role is limited to smaller amounts as opposed to males who have full control over grain and other marketable items. To create assets in the hands of women that would help them increase control over resources, long and short term credits should be given to diversify income since women's income correlates with better food supply in intra-household level.
7. As far as women's coping strategies are concerned, reduction of the amount of meals per day and the amount of food eaten per individual, engaging in labour work around plantations and towns, selling animals, leasing land, reducing family member, and the like are some among others. Since women lack the ability to negotiate in public particularly if the household is female-headed, it is hard to use all the coping alternatives. Moreover, as women carry out both domestic and agricultural activities simultaneously, they can't go to remote areas to earn better wages during droughts. Therefore, the provision of agricultural inputs and credits would develop women's income to challenge food crises.
8. Although women are involved equally or more in agricultural activities as compared to men, they seem to hold marginal positions in terms of intra-household food allocation. Moreover, it is also influenced by age differences and as a result children are less privileged than adults. Until one year and half, children are restricted from eating salt since it is believed to result in disease. To

avoid such misconceptions related to traditional beliefs, intensive awareness creation works should be carried out to change the people's attitude.

9. In communities like Konso where male have decisive role over controlling scarce household resources, focus on only one sex group may not have a contributing effect to the development programs undertaken in the region. Moreover, in every matter within the household and at the community level since the ultimate decision-making power is in the hands of men, any intellectual and development program intended to be launched particularly on women should imperatively consider both gender groups.
10. Unless women realize their full right over their productive and reproductive capacities, enacting and implementing different programs and projects might not bring a meaningful change in the life of the people. Thus, successive efforts should be made in bringing attitudinal changes on behalf of men particularly in the use of household resources, inheritance and property ownership. Generally, since this gender-based thinking is embedded in the social organization of the community, the attempts of bringing change likely to follow multidisciplinary approaches.

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GLOSSARY

<i>Aapa</i>	Father/husband
<i>Abuya</i>	Uncle (mother's brother)
<i>Akatuta</i>	A person who has committed serious crime against the community.
<i>Akita</i>	The special house where a clan head is believed to communicate with angels.

<i>Allumala</i>	The work group that consists of only males of the same age.
<i>Anda</i>	The village leader who holds a drum for more than one year.
<i>Annada</i>	A white soil with which the <i>allumala</i> work group members use to embellish their body during a certain occasion.
<i>Arhata</i>	The lower part of the homestead, located near the main gate and used as animal shed. It also serves as a traditional sewerage system.
<i>Bayra</i>	Two toothed wooden hoe.
<i>Bifta</i>	The traditional Konso house made of stone.
<i>Birr</i>	Ethiopian currency.
<i>Boka</i>	A person's dead body is believed to easily swell and break down or bounce up after it has been buried.
<i>Bona</i>	Dry season from September to February.
<i>Chaka</i>	The local fermented grain beer.
<i>Dama</i>	The dough ball made of sorghum or maize flour and the common food of Konso.
<i>Dina</i>	The land covered with wood surrounding a village that serves as a latrine.
<i>Dula</i>	Farm plot.

<i>Enset</i>	A banana-like green fibrous food crop chiefly grown in south western and south central Ethiopia.
<i>Ererota</i>	Unfermented grain beer.
<i>Etenta</i>	Peasant.
<i>Fadeeta</i>	An assistance group or a pulling together of labor.
<i>Fuuna</i>	The traditional sewerage system.
<i>Hageya</i>	A time when the second-round sorghum product begins to mature.
<i>Hardufanda</i>	A feast conducted during pre and post-harvest time.
<i>Hawda</i>	Craftsmen.
<i>Hayda</i>	The best and precious preserved food which is made of cattle meat and served during special occasions and rarely for household consumption.
<i>Hayya</i>	The work group which consists of both sexes of the same age.
<i>Hela</i>	Every younger generation who serve as a military men.
<i>Helita</i>	Years (one <i>helita</i> is equal to eight years).
<i>Hoba</i>	The traditional Konso shoe made of skin.
<i>Hola</i>	A drink prepared from the coffee leaf.
<i>Idir</i>	An association where labor or money is pulled on the basis of clan and neighborhood to help its members prepare a funeral.

<i>Kafa</i>	Clan or lineage.
<i>Kanta</i>	Neighborhood.
<i>Karaya</i>	Lineage spirit.
<i>Karra</i>	Time counting system using generation poles and stones.
<i>Katanna</i>	Rainy season from March to August. Planting and weeding are during this season.
<i>Kawatta-Arhata</i>	The dividing line between <i>arhata</i> and <i>oyda</i> which is made of stone.
<i>Kawula</i>	A piece of rectangular wood used to clap during chanting and dancing.
<i>Kebele</i>	The division in the administrative structure next to Wereda (district). It is the primary organization for the rural community in charge of task collection.
<i>Kimbo</i>	A container made of iron sheet that is used to measure food grain. One <i>kinbo</i> is equal to half kilo gram.
<i>Komayda</i>	Common land covered with trees and that is found away from the residential villages in the remote areas.
<i>Konssita</i>	The land located outside <i>dina</i> that uses for farming and often undercultivation.
<i>Kunita</i>	A cabbage-like plant consumed during food shortages.

<i>Manqa</i>	The post-harvest food offering for the lineage spirit.
<i>Masana</i>	The post-harvest period and a relative leisurely time.
<i>Moora</i>	The demarcated public meeting place within the village and the sacred field where rituals are performed.
<i>Mugula</i>	The bracelet worn on the right hand and whose holder has an authority only over a single clan.
<i>Olahita</i>	The sacred pole planted in the <i>moora</i> by age grade groups.
<i>Oyda</i>	The upper part of the homestead, that is used as a residence of people.
<i>Pagana</i>	Tuber plant consumed during food shortage.
<i>Paleta</i>	Village.
<i>Parga</i>	The work group composed of only girls of the same age.
<i>Pe7ateta</i>	The separate cemetery where a person who killed a man is buried.
<i>Poqalla</i>	Clan head, land lord, economic and political leader, traditional priest, founding father of the clan and local king.
<i>Porshota</i>	Neighborhood leader
<i>Qotimbeyda</i>	The common dish from which children and other household members except a husband/father eat together.
<i>Region</i>	An administrative division below the federal state.
<i>Reqa</i>	An apartment-like Konso house, where secret and precious goods are kept.
<i>Roka</i>	Recently introduced type of house made of wood and mud and thatched

with grass.

<i>Sara</i>	Counsellors of leaders on various administrative, justice, religious and other matters.
<i>Senkeleta</i>	The leader of young people who serve as a military men.
<i>Shelaqita</i>	A food mixing vegetable
<i>Shorogota</i>	The traditional priest, leader, the only circumcized man, bigman, and landlord.
<i>Silbota</i>	One toothed wooden stick used for hoeing the land.
<i>Sooma</i>	A wooden dish particularly of the husband/father.
<i>Special Wereda</i>	The area which is deemed ethnically distinct and whose area is too small for division into a zone.
<i>Teff</i>	One of the indigenous cereals grown in Ethiopia.
<i>Timba</i>	A drum that represents an individual who governs a given village. He is both an administrative and ritual leader.
<i>Tuma</i>	The bracelet which is worn on the wrist of the right-hand and whose holder is the lord that used to govern the nine Konso clans.
<i>Turayta</i>	The eldest son of <i>poqalla</i> who is candidate to the clan headship status.
<i>Uganda</i>	A work group that involves both sex and all age groups of people.

Appendix

Household Survey Questionnaire

I. Demographic Characteristics

1. Name of the PA ----- and name of the respondent -----

2. Age

A. 20 - 25

B. 26- 35

C. 36 - 45

D. 46 - 55

E. 56 and above

3. Sex

A. Male

B. Female

4. Ethnicity

- A. Konso
- B. Amhara
- C. Oromo
- D. Others -----

5. Religion

- A. Orthodox
- B. Protestant
- C. Muslim
- D. Primal belief
- E. Others -----

6. Marital Status

- A. Single
- B. Married
- C. Widowed
- D. Separated
- E. Divorced

7. Number of children

- A. Male
- B. Female

8. Education

- A. illiterate

- B. literate
- C. 1 -6
- D. 7 - 12
- E. Above

II. Socio -Economic Issues

9. Are you the breadwinner of the household?

Yes

No

10. What is your household's major means of earning livelihood?

- A. Crop cultivation
- B. Cattle rearing
- C. Trading
- D. Handcraft
- E. Others (specify)

11. Have you ever been migrated out of your village due to food crisis?

- A. Yes
- B. No

12. Whose labor is more important during food crisis in your household?

A. Women

B. Men

C. Children

13. Which members of the family are engaged in the following activities?

Activities	Responsible members			
	Women	Men	Male children	Female children
☐ Sowing/planting				
☐ Hoeing				
☐ Ploughing				
☐ Weeding				
☐ Harvesting				
☐ Transporting the crop				
☐ Storing				
☐ Honey production				
☐ Herding				
☐ Supplying fodder				

☐ Terrace, house and granary construction				
☐ Marketing				
☐ Participating in meetings in the community level				

14. What are your key economic assets in the household?

A. -----

B. -----

C. -----

D. -----

15. Do you have farm plots?

A. Yes

B. No

16. What are the implements used for agricultural tasks?

A. Digging-sticks

B. Wooden-hoe

C. Iron-hoe

D. Ox-drawn ploughs

E. Others (specify) _____

17. List the major crops grown on your farm?

18. Does your household own livestock?

A. Yes

B. No

19. If your answer is yes, cite the number of

Oxen _____

Cows _____

Sheep _____

Goats _____

Pack-animals _____

Beehives _____

Others _____

20. Does your household use ox-drawn plough?

A. Yes

B. No

21. Whose domain is ploughing?

A. Men's

B. Women's

C. Children's

22. Do you think that the introduction of oxen drawn plough farming has improved productivity?

A. Yes

B. No

23. Do you believe that the use of oxen has reduced the burden of women in food production in comparison to hoe ploughing ?

A. Yes

B. No

24. If your answer for question No. 22 is ' yes', how?

A. -----

B. -----

C. -----

25. Do you participate in work group parties to carry out agricultural activities?

A. Yes

B. No

26. Do women involve in work group parties?

A. Yes

B. No

27. If yes, what are the activities in which women commonly participate?

III. Availability of Food

28. Of the following type of household, which one is exposed to food shortage?

- A. Male - headed household
- B. Female- headed household
- C. Households where able-bodied labour lack
- D. Others, specify -----

29. State the main causes of food shortage in your household and community.

- A. -----
- B. -----
- C. -----
- D. -----

30. In which months do your household gets affected by food shortage each Year?

31. Does the food crop you produce each year meet your food supply ? .Yes No

32. If your answer is 'yes' for question No. 31 to what extent does it meet?

A. Minimum

B. Optimum

C. Maximum

Specify if any -----

33. What are other mechanisms you use to meet your household's food supply specially during the time of food shortage?

A. Wage - labour

B. Reduction of food allocation and feeding time

C. Reducing family number

D. Depending on government and NGOs food relief

E. Others , specify -----

IV. Women's Status and Decision Making in the Household and Community

34. How you view yourself in your community?

A. Superior to men/ women

B. Equal to men/women

C. Inferior to men/women

D. other if any -----

35. What is your out look of the status women occupied in your society?

- A. It is natural (God's rule)
- B. It is cultural accepted by the society
- C. It is the influence of men over women
- D. Other specify

36. In what matters are you able to decide in your household?

- A. -----
- B. -----
- C. -----
- D. -----

37. Who controls/ possesses major assets in your family?

- A. Husband
- B. Wife
- C. Jointly

38. Do you have any leadership position in traditional and formal organizations?

- A. Yes
- B. No

39. If yes, specify

40. How much role do you play in indigenous institutions?

V. Grain Management and Marketing

41. Who has the right over managing the grain stored in the granary in your household?

A. Husband

B. Wife

C. Other specify -----

42. Since you are the main food crop producer in your household, are you able to sell any food crop when the need arises by your own right?

A. Yes

B. No

43. If “no” for question No. 42 why? specify

44. What crop items or animals are you able to sell in the market?

A. Only food crops

B. Commercial crops

C. Domestic animals

D. Others specify -----

45. What are other income generating activities in your household?

A. -----

B. -----

C. -----

46. Who controls the many resources pulled out of other income generating activities, the sell of any food crop, animals, etc in your household?

A. Husband

B. Wife

C. Other if any -----

VI. Mutual Support and Assistance

47. Did you borrow or accepted food gifts , grain or cash from neighbours or relatives during food shortages?

A. Yes

B. No

48. Have you ever been assisted from community members in times of food insecurity?

A. Yes

B. No

49. On what bases do you return the assistance you get from your relatives or community?

A. -----

B. -----

C. -----

VII. Food consumption and Food Taboo

50. What are the quality foods in your community?

A. -----

B. -----

C. -----

D. -----

51. Who is given priority in terms of feeding?

A. Husband

B. Wife

C. Young male boys

D. Children

E. Others specify -----

52. Who is given the best quality and/quantity of food in your household?

A. Husband

B. Wife

C. Children

D. Other, specify -----

53. What food restrictions do pregnant and lactating women practice in our community?

A. Fruits and Vegetables

B. Protein rich foods

C. Cereals

D. Others, specify -----

54. What is child specific food taboo in your community?

A. -----

B. -----

C. -----

55. Who you think is more privileged in terms of feeding quality foods?

A. Husband

B. Wife

C. Children

D. Other, Specify

56. Who is the most disadvantaged sex and/or age group in terms of eating in
your community or household.

A. Men

B. Women

C. Children

D. Other, specify -----

DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work, has never been presented for a degree in any other university and that all sources of materials used for the thesis have duly acknowledged.

Name Yilma Sunta

Signature_____

Date _____

This thesis has been submitted with my full approval as the advisor.

Yared Amare (PhD.) _____

