ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

ADAPTATION, CULTURE AND CHANGING ENVIRONMENT: THE CASE OF THE GUMUZ OF THE DIDDESSA VALLEY (KAMAŠI ZONE), WEST ETHIOPIA

026230/2

ABEYA IFFA

MAY

ADAPTATION, CULTURE AND CHANGING ENVIRONMENT: THE CASE OF THE GUMUZ OF THE DIDDESSA VALLEY (KAMAŠI ZONE), WEST ETHIOPIA

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES OF ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

BY

ABEYA IFFA

ADVISORS 1. Dr. Alula Pankhurst
2. Dr. Teferi Abate

May *2001*

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATES

Adaptive Strategies and Changing Environment:
The Case of the Gumuz of the Deddessa Valley (Kamasi Zone)

By
Abeya Iffa Worjie

College of Social Sciences

Approved by Board of Examiners:

Advisor

Examiner

Examiner

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Acronyms

a.s.l = above see level

A.A. = Addis Ababa

A.A.U = Addis Ababa University

BGRNS = Benišangul-Gumuz National Regional State

cm = centimeter

CSA = Central Statistics Office

c^o = degree centigrade

EPRDF = Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front

kgs = kilograms

km = kilometer

km^2 = square kilometer

M = Meter

NUPI = National Urban Planning Institute

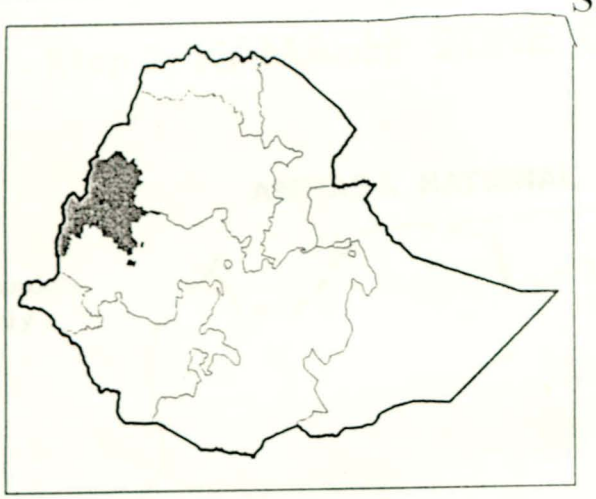
NGO = None-Governmental Organization

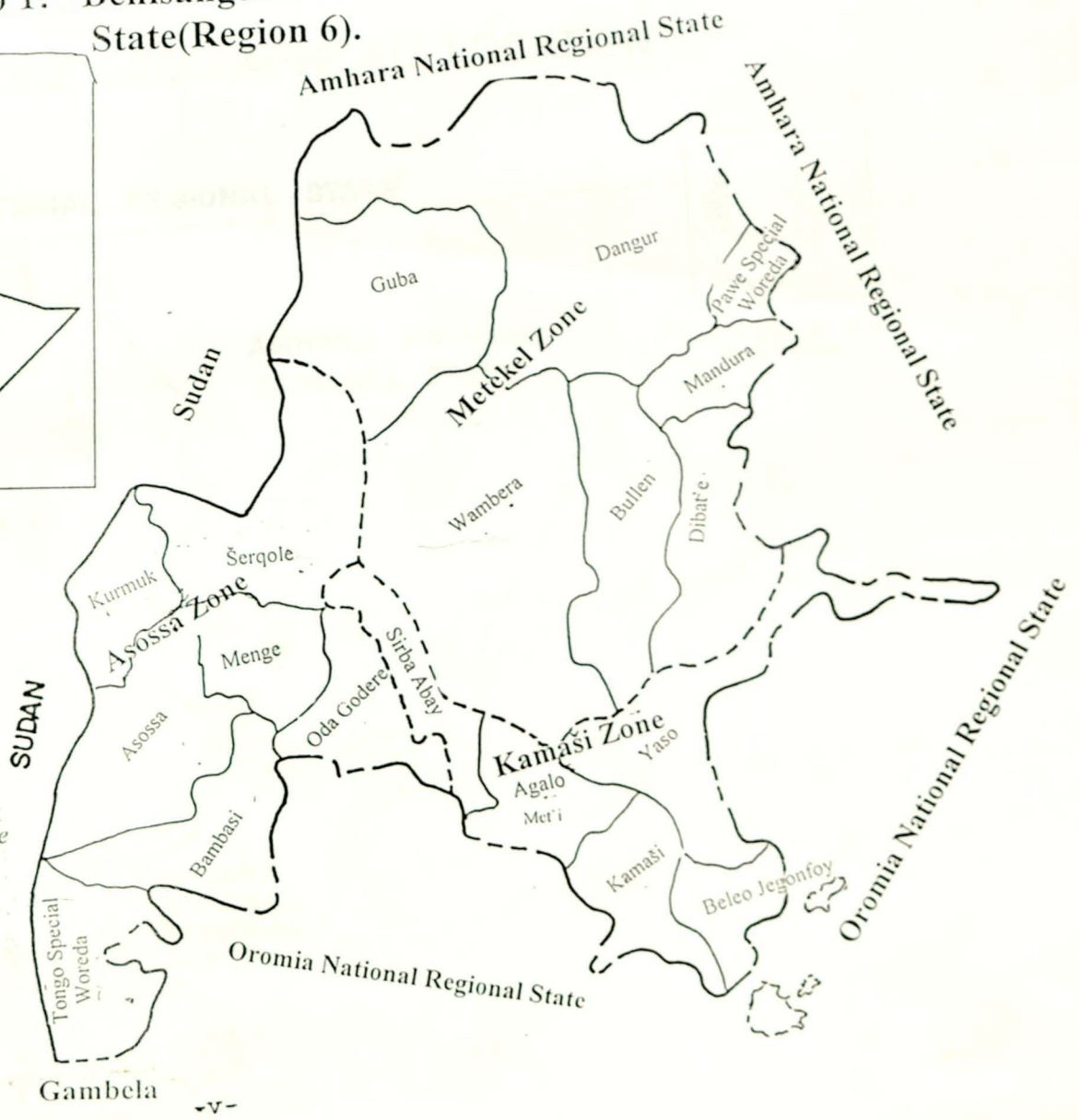
N.B = Nota bene

Oxfam GB = Oxfam Great Britain

PA = Peasant Association

Map 1: Benišangul - Gumuz National Regional State(Region 6).





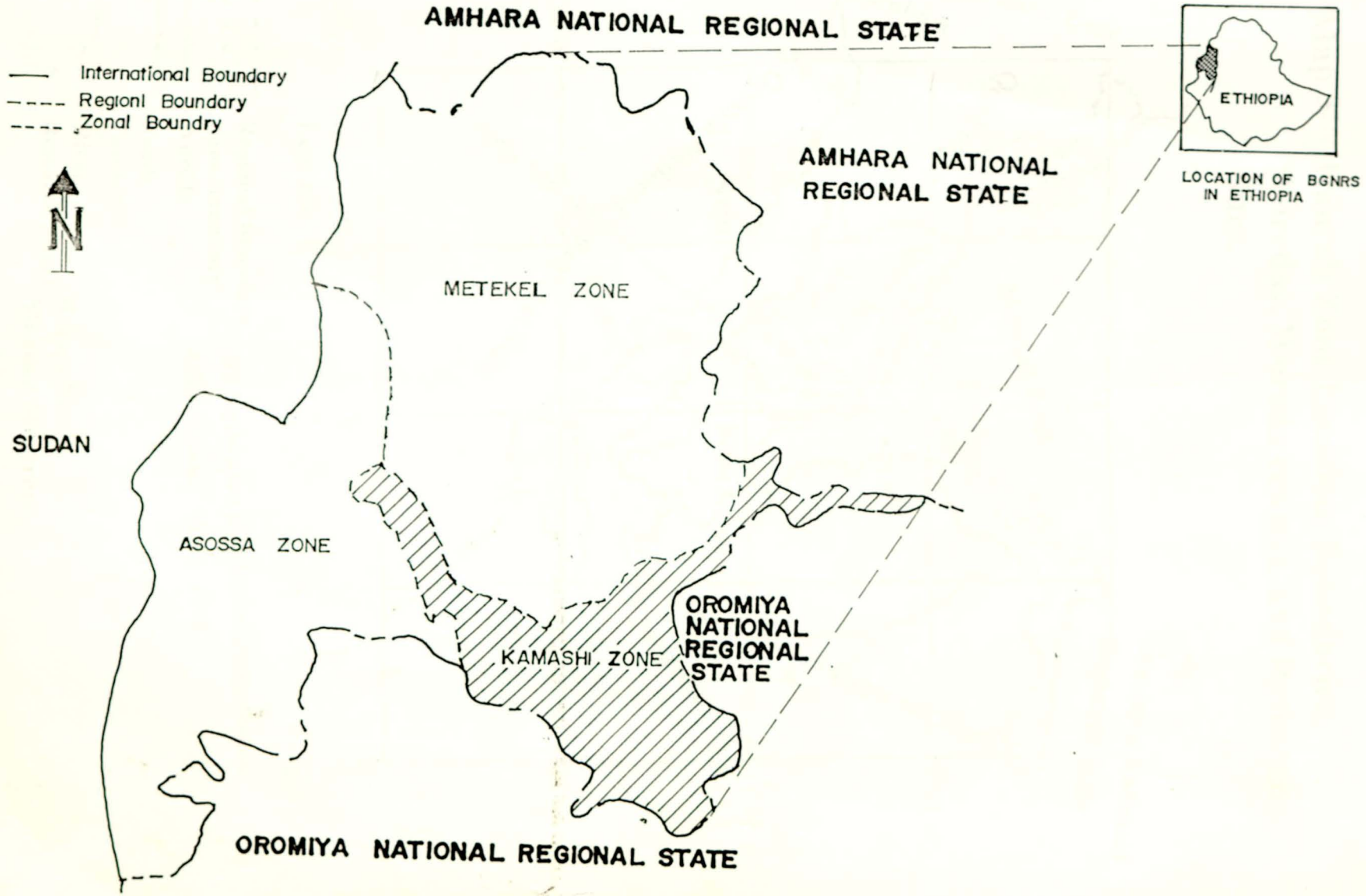
Legend

- International Boundary
- Regional Boundary
- Zone Boundary
- Woreda Boundary

All borders are unofficial and approximate

Adapted from NUPI, 1999

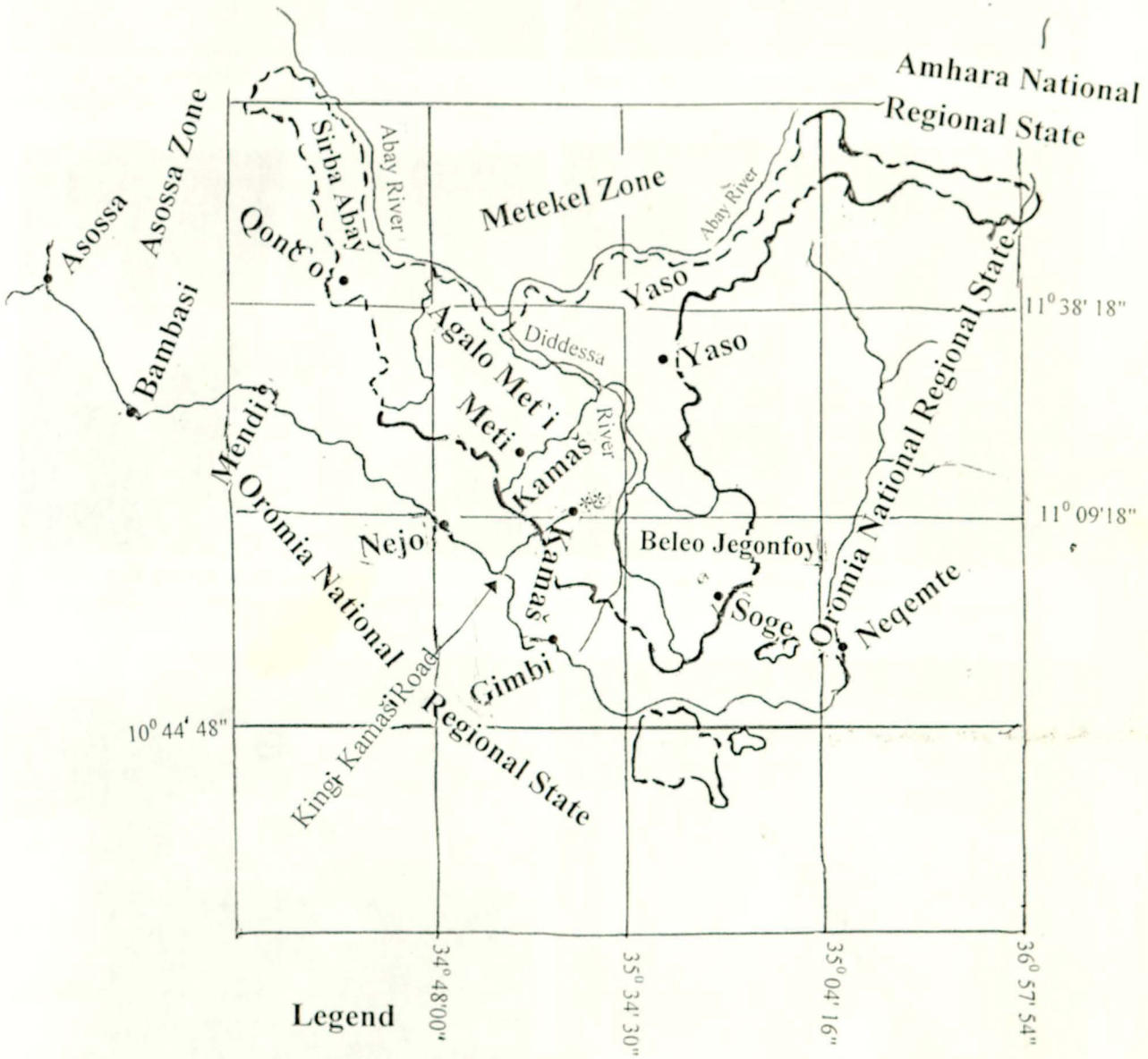
Map 2: KAMASHI ZONE GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION



Scale Without Scale

Source BGNRS Regional Atlas

Map 3: Kamaši Zone Location, Boundaries, Woredas, Woreda centers, and Research Sites.



Legend

- Regional Boundary
- Zone Boundary
- Woreda
- Roads
- Towns
- River
- * Research Sites: Burqa Met`i, Mender Mesereta

All borders are unofficial and approximate

Adapted from NUPI, 1999

Plate 1: Coffee ceremony

Plate 2: Male focus group discussion

Plate 3: Male focus group discussion

Plate 4: Female focus group discussion

Plate 5: An interview with an elder Ato Wolteji Sasiga

Plate 6: A pregnant woman grinding maize and a small girl carrying a

Plate 7: A pregnant woman grinding maize

Plate 8: A view of zone council's building from right

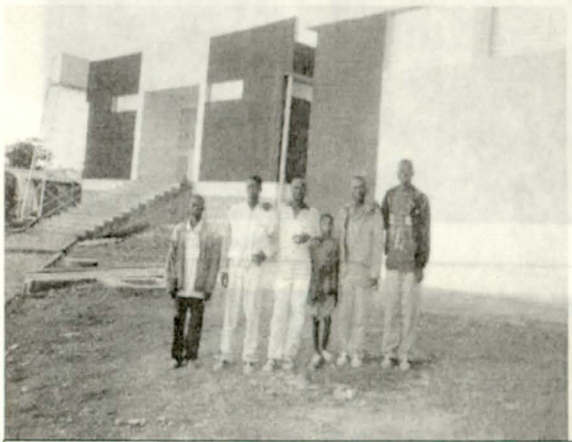


Plate 9: A view of zone council's building from left side

Plate 10: Girša Teso's garden

Plate 11: Coffee and papaya plants

*Plate 12: Sorghum, papaya and **wupa** plants*

Plate 13: Sorghum plot

Plate 14: Maize plot (extension program).

Plate 15: Sesame plot

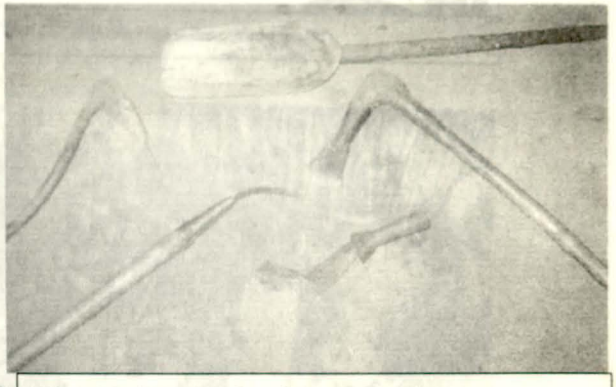


Plate 16: Agricultural implements

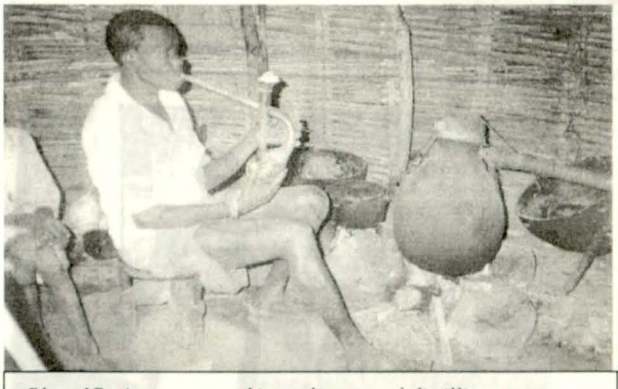


Plate 17: A woman smoking tobacco and distilling ***araqe***

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Plate 21: Recently divorced female returning from fetching

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Plate 25: Women, man and children.

Plate 26: Women, to the left and right of me, returning from market

Plate 27: Adopted Oromo girl

Acknowledgements

Had it not been for patience and cooperation of resourceful persons and NGOs, this study would have not been materialized. I would like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to the Gumuz people and their administrators whose cooperative feature and true collaboration facilitated the study.

I am very much indebted to my advisor, Dr. Alula Pankhurst, not only of this thesis but also of the two-year academic period, whose thorough knowledge and experience of the research project greatly enriched the work. His encouragement and meticulous comments right from the inception of the research topic have been invaluable. I specially appreciate for the time he shared me from his sabbatical leave. I am also deeply grateful to my advisor, Dr. Teferi Abate, whose supervision, guidance and critical comments have been invaluable to the subject. I am thankful for his comprehensive knowledge put into the study.

I am extremely indebted to my twin-brother Abeshu Iffa whose support was all round throughout the study. He carried the burden not only in financing and computerizing my study but also in sustaining the family. This study would have been impossible had it not been for his generous support, encouragement and constructive comments throughout the study. Undoubtedly he put all his effort into my work without any reservation, of course, I may dare to say, as it was his own project. Really, I owe him my heart-felt and greatest debt for his keen interest in my study, tireless closer support, hospitality and encouragement at absence of any fund or sponsorship. I also extend my special and sincere thanks to other family members: W/o Nigist Iffa, W/t Mulu Gudeta and Meti Abaya – whose moral and encouraging support contributed towards the realization of this study.

I am also thankful to Ato Waqshum Mekonnen and Ato Yohannis Demeke, who took the responsibility of scanning and arranging the plates, Ato Gebryaw Molla who contributed to the settings of the maps and to W/o Seblewongel Tefera who shared the duty of computerizing my paper. I am also grateful to Ato Lemesa Tulu for his material and encouraging support. I owe my sincere thanks to Oxfam GB and Health Net International who lent me field equipment.

Finally, I wish to extend my deepest gratitude to my parents Ato Iffa Worjie, W/o Bultu Fida and other family members for their continuous encouragement and moral support.

Abeya Iffa, May 2001

Abstract

This study attempts to explain adaptive strategies and coping mechanisms employed by the Gumuz in response to constraints or in their effort to adapt to the ecology of the Diddessa Valley. In the process, it tries to identify variables affecting these strategies as well as changes brought about by the responsive interactions between people and their environment. The exogenous forces are among variables considered here. Our knowledge of these people, considering the effects of concentration of resources as well as strategies or variables (indigenous knowledge, skill, implements, diversified means…) used to adapt to them, enables us to understand needs and priorities of the Gumuz society.

The findings of the fieldwork, in which a combination of different data collection methods were employed, tends to reveal that, although routine differences are there between household's adaptive mechanisms, the Gumuz communities generally adapted similar strategies to adjust themselves to the ecology of the area. The investigation shows that, in line with adaptive re-adjustments to the new context, the community responded to the environment similarly but not without creating socio-economic and cultural differentiation between different households and on gender basis.

Another outcome of the study is that some societal elements not only survived in themselves but also contributed to the physical continuity of these minority groups while other practices changed or are changing in response to meet needs and necessities where and whenever options are found. Some practices survived because of their ecological or economic importance and others due to their spiritual or emotional significance. People and environment influence and induce one another to act according to response of interactive process. In general, the findings fit with the interrelated conceptual frameworks upon which the research is based.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The Gumuz of the Diddessa Valley, administratively Kamaši Zone, migrated into the area in the second half of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries. Their migration into the lowlands of the Valley was not a simple physical movement. It was rather a complex social process that involved decisions on and selection of settlement area, evaluation of its safety and economic value, and convenience of its ecology. The factors behind their flight from Metekel to the Diddessa Valley included imperial expansion, high taxes and the slave raids as well as internal conflicts (James, 1986). The protective features of the Valley provided a refuge for the forced migrants. The people of this peripheral area have hardly been studied. The poor infrastructure might have discouraged researchers from doing fieldwork on people of this region. Researchers like James (1977, 1986), Wallmark (1981), Taddesse (1988), and Irwin (1968) produced articles while Edossa (1982), Damie (1980) and Emiru (1984) wrote B.A. theses on the Gumuz of the Diddessa Valley. Each of them either dealt with a particular "clan" or case, but not with the Gumuz as a whole.

Very little is said about Gumuz's adaptive strategies or coping with the complex ecosystem of Diddessa. Thus, the literature so far is scant. Adaptive or coping strategies might have been employed in moving from Metekel to the Diddessa Valley and from one economic activity to another within it. However, these were not treated fully and anthropologically. The indigenous knowledge, skills, forces and dynamics of society did not receive due attention. And likewise much of socio-cultural practices are not discussed. The changes that might have been brought about by the influences of state measures, religion and neighboring groups are hardly touched. The importance or disadvantage of shifting agriculture is ignored. When it comes to the issues of how and why the Gumuz changed their environment as well as farm fields, employed various means of livelihood and

how they were able to survive in the ecology of the Valley, the gap in studying these people gets much wider. I believe the findings of this study can contribute towards filling these gaps and add to the ongoing debate on adaptive strategies and changing environment.

The motivation to study diversified economic and socio-cultural activities of the Gumuz arose from the fact that these people live in a peripheral area of the country where they received very little attention from successive regimess as well as researchers. Thus, their adaptive strategies became the core of this study. A focused problem of investigation was formulated on the basis of field realities. The essential components of Gumuz's economy, how they use indigenous knowledge and manage to adapt to their ecology, the factors that influence their access to and control over resources, the extent to which they have been exposed to "modern" services, the implications of variables such as power relations, gender, and age on the Gumuz's adaptive processes are general issues considered in this study. More specifically, the contribution of inaccessible region, exchange marriage, shifting agriculture, hunting/gathering and other economic activities to the reshaping of the Gumuz society; the roles of indigenous knowledge and skills in utilizing local resources and the dynamic feature of these societal elements are issues of this research. The role of differences in access to resources, location of the households, and labor mobilization with respect to socio-economic differetiation is another issue of consideration, and likewise gender-based taboos. These research problems were discovered on the basis of empirical research. I employed perspectives of "human adaptations to the environment" as the conceptual frameworks to analyze data on the interaction between the Gumuz and their environment as mediated by socio-economic and cultural practices.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

1.2.1. Main Objectives

The general objective of this research is to explore the strategies employed by the Gumuz in their adaptation to the lowlands of the Diddessa Valley. In the course of the research, attempts were

made to look into the interplay between the essential components of economic and cultural activities on one hand and the ecological elements of natural environment on the other.

1.2.2. Specific purposes of the research are:

. to explain aspects of the production practices and indigenous knowledge employed by the Gumuz in managing their strategic resources including soil, crop, animal, labor, etc.,

. to describe and analyze how individuals acquire productive resources and what dictates their preference in utilizing these resources,

. to understand the nature and consequences of swidden cultivation and other economic activities,

. to analyze relevant aspects of social organization of households, marriage, and beliefs as these are related to Gumuz's adaptive processes, and finally

. to indicate changing and dynamic elements of the Gumuz community.

1.3. Significance of the Study

Against the background of little attention given to the study of Gumuz's adaptation in the Diddessa Valley this research will be significant at both general and specific levels.

At general level, the research may:

i. contribute to the already started endeavor of understanding adaptive strategies,

ii. serve as ethnographic case material for comparative study of societies' adaptive strategies,

iii. and give insight to researchers interested in the study of survival strategies

At specific level, it may:

i. contribute to the ethnographic study and further studies of the Gumuz in western Ethiopia in general and in the Diddessa Valley in particular,

ii. and serve policy-makers in their endeavor to know about appropriate socio-economic and cultural transformation through understanding Gumuz's way of life, ecological contexts and general characteristics of societal changes and formulate appropriate policies of development in which the

Gumuz's interests are respected and their participation advanced. In short the collection and documentation of information will help policy makers and development actors to see the gap and set plans and programs accordingly.

1.4. Research Methodology and Field Experiences

The research was conducted in **Burqa Met'i** and **Mender Mesereta** villages of **Hena Duda Gibe** peasant association (PA). Thirty questionnaires (six each) were distributed to other PAs of **woredas** such as Kamaš, Agalo Met'i, Yaso, Sirba Abay, and Beleo Jegonfoy and occasional visits were also made to other areas. A combination of different methods was used to collect valid and reliable data.

1. **Participant observation**: The researcher took part in the daily life of the people observing and recording actual socio-economic and cultural activities and decisions. This method helped to obtain information on insights, thoughts, attitudes, beliefs and practices concerning many aspects of Gumuz's adaptive strategies and processes.

2. **Interviews**: Unstructured, semi-structured and structured interviews were conducted not only to identify key informants and focus groups or households to be selected for extended case study and to ensure optimum coverage of different issues but also to draw important information on related topical issues. These issues were tape-recorded and transcribed later.

3.Focus group discussion: This method was employed to generate information on socio-economic and cultural practices by organizing males, females and adolescents into their respective group discussions.

4. **Extended-case study**: This method was employed to obtain qualitative data on survival strategies of key informants, their actions and relationships in social, cultural and economic networks through close acquaintance with them over period.

5. **Household and Village surveys**: This method involved the collection of quantitative data on households and village, especially statistical data of marriages, families moving in search of new plots within a given time etc.

6. **Documents**: Available documents and records, both published and unpublished, were consulted to upgrade the validity and reliability of data.

The Gumuz are the groups whose socio-economic and cultural practices are the major focuses of my study. My research in their Region, Benishangul-Gumuz National Regional State (BGNRS), began during June 24 to September 2 and September 21-22, 2000. The Periods from September 4-14, September 24 to November 4, from November 9-20 and again from January 1-31 were devoted to the fieldwork in Kamaš, especially **Burqa Met`i** and **Mender Mesereta** villages.

My observation of the Gumuz within their localities started on the Kingi-Kamaši road on September 3. Bamboo trees, bush forests and various types of crops are spread over the field. The town is not clearly separated from the surrounding agricultural and forestlands. **Kenteri** is the native's name for the Zone's center after the landing of a helicopter there during the **Derg** regime, probably derived from the name of airport around Gimbi town. However, it is known as Kamaš among the town people, after the name of the river crossing the area, which also covers the whole area including rural ones. The rural Gumuz pronounces it as "Kamaš" while non-Gumuz and administrative workers as "Kamaši".

On the basis of letters from A.A.U.and Region Six, I produced research permits from the office of the Zone Council and introduced myself to community members and officials. The professionals and Health Net workers in the town shared with me their idea in identifying a helpful guide and research sites of less exposure to outside influences. Equipped with boots, raincoat, umbrella and camera, I left **Kenteri**, guided by Shiferaw Gense, for **Hena Duda Gibe**. It took us about an hour to reach the first village called **Burqa Met`i** and 1½ hours to reach the second one

called **Mender Mesereta**, both in **Hena Duda Gibe**, and with 11 and 18 households respectively. According to elders, **Burqa Met'i** is an Oromo word to connote 'spring of straw', a long grass widely distributed in the area and uses for making mats. **Mender Mesereta** is an Amharic word but pronounced in an Oromo accent with literary meaning of 'building a village'. It has got its current name after government's attempt to gather scattered homesteads into that area recently.

As soon as we reached **Burqa Met'i** all the Gumuz came out of their houses and provided us with stools. After we sat for a while all of them from children to elders greeted us one by one either shaking our hands or touching their heads to our heads in the form of embracing and saying "**atam**? **Faya d'a**?..., the Oromo greeting to mean " how are you? Are you well? ". Soon coffee was prepared and hand-water moved around by a woman. Her daughter brought cups and put them on the floor in front of everybody. Roasted maize in half-gourd called **qent'o** was moved around and the rest was put near me after every one took a handful. Then, a girl poured coffee in everybody's cup and continued to do so until it was finished (see plate 1). The same process of greeting, providing seats, hand-water and something to be eaten and drunk was followed in every household, which shows the community's respect for a guest. During the coffee ceremony we introduced ourselves to the community who accepted us without any hesitation.

Walking for some thirty minutes in the bamboo forest, we reached the first two houses of **Mender Mesereta** village. As soon as we arrived there, wives of the two brothers provided us with stools, greetings, **t'inqiš** (something like sorghum's stalk but sweat like sugar cane), coffee and roasted sesame in the same manner as was done to us in **Burqa Met'i.** This was how the ground was laid for cooperation of the community and smooth operation of the fieldwork. Both villages are inhabited by **Dusinia** and **Daro** clans, which claim to be descended from the same father and have similar features: founded on hills not far away from water sources; devoid of infrastructure facilities and are surrounded

by grass, bamboo and bush forests. Animals and people have destroyed the forests in the immediate parameter of **Kenteri.** Real forest features start after about an hour's walk from the town.

Apart from the general conversation and interview with some Gumuz during the two months of my stay in Assosa, the actual fieldwork took a little over three months in four rounds Besides alert observation of the community and its activities, I organized seven focus group discussions of males, females and adolescents (see plates 2, 3 & 4), 25 interviews (see plate 5), eleven case studies and some surveys on marriage, religion and shifting plots. The intensive study mainly focuses on 29 households of the two villages. Five informants from **Mender Mesereta** and three from **Burqa Met`i** were frequently used to clarify every routine, and unclear concepts.

The main focuses of group discussions included history, economic, and socio-cultural practices of the indigenous people. 25 persons (20 Gumuz and 5 professionals) were interviewed on related issues. Interviews were also extended to the other PAs. Case studies were organized on cultivation, marriage, delivery, healing, menstruation and marriage of Oromo females to Gumuz males. Survey method was used to identify the number of plots each household had; the number of couples married by exchange or any other system, and number of persons adhering to Protestant, Orthodox and traditional beliefs. A survey of **Kenteri** market was also held.

1.5. Organization of the Study

This thesis provides a brief presentation on strategies and mechanisms employed by the Gumz in their effort to adapt to the ecology of the Diddessa Valley. It consists of eight chapters. The first chapter is preceeded by acronyms, maps, plates, acknowledgments and abstract. The main themes of the introductory part are research problem, objectives, significance, tools, limitation, conceptual framework and field experiences. Gumuz's history, distribution, settlement, nomenclature, relations and physical characteristics and infrastructures are explained in the second chapter. The third one discusses adaptive constraints and problems and the strategies employed by

the community to improve or survive. The fourth chapter explains cultural practices pertaining to language, beliefs, initiation ceremonies, marriage, delivery and funeral systems, decoration and clothing styles and food sharing, habits and taboos.

The next one analyzes differentiation within households and on gender basis. Then follows examination of relations between Gumuz's ecology and adaptations mentioned in the preceding chapters. The role of environment as a source of means of livelihood and the extent of relationship between ecology and cultural practices are themes of this part. The seventh chapter looks into the socio-economic and cultural institutions that undergone change or proved continuity. Attempts are made to substantiate the relations between change and continuity on the one hand and exogenous forces on the other. Summarizing and concluding points (findings) are displayed in the last chapter.

Moreover, in this thesis, besides vowels (a, e, i, o, u), the Gumuz palatal, velar and dental sounds are transcribed with the international phonetic alphabets as follows:

Palatal and velar sounds: č, č`, ñ, q, š, ž

Dental sounds: t`, ś, p`, d'

1.6. Scope and Limitation of the Study

The study is limited both in scope and time in that the data collection has not covered the whole area inhabited by the community under study and was carried out only for a little over three months without covering the whole process of agriculture, hunting, gathering and other economic and socio-cultural activities, which needs at least a year to cover its full cycle. Shortage of time, lack of fund and difficulty of transportation and communication facilities are the main factors for less area coverage of data collection. The decision-making environment in all its holistic complexity needs a discussion with actors over extended periods of time.

The travel for the field study was made difficult not only by rainy season traditional road problem of the extreme west but also by the then cracking of the Gedeo bridge of West Shoa Zone and absence of roads from one P A or **woreda** to another in the Kamaši Zone. Above all, traveling

through very steep and difficult Kingi-Kamaši road, 36 kms from the Addis Ababa-Assosa main road, puts life at risk. It is full of ups and downs and has "S" shapes at very short distances. Intra-zone movement is always difficult. Lack of funds and absence of earlier documentation are another limiting issues.

Nevertheless, various mechanisms were employed to ease these problems and collect valuable data for the study. Through borrowing field equipment from Oxfam-GB, looking for lifts from non-government cars, sending questionnaires to people in inaccessible areas, interviewing people from every part of the Zone, and analyzing the scattered and unpublished documents of Regional, Zonal and NGO offices, valid and reliable data were collected.

A full treatment of the ethnic relations, gender cases and comparison of the Kamaši Gumuz with those in the other areas is beyond the scope of this thesis though it is taken up as far as they are strongly related to the Gumuz's ecology, adaptive strategies and dynamic forces.

1.7. Conceptuall Framework: Human Adaptations to Environment.

People who change their environment encounter difficulties in adapting to a new ecology with new climatic conditions, farming practices or other economic activity, food habits and the like. As Moran (1982) describes cultural adjustments to climatic conditions include knowledge of house construction, clothing styles, and subsistence technology and ritual aspects while social adjustments mainly consist of forms of social and economic organization. Depending on the differing circumstances, people may apply both adaptive and coping strategies with a purpose to improve during favorable conditions in the former case, and to cope up with existing problem during failures in the latter case. This is reflected in Bennet's definition of adaptive strategy in Orlove (1980:251) as "the patterns formed by the many separate adjustments that people devise in order to obtain and use resources and to solve the immediate problems confronting them."

Although it may or may not be explicit to adapters, adaptive strategy allows the people to adjust to or cope with human and natural constraints, which may be imposed by environment or other groups, or could be the consequence of the strategies developed to attain a goal. A predatory expansion of one group into the territory of another is an adaptive strategy but could be destructive to the latter one. Thus, analysis of adaptive strategy aims at understanding of community, change, the availability of options and the reason of selecting one option over the other, and complements the study of ecological patterns, economic growth and other societal dynamics.

People may organize themselves into units as production strategy and their cooperation in social life may include resource sharing, intermarriage, reciprocal visiting and commercial exchange. Moran (1982) has rightly recognized many strategies to be employed in the process of adaptations to certain environment. These include shifting cultivation, hunting, gathering, fishing, gold panning, animal husbandry, and other subsistence strategies. Each of these strategies reflects human efforts to deal with the complexity and diversity of the habitat.

1.7.1. Swidden Cultivation as Livelihood Strategy

Shifting cultivation, also known as swidden cultivation or "slash-and-burn", is an agricultural system in which farm fields are cultivated for some years before leaving them fallow. This system mainly utilized by peoples lacking capital resources and economic privilege. Farmland is prepared by clearing the forest and burning it after it has had a time to dry. Burning may bring some changes in the physical properties of the soils, and kill pests and insects and eliminates seeds of weeds, which is beneficial in any effort to cultivate crops. Moran argues that burning doesn't cause much negative effect on soil organic matter since temperatures during burning of the forest are not high to destroy it though its amount depends on the success of the burn, humidity of the environment and density of vegetation (1982: 267-268).

Another advantage of swidden cultivation or fallow system is that it protects the soil from leaching and erosion, reduces expenditures for fertilizers and pesticides and creates new forest that provides a higher net yield. African studies indicate that maximum biomass is attained within eight years after a field is abandoned. Using these studies Moran argued in favor of the system's merits but recognizing that any demographic increase would threat the system by reducing a volume of agricultural land and shortening the fallow period (**Ibid**; 272-273).

Stauder (1971) argues that abundance of lands and the absence of population pressures on vital natural resources are necessary for shifting cultivation. Frequent mobility is made possible by domestic organization, arrangements of huts, neighboring relations, free access to natural resources and availability of land–all of which are related to shifting field cultivation. People may also move in response to reduced farm yields, low returns to labor in hunting/gathering activities, fear of raids, and discomfort of high humidity and temperatures.

1.7.2. Hunting-Gathering Economy as Subsistence Strategy

As an adaptive strategy, hunting also requires intimate knowledge of the forest and the animals--their sounds, calls, telltale, footsteps, food preferences or type of vegetation they feed on and their migratory behavior – all of which help to relocate and hunt games. Similarly, gathering also requires knowledge of fruit trees, roots, honey hallow and leaves. Hunters and gatherers exploit forest resources in various ways that reflect features of their habitat, season and previous patterns of exploitation in the territory. Their hunting technology primarily consists the use of bows, arrows, traps, lances and guns. While hunting is characterized as male-dominated and as half-work and half sport and conducted for meat, fame, protection of crops, and for religious and ritual purposes; gathering of forest products is a duty of men, women and children. Anthropologists have often noted the possibility of relocating necessities through productive hunting and gathering as one of the major

reasons for the low development of sedentary villages in many tropical forest areas. The two subsistence strategies of fishing and animal husbandry practiced by sedentary populations that mostly inhabit riverine or coastal areas. Fishing as horticulture is carried out by harpoons, bows, arrows, traps and poisons (**Ibid;** 257-268).

1.7.3. Cultural Adaptations: Change and Continuity of Culture

Being introduced to reasons inducing population movement and the definition and role of adaptive strategy, we may be puzzled by the question related to change and continuity. How adaptation can be achieved in certain circumstances and cultural continuity is promoted in others? since the two are opposed tendencies, or processes. Which cultural traits can contribute to the successful adaptation of a society to its environing context and which ones not?

Anthropologists contend each other in an attempt to make sense out of cultural forms. Some of them believe in the existence of some practical utility to customs. Stressing on the practical usefulness of customs to adaptation, Ember and Ember write, "... customs which diminish the survival chances of a society are not likely to persist ... Those customs of a society that enhance survival chances are adaptive and are likely to persist" (1981: 32). The same suggestion is explicit in Harris's statement:

> *... culture is man's primary mode of achieving reproductive success. Hence particular socio-cultural systems are arrangements of patterned behavior, thought, and feeling that contribute to the survival and reproduction of particular social groups. Traits contributing to the maintenance of a system may be said to have a positive function with respect to that system (1971: 141).*

Implicit in both quotations is that culture is largely utilitarian and plays a role in adjusting the society to its environment. It is functionalist view of Harris that even belief in witchcraft, especially in simple societies, can serve the ends of social control through restraining deviance and putting pressure on an individual to conform to accepted rules and norms of a society. Moreover, in his famous **Cows, Pigs, Wars and Witches: The Riddles of Culture** (1974), Harris tried to show

that economic importance and ecological elements are implicit in the ritual practice of the sacred cow. It is his view that the cattle are economically sounding, in terms of cost and energy assessment, in a poor country like India (1974:20-30).

Barrett (1991:86-9) rightly argues that, when compared to their usage in other developing countries or modern technology, Indian practices with respect to cattle are vividly obsolete. Elsewhere, the use of cattle is based on economic considerations or market values. In India more is involved not with economic value but with close relationship of cow-love to the conceptions of ritual purity and caste position. Thus, the Indian peasants are likely to continue their practice even in the face of inefficiencies. Moreover, can we go further and apply Harris's ecological factors to other cultural practices such as beliefs related with menstruation, delivery, food taboos, etc.? We return to this question under chapter 6.

Harris's reason for cultural persistence lies in its economic importance. Here I am not denying its ecological value but that may not be the main factor behind the cultural continuity. Is it really because of its economic importance that cow is sacred in India? The reason may be related with a general tendency to conserve and defend established cultural practices such as food etiquette, language, dressing and recreational and religious preferences. Hence, persistence or changse of human culture may depend on both economic importance and emotional significance. Thus, the interaction between societies and their environment, type of that society and its economy, and population's previous knowledge, skills, norms, values and the like are combined to determine the adaptive strategies to be employed and the consequent outcome.

Those who believe in situational adjustment to environment argue that every culture must posses a dynamic element that practically helps a society to adjust to circumstances. People may move to a new area; environment may change; technology may improve; population may increase; etc. and existing culture may not fit the altered circumstances. Thus, situations may request for

innovative behavior, as individuals are obliged to modify their culture to cope with changing circumstances. In Barrett's term, "This, then, is what is commonly referred to as the adaptive dimension of human culture" (1991:81).

Nevertheless, practices that cannot make sense out of the external environment and may be practically inefficient would make sense when linked to other parts of social life. For Sahlins, " meaningful schemes" are distinguishing features of human beings. He writes, "The distinctive feature of man [is] not that he must live in a material world, circumstances he shares with all organisms, but that he does so according to meaningful scheme of his own devising" (1976: viii). For him the utility of culture lies not in a material world but in its meaning or symbolic quality. But this may not be true for all cultural practices. Opposing Sahlins' opinion Barrett (1991) writes,

> *... culture is basically a utilitarian-instrument and that as human beings cope with their surroundings they create the norms, values, and institutions most appropriate to those conditions(97)... Adaptation is rarely a matter of choosing the most efficient alternatives. New adjustments, or adaptations are almost always compromises between the limitations imposed by the preexisting culture and the opportunities offered by new conditions...(113).*

By now, I hope, the reader may have an idea of how adaptive success and continuity of tradition operate side by side; how and why some cultural elements can persist; and which trait contributes to a successful adaptation and which one is not. What we can deduce from the above discussion is that "culture in …[some] cases emerges as an active principle, preceding, guiding, and channeling human action" (Barrett, 214).

Sahlins may be true in that meaningful sense could be made out of some cultural elements internally but erroneous in his denial of material utility for some cultural practices and confining man's quality to purposeful devising in choosing cultural element. "Adaptation is rarely a matter of choosing the most efficient alternatives" (1991:113) is the way Barrett responded. Harris and the Embers are also correct in relating cultural persistence to their contribution to adaptation but customs that do not contribute to the successful adaptation of a society to its environing context can also

persist. Once we understand the underlying premises clearly, the practices appear reasonable, at least from the native's point of view. Thus, both internal and external perspectives have contributed to our conceptual framework in analyzing socio-cultural practices of a society.

1.7.4. Application of Adaptive Perspectives to the Cases of the Gumuz

In a complex ecosystem like the Diddessa Valley where people practice various economic activities, views of Moran (1982), Orlove (1980), Stauder (1971), Bartlett (1980a), Barrett (1991) and others on adaptive strategies and processes in social, economic and cultural adjustments are the basic conceptual perspectives upon which my investigation is guided.

As already said, the Gumuz have changed their settlement area from Metekel to Diddessa, now **Kamaš**, due to wars and raids of neighboring groups and internal confilcts. With respect to changing settlement within the Valley, Moran, Stauder and others emphasize that the abundance of lands and the absence of population pressures on vital resources as well as low returns in economic activities of previous areas made Gumuz's shifting cultivation possible. Other contributing factors include inter-clan conflict, and pushing expansion of neighboring group. In addition, the adaptive and coping strategies involved in Gumuz's cultural, social and economic adjustments to new environmental settings are reflected in the opinions of scholars mentioned above.

Moran's perspectives on human adaptations to a variety of ecosystems; Stauder's and some of Orlove's views on shifting economy and people's movement; some of Barlett's opinions on adaptive strategies and Barrett's views on change and continuity are employed in analyzing Gumuz's adaptive or coping strategies and persistence of customs with respect to economic and socio-cultural practices. Briefly, in line with the analytical view made above, external and internal and/or actor (emic) and observer (etc) perspectives are combined to analyze the economic and socio-cultural adaptations of the Gumuz community.

Chapter two: The people and Their Environment

This chapter briefly introduces the Gumuz, their history, location and how they relate to their environment. Phyical characterstics and infrastructures are also given some spaces. But we require an overview of the present Region's context in which the Gumuz found.

The current BGNRS, also known as Region Six, was created in 1993 with its center at Asossa as a result of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front's program of transferring authority to ethnic-based regional administrations. The Gumuz, Berta, Šinaša, Mao and Komo were organized into it. It is found in west Ethiopia and bounded by Amhara in the north; Amhara and Oromia in the east; Oromia in the south; Gambela in southwest and Sudan in the west. It is administratively divided into three zones (Assosa, Metekel and Kamaš) and two special **woredas** (Tongo and Powe) with a total of 19 **waredas** (see Map 1). BGNRS has 631 PAs and 14 **kebeles** organized in its 13 towns. The lowland people of a Benishangul-Gumuz occupied marginal territories. They are located between highland Christian Ethiopia and lowland Muslim Sudan, and generally received very little attention from development agencies and researchers due to the limited capacity of the center and difficulties in building transport systems in such remote areas.

The indigenous peoples of this area are of Nilo-Saharan extraction except the Šinaša who belong to the Cushitic language family. The area was subjected to slave raids from early times. Its major indigenous communities are, according to the Papulation and Housing Cencus of 1994, the Berta and Gumuz, both together constituting almost half of the population, 115,602 and 107, 495* people respectively. Šinaša, Komo and Mao are smaller indigenous communities. Amhara and Oromo, considered to be "outsiders", constituted substantial numbers –102,061 and 58,833 respectively in the Region. Both together constituted 35% of its population. Tigre, Gurage and others are also found in

**Since most areas in the Kamaši Zone or the Diddessa Valley are inaccessible, even today, due to the lack of roads, this number is highly doubtful. It is my opinion that people in remote areas were uncounted in the Population and Housing Census of 1994.*

small numbers, especially in small towns. Many of these people are attracted into the area by the lure of gold. There are also people settled by the government.

People of this area are desparately poor. Despite its diversified economy, the region is less developed: no modern industries, mines, commercial farms, insurance companies or convenient roads. It has one small government bank, two petrol stations and very few NGOs. Potential for mining, especially gold, and marble and granite to lesser extent, exists but no company is operating in the area at the present. The Region sends oil seeds, honey and gold to the highland markets. Gold is extracted by traditional methods. Its mining has gone on for centuries. All categories of people are involved in its production but its earning is controlled by husbands and fathers. Mining is carried out throughout the year but becomes intensive during the rainy season due to the need for water to purify the gold from the soil. The Region has many natural and human constraints. There is a very limited number of educated indigenous people and most of its professional staff is non-indigenous people like Amhara and Oromo. There is no post-secondary educational institution in the region except a teacher's training institute under construction. Other problems of the Region are related to malaria, lack of potential markets, existence of crop and livestock diseases and pests and other similar difficulties. The prevalence of tse tse fly has restricted raising cattle, though not of goats and sheep. The lack of market outlets restricted prospects for commercial production, and extension services are limited by the shortage of skilled labor. Among the major obstacles to the development are lack of transportation and comunication facilities. There is no bridge over the *Abay* River, which bisects Benishagul-Gumuz. Due to this, the road connecting Assosa and Metekel zones goes through Wollega and Gojjam at a distance of 1,250 kms, against 180 kms if a bridge were constructed over the Abay. Transportation within the Region and zones is subjected to season and difficulties. In general, education, transport and other indicators of development remain poor. These features are what the Gumuz people, as part of the Region, cannot escape.

The Gumuz had suffered from both Ethiopian and the Turco-Egyptian expansion of the previous times. With no choice, they were to retreat into areas less accessible to the central state. My personal observation of the Region during June-August, 2000 agrees with John Young's (1999: 321-43) description of the area. The following pages are devoted to the case of the Gumuz in the Kamaši Zone since the other two zones are beyond the scope of this work.

2.1. History, Distribution and Settlement

2.1.1. Historical Background

Like the Nilo-Saharan people of Ethiopia such as Nuer, Anuak, Berta, Komo, etc., the Gumuz* inhabit the upper and lower courses of the Abay River. . Both the Mahdists and Ethiopian rulers attempted to secure allegiance of the Gumuz. Their main tactic in facing violent incursions of Sudan and Abyssinian forces was to retreat to an inaccessible defensive positions. Regarding the impact of this situation upon the Gumuz James writes, "conditions were bad at this time in the Blue Nile Valley for the Gumuz people, many of whom fled upstream as far as the Diddessa river as a result of raiding from the Sudan" (1979:38). Gondarine kings and their followers engaged in slave raiding expeditions in Gumuz localities and captured individuals as booty. The demands of Menelik's followers for slaves in the late 1890's seem to have contributed to an increase in slave trading and slavery from which the Gumuz had suffered. Thus the wars, raids and disturbances between 1880 and 1920 in southern Gojjam seem to have accounted for unprecedented incursions of the Gumuz from Guba area into the lowlands of Metekel region and some into the Diddessa Valley (James, 1977: 9-10, 1986: 129, Abdussamad, 1989: 241). By the boundary demarcation of 1902/1903 between Ethiopia and the Anglo-Sudan, most of the Gumuz inhabited territory, especially its heartland of Guba, was included in Ethiopia. A small proportion of the Gumuz also lives in the Sudan, along the border with Ethiopia around Fazughili and near Roseires

*In this study I prefer the term "Gumuz" to "Šanqilla" or clan names because it is a name currently employed by the concerned people for whole clans and also has no derogatory connotation for them. The origin of the term "Šanqilla" is not yet clear but highlanders have used it as a derogatory term for "black" or "slave". Other terms such as "Demosega", "Dikeria", "Gombo", "Khaza", "Say", "Sai", "Saysay", "Sese", etc., are clan names (Berihun, 1996: 2; Demie, 1980; Edossa; 1982; Emiru, 1984; James, 1977: 14; Irwin, 1968: 131 and Wallmark 1981: 76-81).

(Ezekiel, 1983: 6; James, 1977: 10). All researchers, who studied the community one way or another, as well as elders rightly note that people under study migrated first from Sudan to Gojjam and then from Gojjam to Diddessa.

Some Gumuz in my study sites attribute their ancestral origin to the Sudan. They believe that their forefathers' ancient home was **Anguar** in the Sudan from where they initially moved to **Roseires** in the same country and finally crossed the Dender river into the highlands of Ethiopia.

Other elders say that the Gumuz did not come from elsewhere but were born from a female called "Eimba" or "Edamba" and distributed on their current settlements. However, all writers and some elders rightly argue that historical distribution of the concerned people was from northeast Sudan through upper and lower courses of the Abay River to northwest Ethiopia highlands from where some of them moved into the lowlands (Region Six Education and Culture Bureau 2000). In the words of. James, " We know from Bruce, Salt, Beke and others that the Gumuz lived in the higher country of what is now central and southern Gojjam in the 18th and early 19th centuries, although they were exposed to intermittent slave raids and were already beginning to retreat down into the lowlands" (1986: 121).

Thus, the migration view of the Gumuz seems to take the following route: **Anguar→ Roseires→Dender river→Ethiopian highlands of Gonder and Gojjam→upper and lower courses of the Abay→Ethiopian lowlands (Metekel and Diddessa).** As suggested by elders and some writers the general reasons for this migration include: internal and external conflicts, defensive mechanism (searching for an inaccessible area), mobile system of community's life (hunting and shifting cultivation), and raids and oppressions by the highland people.

Abdussamad (1989: 237; 1995: 54-66) notes that the Oromo of Wambera were on friendly terms with the Gumuz of Metekel and Guba. Although, unlike the Amhara and Agaw chiefs, the Oromo didn't take part in the slave raids and trade of these areas, their expansion had indirectly

affected them in that when they successfully drove the Šinaša to the lowlands, the latter in turn pushed the Gumuz to still more lower hot lands. Thus, the Gumuz were the ultimate losers. In his words, "The Oromo ... were on friendly terms with the Gumuz ... [and] didn't take part in the raids and the slave trade. But the Agaw were the notorious slave raiders ..." (1995:62). Their weapons were in no way a match to highland rifles. Moreover, the Gumuz were also not organized into states and hence could not defend themselves against the threat of their neighbors who had relatively an organized political organization. Facadu (1988: 49) also stresses that migration, fragmentation and lack of unity are the main reasons behind a weak social and defensive organization and non-existence of overall ethnic association.

Internal conflicts within the Gumuz in Guba were a secondary pushing reason behind their move into the Diddessa. In the conflict between **Dukunzilla** and **Bugua**, the two Gumuz clans, **Ngabas** or Sudnese Arabs aided the latter against the former. Being defeated and led by the two brothers, **Bicad** and **Zhogwadze**, **Dukunzilla** went to Wollega. On their way, the **Dukunzilla** were dispersed at **Yaringhe** by **Ngaba** and their remnants, led by **Bicad's** son, **Gulbak**, settled on **Beri** hill in 1882. Some Gumuz remained around this hill whereas others, led by **Bicad** and **Zhogwadze**, crossed the Abay and settled in Wollega (James, 1986; Donham and James, 1979:38). Wallmark also points out that the Gumuz began their movement at the beginning of 1880s from Guba and Wambera parts of Gojjam (North Abay) to Wollega (South Abay) due to slave raids, serfdom, burden of taxes and consequent conflicts with Amhara, Arabs, Agew and Šinaša (1981: 81). Hence, the Valley became the reception and refuge area of the Gumuz where they came into contact with the Oromo of Wollega. Thus, dictated by political, geographical and historical circumstances, the Gumuz chose a pattern of dispersal and movement as strategy to escape the raiders.

There is no documentation for the early developments in Gumuz-Oromo relations in Wollega. Unlike the later periods, the early Gumuz arrivals were treated on friendly terms in similar manner as

it was in Wambera. They were not raided and sold into slavery. It is said that Moroda Bakare, who was recognized by Emperor Menelik as sole ruler of Wollega, had offered protection to some early arrivals. But the trouble began with Moroda's death and his son's (Kumsa) succession. After then, the Oromo began to capture and sell the Gumuz. The Diddessa Gumuz believe that their forefathers were free long ago but fall under the Wollega Oromo after escaping the raids of the Sudanese Arabs and Ethiopian kings (Triulzi 1986:52-54; James, 1986:129-130). The abolition of slave trade brought a period of relative peace to the area and this had profound effect on the Gumuz settlement patterns in the Diddessa Valley. The population has certainly increased due to the return of some freed and escaped slaves from the highlanders to their original communities after the abolition of the slave trade (James, 1977:11; Taddesse, 1988:16).

In general, factors behind Gumuz's distribution over the peripheral areas included external and internal conflicts, slave raids, selection of an inaccessible area as strategic position to protect themselves against expanding forces of Arabs, Agew, Amhara, Šinaša and Oromo, and their culture of mobile existence with respect to hunting/gathering and shifting cultivation. With this historical background we now turn to their settlement distribution in the Valley.

2.1.2. Distribution, Settlement and Nomenclature

The Gumuz clans migrated from different places in Metekel, at different times, on different condition and settled in different places in the Diddessa Valley. Some of them migrated on their own decision to evade expeditions of the Christian kings, and conflicts with neighboring people and within their own community. Others were taken as Oromo captives. Hence, Gumuz's distribution is based on the period and place of their arrivals, blood relations and conditions of their migration. It is here that time, place and condition worked together to cause the appearance of many clans and sub-clans in Gumuz community. Multiplication of this community into various clans and establishment of

their settlements in different localities have produced some differences, and invited conflicts on the matters related with kidnapping of females, adultery, robbery, spoiling clan's land rights and killing for fame. According to the report of Education and Culture Bureau (2000: 9-13), W/Gebriel and Tefera (1997) and elders, there are more than 68 clans and various sub-clans or lineages in the Diddessa Valley. 39 of them are as follows:

Dakedanba	Deguba	Desp`a	Dowiya	*Dukunzilla*	*Jaža*	*Manda*
Dakutia	Demela	Digitamba	Dubakuda	*Dlungua*	*Jemera*	*Mandeya*
Dangoda	Demosega	*Disua*	*Dubakuja*	*Dusega*	*Jemwa*	*Salba*
Debenza	*Demoya*	*Dižana*	*Dubangua*	*Dusinia*	*Kedumeja*	*Set`enqua*
Debeśa	*Denda*	Doboqa	*Dubezalia*	*Ebanja*	*Kundo*	
Deč`enqua	Degufa	Dolgoba	Dubezena	Fungosowa (Fukoša)		

Some Gumuz settlements, such as Ebanja, Kedumeja, Danda, Dukunza, Dusenia, and Debanza, adjacent to Oromo districts were named after Oromo clans such as Agalo, Kutala, Amuma, Gida, Gombo, Enemai and the like. But almost all of them re-adopted their original names recently. These clans were not organized into overall ethnic groups. In spite of the existence of scattered settlements and natural barriers, their similarities in cultural traditions, socio-economic formations, ways of life and uniformity in language indicate their sharing of common origin or recent separation and migration.

The Valley is one of the sparsely populated areas in Ethiopia. The lower course of Diddessa is more populated than its middle and upper courses. Their settlement distributions are patterned by environmental features and related economic activities. The rural settlement pattern generally comprises cluster settlements consisting of 10-20 households. But settlements with single households are observed around Zone's center. Determining factors of settlement pattern include clanship tradition (members of a clan or sub-clans form one village or neighboring villages), and access to water, fertile land and other forest resources. **Mender Mesereta** and **Burqa Met`i,** my study sites, are neighboring villages formed by **Dusinia** and **Daro** clans who are said to share common descent, thus live together in both villages and don't intermarry. They are foun around hills

but not far away from water sources. Springs and rivers form permanent sources of water though ponds and small rivers provide additional sources during the rainy season.

One point of ambiguity is related with the nomenclature or naming of the community. Given the existence of many clans in different habitats various terms are used in reference to the people currently called "Gumuz". Aacademics and other ethnic groups have tended to use local territorial and clan names or the term **Šanqilla**. Some of these local names have appeared in the literature as ethnic terms applying to a wider population.

As James (1977: 15) notes, terms like **Kadalo** (by Schuver), **Saysay** or **Sese** (by Irwin and Forslund) and **Sayi** (by Ezekiel) are almost certainly clan names. **Sese** and **Say** were originally Oromo names for the clan known in Gumuz language as **Dukunzilla**. **Sai** might have been used after the river of the same name in the area. It is the term mainly employed by Gebeto and Mao for the clans around the Diddessa River. Other terms such as **Demosega, Dikeria, Gombo** and **Khaza** are also clan names employed by Demie (1980), Edossa (1982) and Emiru (1984).

The term **Begga** was used in reference to the concerned people while they were in the Sudan long ago. Writers and community elders agree that it was their ancient name with literary meaning "people." Wallmark uses it as the "proper self-name" of the Gumuz in Diddessa, noting as they are also known as "**Sai, Say, Saysay, Sese, Dokadea, and Dokonsa**" in the literature. He discards all other ones as names of local communities except that of **Gumuz** which was unknown to those in the Diddessa Valley, though known in the Sudan, Gojjam and Gondar (1981:79). Nevertheless the term **Begga** itself as a name of a community is only known around Metema and Metekel but not in the Diddessa.

The most common name applied to the Gumuz and other Nilo-Saharan extraction by "outsiders" and themselves, until it was theoretically abolished after 1974 revolution, was the term **Šanqilla**, a pejorative name for dark-skinned face on Ethio-Sudan border. The Gumuz, again like

other dark-skinned communities were defined as "people of the wilderness" by the highland people (James, 1979). Although the Gumuz use the term in reference to themselves, its derogatory connotation as "black" or "slave" is absent for them. Ato Wolteji Sasiga, a man of 80, said, "We used to call ourselves **Šanqilla** but we don't know its origin or meaning".

According to W/Gabriel and Tefera, it was a term with negative connotation, employed by the ruling classes of the kingship era and defined as "**minim yemayawuq**... **Ši qil,"** the Amharic proverb to mean " one who knows nothing, ... thousand fools" (1997:11). Some elders claim to have been told this by some Gumuz elites during the political change of 1991. Tesfahun also claims that it was derived from an Oromo word "**Šanqella**" to mean, "we slaughter five" (1996:7).

However, we don't have convincing evidence whether it was derived from the Amharic word **Ši qil** or Oromo term **Šanqella**. Although there is no clear and specific meaning agreed upon, writers and the people themselves agree on its implication of inferiority. The term was also employed by academics, especially before the **Derg** regime but also by some after then. The earliest mention of it in Abyssinian records was in a song presented in honor of Yeshaq (1412-27) in which unspecified Gumuz are said to have paid tribute in goats. After then it occurred frequently in the records of the later writings (Cerulli, 1956:15).

The earliest record referring to the black people of Guba on the Sudan side of the border as **Dar el Goumousse** belongs to Cailliaud's **Voyage a Meroe** (1826). However, the term Gumuz was also employed, as James notes, far back by some researchers such as Conti Rossini (1948), Grottaneli (1943) and Schuver, in their descriptions of these people (1977: 6-7). Cerulli (1956) has also employed it in her study. Recently researchers like James (1977,1979 and 1986), Berihun (1996), Wolde Selassie (1997), Taddesse (1980). Abdussamad (1988) and others used the term in their works. James rightly argues that the Sudanese Arab term Gumuz became recognized as the most apt name and the less objectionable and ethnically specific term for the distinctive people and their

language in the area inhabited by them (1977:1). Although it was unknown to the inhabitants of Diddessa before the 1974 revolution, its usage has been widely applied to all Gumuz society beginning from the coming of EPRDF to power. According to Cerulli (1956) and Region Six Culture Bureau (2000), Arabs and Berta of Sudan refer to them as **Gumza**. After their migration to Ethiopia, they came to be known as **Gumza** or **Gumza Dwa**, literally means "clever or heroic man". It is suggested that because of the high contribution of males in hunting and conflicts with enemies the term **gumza dwa**, "heroic man", was widely used and later became name of the community itself. The Gumuz of my research sites know the word **gumza** as an ordinary term to mean "clever". Ato Woltegi Sasiga said, "We did not know the term Gumuz before, but Gumuz intellectuals came and said, 'don't call yourselves **Šanqilla** but Gumuz; **Šanqilla** is an Oromo term to mean 'we slaughter five,' don't use it again! It is an insulting word imposed upon us by outsiders', and that is how we came to be known as Gumuz".

Since the people themselves currently reject the term **Šanqilla** as a derogatory name in favor of the term Gumuz, which is also employed by their current Regional State, it is advisable to employ the term Gumuz.

2.1.3. Inter-and Intra-Clan Relations

As already been pointed out (2.1.2) the Gumuz community was divided into various clans due to the differences in time and condition of their migration and area of their settlement. Inter-clan relations were manifested more in conflicts than in cooperation due to the supposed reasons of natural barriers, kidnapping of girls, spoiling of clan's border, killing for fame and robbing of a property. These interrelated situations have combined to lessen social, economic and administrative relations between different clans of the community. The result was multiplication of clans, scattered pattern of settlements and occurrence of some differences, though limited, in language and other socio-cultural elements.

Social organization at the wider ethnic level is very loose especilly below P A organization. Though there are some changes, the latter is not very significant in terms of production, jural and political organization. With respect to the latter two, there is a condition that community elders and PA officials work together, because many of its members are elders themselves. As observed in **Burqa Met'i** and **Mender Mesereta**, the domestic or kin-group, which usually consists a nuclear family, is the most important unit not only in production but, to some extent, in consumption, judicial affairs and cooperation. Domestic group may include paternal and maternal kins and their friends. Inter-clan relations are mainly observed in marriage arrangements, affinal connections, and dispute settlements and sometimes in responding to common enemy. Once affinal relations are established people respond to one another's funeral, marriage, festive labor and other social occasions. Beyond this, networks that involve reciprocal obligations and social contacts, including "borrowing and payment of girls", are stronger at clan or sub-clan level.

The village community administered by elected P A council is consisting of five members. The council links the village or clans to the **woreda** council. Nevertheless, elders and religious leaders enforce traditional rules and norms in settling disputes and in facilitating the whole process of marriage, funeral and other socio-cultural engagements and in assisting the electors in administrative matters. Based on the customs, values and norms of the society, elders and religious leaders settle inter-and intra-household conflicts, console the bereaved family, facilitate marriages including levirate, lead the worshipping and even pray on behalf of the community.

Other fields of cooperation include sharing of labor and implements, and bonding of livestock. Marriage arrangements forge sets of profound links between individuals and within ommunities. Values and norms of the society impose obligations on members to help each other in socio-econmic and other aspects.

2.2. Physical Characteristics: Environmental Setting.

Description of the next two sub-topics (2.2 & 2.3) is partially based on the reports of NUPI (1999), and Region Six Planning and Economic Development and Culture Bureaus (2000). The Zone is the smallest of three zones in the Region both in terms of areal and population sizes. It has a boundary of 1,125 kms and is bounded by Metekel Zone in the north; Amhara Region in the northeast; Oromia Region in the south, southwest and east, and Assosa Zone in the northwest. It has elongated shape and approximately lies between 10° 44' 48" and 11° 38' 18" north latitudes and 34^{0} 48' 00" and 36° 57' 54" east longitudes (see Maps 2 and 3).

According to the CSA's 1994 definition, Kamaši Zone has no urban population but only five towns with respect to five *woredas* such as **Yaso, Qonč`o, Kamaš, Met`i** and **Soge** in order of their list below (see Map 3). The structure of administration has been reorganized recently. **Woredas** remained the same: Yaso, Sirba Abay, Kamaš, Agalo Met`i and Beleo Jegonfoy. Respectively each **woreda** consisted of 27, 19, 13, 15 and 19 P As—a total of 93 before but they have been reduced to 14, 16, 14, 13 and 10—a total of 67. Previously local government administration was very loose but it has begun to become stronger since the last five years.

According to the CSA's report of 1994, the Gumuz comprised 107,495 people (23.3%) out of the dejure population of the Region (460,459). The Gumuz form the largest ethnic group both in Metekel and Kmaši Zones constituting 32.2% of 201,521 and 77.4% of 50,783 of their population sizes respectively but only 0.6% of Asossa Zone's population (208,155). About 11% (50,783) of BGNRS's total population lives in Kamaš out of which 77.4% are the Gumuz. It is one of the sparsely populated zones in Ethiopia and its crude population density as of October 1994 was only 5.7 persons per km^2. This shows absence of pressure on land and other resources in the Zone.

As to relief, the general elevation in the Zone ranges from 580 meters at the Sudanese border where the Abay crosses Ethiopia to 2207 a.s.l. at the Oromia border in **Agalo Met`i Woreda**. In

other words, the highest elevation is found in the Wollega hills along the border with Oromia while the lowest areas are situated in the gorges of the Abay, Diddessa and Dabus rivers. The average elevation of the Zone is about 1,066 meters a.s.l. and about 39.3% of the land is found below 1,000 meters a.s.l. About 94.7% of the Zone is below 1,500 meters and about 5.3% ranges between 1,500 and 2,207 meters a.s.l., thus respectively falling within warm and temperate climatic zones. Hence, the Zone is considered to be lowland though it has a number of hills and Valleys. It is dominated by a plateau with an elevation between 1,000 and 2,000 meters a.s.l .

The main factor behind the existence of different climatic conditions in Kamaši Zone is altitudinal difference. The lowlands around the Abay get low amount of rainfall and high temperature while mountainous areas around Oromia border get high amount of rainfall and low temperature. Most parts of the Zone get rain from May to October but high rainfall is observed during June, July, August and September. Some areas also get low rainfall sometimes in April and November. The annual rainfall varies from 850-1600 mm. It is very hot especially during the dry season. High temperature is observed, but reducing in order, during March, April and February, December and January; and low temperature in August, July, September, October, June, May and November. Annual temperature ranges from 20^0c-25^0c during the rainy season and from 25^0c to 40^0c during the dry season. Thus, the climate of this area as a whole is moist and warm, which makes it suitable all economic activities of lowland areas. Its temperature is not as such harsh to development activities. It could be permanent settlement area for the people since it is stable and hazard free region.

The Zone is located in the Abay Drainage Basin and drained by River Abay and its two major tributaries (Diddessa and Dabus) and many other small rivers. Abay is the longest and largest river in the area and forms the northern boundary of the Zone while its northwestern limit is made by Dabus Valley. It bounds Kamaši Zone with Amhara Region and Metekel Zone(see Maps 2&3). The Diddessa River and its sub-tributaries (Sai, Jirma and Kamaš) drain the central part of the Zone from

south to north. This adequate water resource with flat lands makes the Zone suitable for mechanized irrigated agriculture. But the use of this potential is not yet started due to inaccessibility, lack of know-how and prevalence of tropical diseases.

Related with good climatic conditions, the area has wide area covered by vegetation. The main vegetation cover is made of deciduous woodland, bamboo and riverine forests. Due to the low population density, absence of roads and low level of urbanization, forest resource destruction has been less compared to other parts of Ethiopia.

Materials from vegetation are used as cosmetic items, medicines, firewood, house utensils, agricultural implements and construction materials and the existence of variety of vegetation allowed the presence of various species of wild animals and different types of snakes and birds. Generally, the forest is the Gumuz's dwelling as well as sources of food and income.

However, at present, population growth, construction of the Kingi-Kamaši road, inception of urbanization expansion of agriculture, prevalence of bush-fire, increasing demand of wood for fuel, construction and furniture etc, are threatening forests. Moreover, deforestation and burning of their habitat, and the tradition of hunting for food and fame reduced the wildlife of the area by pushing them beyond the border. Leopard, buffalo and lion are especially rare. There is no sanctuaries or reserves for the protection of wild animals even in the whole of BGNRS. Gold panning is one of the few sources of income. Made out of rocks, grinding stones are widely used throughout the community for making flour, extracting the same oil, grinding coffee and spices, and pounding vegetables. Women use a smaller oval-hand stone (**dugiša** in Gumuz) to grind food items on the large flat lower stone (**giša** in Gumuz)(see Plates 6 & 7).

2.3. Physical and Social Infrastructures: Transport, Communication and Other Facilities.

The forms of transport in Kamaš are traditional means of transport and road transport. Since modern means of transport are absent, pack animals and human porters are still the only means to render valuable service. The Zone is penetrated with Kingi-Kamaši dry weather road, itself hardly accessible. It is 36 kms off the main Addis Ababa-Neqemte-Assosa trunk road to northeast, after driving 40 kms from Gimbi on the way to Nejo (see Map 3). It was constructed in 1976/77 but was not maintained since then. Even this road itself doesn't link the three zones: Kamaš, Assosa and Metekel. Kamaši zone is linked with Assosa through Oromia, and Metekel zone through Oromia and Amhara regions. Its **woredas** are not accessible by vehicles except Kamaš; only 24 out of 67 PAs are accessible, during the dry season. There is no inter-town public and freight transport services and road movement is only conducted by small pick-ups, again itself during the dry season with expensive transport costs. In general, the physical topography, the steep gradients, narrow bends and the seasonally swelling rivers along the Kingi-Kamaši road affect the operation of cars and have always made wider contact very difficult.

Except one inefficient sub-post office run by one person in the Kamaši town, telephone and postal services are totally absent. The center has no petrol and banking services. It is also devoid of electric light and power services. The Zone is the least urbanized both in the BGNRS and in the country and considered to be rural in feature. However, some changes or improvements are taking place since the last five years. Radio-communication is giving services in government and NGO offices except Agalo Met'i **woreda**. Generators are producing light in some Zonal departments in **Kenteri.** It has a police station. Though not yet inaugurated, modern buildings of Zone council (see Plates 8 & 9), clinic, residential quarters, vocational training institute and boarding school have

already been completed. Lines of potable water are under busy construction. The number of schools, clinics and other public services are also increasing.

There are five clinics in the Zone: one each in **woredas**. The one in Yaso has one and in Beleo Jegonfoy two health posts attached as satellites. Four are furnished to some extent except that of Yaso, which is incomplete and has no medical equipment at all. Their services are generally not standardized and there is a great shortage of professionals, medical supplies, and treatment rooms. There are only two private drug vendors in **kenteri** but no hospital. Children are still dying of vaccine preventable diseases and mothers from complications of delivery.

Educationally the Zone has better start. There are one high school, five juniors, 41 elementary (but most of them below 4th grade) one kindergarten and one vocational training center in the Zone in 1992, according to the statistics of Zone Education and Culture office. The number of school attendants is also increasing. However, education still couldn't provide a substantial base of human capital and there is still low access to educational opportunities and less coverage to both sexes with conspicuous gender gaps, that is, lower to the females.

Thus, the first survival strategy of the people under study was to move their niche from Metekel to the Diddessa area, which provided them not only with inaccessible dwellings but also diversified means of livelihood. It is in this Valley that they employed various adaptive mechanisms in order to survive. They used their indigenous knowledge and skills in utilizing environmental resources and meeting their needs and necessities against the absence of modern public services.

Chapter Three: Gumuz's Adaptations in The Diddessa Valley

This chapter focuses on adaptive strategies and indigenous knowledge employed by the Gumuz in response to differing circumstances. Hunting-gathering economy, shifting cultivation, livestock production, gold panning, handicrafts, organization of production, division of labor, marketing and constraints faced the Gumuz in the process of performing these activities are themes of this chapter.

3.1. Adaptive Constrainsts and strategies in a New Ecosystem

In a new context, the Gumuz have faced several human and natural constraints such as hot climate, existence of gorges and shortage of fresh water, absence of public services and modern economic activities. The environmental features such as gorges, rivers, grass, hot climate and existence of harmful wild animals hindered an easy communication as well as easy economic activities. Tropical diseases like malaria contributed to high mortality rate of humans while tsetse fly, trypanosomiasis, etc. prohibited cattle breeding. It is within all these problems that the Gumuz have applied various strategies to adapt to a new context and cope up with some of its constraints.

The Gumuz are people quite adaptable to change on their own terms. The origin and history of the Gumuz, as we have seen earlier, indicate their continuing effort to make many of their own choices among alternative strategies including an attempt to relocate defensive areas and forest resources. Being within an inaccessible region of the Diddessa Valley they practiced their own traditional beliefs, exchange marriage, and other societal affairs in response to different needs. Economically the Gumuz employed diversified and supportive strategies. Their economy is basically characterized as shifting cultivation and other productive activities are designed to supplement it.

Their adaptive mechanisms have various aspects. One strategy is increasing size and number of farm fields through clearing the forest in the peripheries of main fields using festive, and/or

household labor. Mobilizing festive labor in clearing the forest, and weeding and harvesting crops during its respective season are means to tackle the shortage of labor. Generating income from diverse sources and conducting petty trade are mechanisms used in the struggle to survive. Some may also exchange oxen for labor, cash, grain or grain for labor, especially around **Kenteri** and areas bordering Oromia.

Coping strategies mostly applied by the poor section of the society. In order to ease their problem the poor people engage in daily labor, exchange labor for oxen or grain; sell firewood and charcoal and construction materials such as bamboo and thatching grass; engage in petty trade; produce beverages and crafts for sale; hire out child labor, especially boys as shepherds; feed on wild roots and fruits; reduce consumption, and share properties of their relatives. To meet their spiritual needs, in contrast to their responses to the physical environment, the Gumuz often display things such as providing sacrifices to their deities and observance of taboos as a means of warding off danger of 'unseen forces that threaten them from all sides.'

Thus, these people employed different strategies and techniques to meet or change their environment in terms of their needs and necessities. They used simple technology, and their own knowledge and skills in the production of implements, instruments, clothes, decorating items, utensils, etc. out of local materials, and in cropping, hunting, fishing, panning gold, constructing house, and the like. A sort of technological solution was applied in attempting to overcome subsistence problem. These economic, social and cultural adaptations of the Gumuz are given spaces in the proceeding sub-topics and chapters. The economic strategies as means of livelihood receive attention in the following pages.

3.1.1. Means of Livelihood

3.1.1.1. Hunting and Gathering Activities

Hunting-gathering economy is one of Gumuz's livelihood strategies designed to supplement shifting cultivation. It is a part of their ecological adaptation and cultural tradition. Since crop

cultivation alone is insufficient to cover the subsistence needs of the society people resort to hunting of small animals, fishing and especially to the gathering of wild food stuffs not only during the rainy season but also during the dry months. Hunting and gathering were probably more important in the past than in the present. The former is diminishing partly because of the government's ban on it and partly because of depletion of wild animals. Hunting has been banned in Ethiopia for a long time but this was not carried out effectively because state's policy could not be applied in Gumuz inhabited area due to inaccessibility. The activity was common until the guns were confiscated in 1994. However, the Gumuz still-hunt small game. Some Gumuz may conduct hunting for prestige and status as well as a traditional sport, besides its economic significance. It had both economic and social values that contributed to its survival for a long period.

Seasonally and operationally hunting among the Gumuz could be divided into two. The first type is conducted in groups during the dry season far away from a village. This is initiated by organizing hunting groups either under clan leaders or a qualified man in hunting skills. Then, the head leads the members in locating the hunting grounds where the beasts are expected to be found in plenty. The type of vegetation they eat, their footsteps and sounds are good indicators of their location. After discovering where they are, a group sets fire to bushes, which makes hunting easier and animals victims of hunters as burning off the area exposes them to easy shooting and weaken them through depriving grazing grass.

On the fixed day, in respose to leader's call with a horn called **faga,** the members of hunting expedition come with dogs, hunting weapons and daggers to the hunting area. The hunting weapons include **joga** (arrow), **čaga** (bow)**, koa** (shield), **libinda** (gun), **gišita** (sharpened stick), and different types of spears such as **shanfo** (long spear), **mua** (short spear), and **t`iwa** (sharpened stick). In addition, a trap made of rope on the ground called **bagolanba** is used in hunting. Another traping system is called **č`esuwa**, a 'pit' in which sharpened sticks are errected and stacked or corded with

leaves and soil. Wild animals are pushed in that direction or the traping pit is left there during the night so that animals would go in and be trapped.

The hunters going out for its operation should take a hunting permit, order and blessing of their **musa,** Gumuz's god. Otherwise, it is believed, they are cursed and either become cripled or killed by a wild animal or not successful. Thus, after they are ready to go out, hunters go to **musa's** house with their weapons. A hen or some other animal is killed and its blood is spat on the weapons at outdoors. The **musa** and other elders bless all hunters. After this, it is believed that they shoot accurately and their weapons' power of killing increases

They begin hunting by dividing themselves into three groups: one each on the left and right sides and a third, with experienced members, enters into the forest from the center with dogs that serve to discover the beasts. Those in the middle make the wild animals go out and the two on both sides shoot them while they are rushing to escape. The fact that those who are responsible for wounding the beast would monopolize the skin and a large part of the meat encourages individuals to go ahead and plunge into hunting. The remaining part is shared among other members. However, they may build temporary shelters or stay under a big tree around river where they lit fire on a big stick, roast part of the meat and eat it. They can stay for a week depending on their success.

If they are not successful or someone is injured, they consider the day as illomened or unlucky and relate the cause to the missing of something in worshipping ceremonies. But if they successfully come back to the village, hunters blow a musical instrument called **qomia** to announce their success to the villagers and are received by them. They directly go to the house of village's **musa**, who orders males to beat **tora** (drum) to announce the successful arrival of the hunters and gather in people in his compounds. **Qomia** and **tora** are used for announcing good news of success in hunting. All people in the village gather and sing **Omafia**, a cultural hunting play. They sing saying **ofe ofe ofe** ... **Omafia** is repeated, followed by other statements indicating heroism in hunting. It is

derived from Oromo song '**oma ofee** ... **ofe** ... **ofe** ..' to mean 'we have driven pack of animals or of enemies ... 'driven' ... 'driven' ... . Males beat musical instruments such as **andinga** (big drum) and **tora** (medium drum); blow **ezebeda** and use **aśiśa** in honor of hunters who kill big games like lion, leopard, elephant, buffalo, etc.

After all hunters and villagers have gathered around the **musa's** house, heads of hunted animals are splatered with blood of a chicken or any other animal and ash. Then, the **musa** and other elders bless hunters and the ceremony and order preparation of the meat for food. **Keya**, the best-liked traditional local beer, prepared out of sorghum, maize or millet, is provided. Night events of a week or two weeks are attended by singing, dancing and cultural play called **Umafia**. All clan members can come and enjoy the ceremony.

Then follows preparation for the honor of **gumza dwa** 'heroic man' who shows bravery in killing big game. He who kneels down or kills wild animal is decorated or adorned by four selected males and four females from his relatives. Depending on his means, **keya** is prepared and beasts are killed for this occasion. To show his heroism in hunting, a sharpened stone called **giša** is used to operate two lined scars on the nape of his neck along both ears. This practice of operating scars for the identification of brave hunters is called **meqtap'ia**. Local ornaments are hung on his ears to identify the kind of animal he killed. His companions also operate scars on the napes of their necks. Food and **keya** are served and **omafia** is sung throughout a week for his honor.

The hunting ceremony comes to an end with elders and **musa's** blessing after another successful group of hunters come back from the hunting ground. They take the horns, teeth or hides of wild animals they kill and are seen off with honor. These items are put, after their death, on the hut constructed around their graves for the memory of heroic hunting. Consequent hunting ceremonies are conducted in similar ways. Successful hunters and their wives are honored and obeyed in the community and this gives a great place to hunting in the community. Returning with success or

failure had an impact on the individuals' social statuses. One who returns without a share is despised not only by people but also by his own wife. Thus, he has to try to erase this humiliation. Even killing of a big game is sometimes taken as criteria of marriage in some areas.

Traditionally one who kills a lion, buffalo, leopard and even a man from an enemy side had the highest social status within the society. On social occasions like feasting, they and their wives are first served. They are also entitled to rewards of money and animals. Wives encourage their husbands to kill big games in order to achieve due social statuses. Thus, hunting seems to have had an important role in shaping the socio-economic life of the society.

The second type of hunting is conducted by an individual family mostly during the rainy season, when there is a shortage of food. But hunting of grass-feeding beasts is very difficult, because they hide themselves in the grass and plants, and also revive from dry season hunger, and they are not easily killed. Thus, hunting during the rainy season by a family is probably confined to small animals. Currently hunting is radically reduced, especially after the confiscation of guns in 1994, and confined to small animals (such as monkeys, baboons, hyena, porcupines and other small crop-eating pests) and remote areas.

The Gumuz also depend on hunting of aquatic animals from the Abay and its tributaries to some extent. Farmers living around big rivers have long experience of fishing for consumption and also for sale. Main sources of fish production are the Abay, Diddessa, Anger, Dabena, Gember, Boqa, etc. in order of importance. Fishing implements consist of nets, hooks, spears and baskets and also roots used to weaken the fish. Fishing still forms a subsidiary source of diet for some Gumuz who live around the big rivers.

Another auxiliary economic strategy is gathering a variety of forest resources. It has already been said that the Gumuz community uses forest resources directly. One element of direct use of the forest resource is the making traditional "salt" out of the local materials. This "salt" is called **t`išа**,

which is mainly produced out of bamboo's stem and bark of a tree called **t`iša**. The type produced out of bamboo's stem is called **muba** and the other from tree's bark is called **yajisia.** Other types, used as medicine and to flavor food, are made up of chaffs of nigerseed and millet. A "Salt" produced out of nigerseed is called **begzqua** and the other from millet **betania**.

To produce **muba** and **yajisia**, the Gumuz first burn bamboo and barks into ash and bore or dril a gourd at its center. **T`ef** straw and the ash are put on the holes of the gourd and finally water is poured on it. The liquid which drops gradually and slowly through the holes of the gourd from beneath is called **t`iša. Begzqua** and **betania** are prepared in the same way. **T`iša** is also believed to speed-up cooking, and reduce bitterness and poisonous feature of plants. There are some 35 types of wild roots, leaves and fruits, according elders and Zone Agricultural Department, which cover gap of food shortage, besides serving as medicine, during the rainy season. Some edible green plants are mentioned below.

*-**Čibaleya** is a bitter and poisonous root. It is cut into pieces, encircled by a cloth and tied to a tree near the river so that flowing water beats it and reduces its poisonous content. Then, it is dried. Its bitterness and poisonous content is high during the rainy season. So, it is boiled and eaten during the dry season.*

*-**Mijira** is a potato-like root that is boiled with ash and eaten. Ash is added in the belief that it reduces its poisonous content. It may kill. So, it is boiled with ash for a whole day, washed pounded, mixed with salt, sesame or nigerseed and eaten. **Ečа** or **sinsa**, a root called **buri** in Oromo, is also boiled and eaten. **Sinsa**, **Čibaleya**, and **mijira** are also liked among the neighboring people.*

*-**Čeha** is a also carrot like root boiled or eaten raw. It grows naturally but some have begun to cultivate it.*

*-The leaf of **kekima** is boiled in a dish or roasted in the fire and eaten. Elders claim that **kekima** is a medicine for malaria, endogenous diseases and "dog's disease".*

*-**Kambuya**, known as **qunśu** among the **Berta**, is a bamboo shoot, which is cut into pieces, boiled and eaten. It can be cooked with ash and used for soup.*

*-**Kima is** a plant ground, dried and added to soup, especially of harricot-beans like **wup'a**, to make it sticky. According to the community, it helps as an appetizer, and as medicine for stomach and headaches and evil spirit.*

*-**Indeha, '**Okra', known as **qenqes** among the Berta, is widely used as a food. Its fruits shape is like a green pepper. It is gathered while green, cut into pieces, boiled soon or after it has had time to dry, prepared in the form of soup and eaten with porridge. Like **kima, indeha** is believed to have high food and medicinal*

content. It can be dried, ground and used to thicken soups made of other things. It is believed that, if added into meat while cooked, it can easily removes meat from bone. ***Kima*** *and* ***indeha*** *are also believed to soften stomach and cleans every dirty thing from female's womb after delivery and cow's womb immediately after birth.*

*-**Žeqa**, a root called **beroda** in Oromo, and leaves of **elangia** and **bedeha** are eaten after boiling or roasting.*

*-Leaf of **ebosiya**, which grows everywhere during the rainy season and only along rivers during the dry season, is bitter and must be eaten patiently since it is believed to be medicine for malaria and gastritits.*

*-**Emakiba** is a pumpkin -like plant whose root is eaten. When cut off whitish liquid comes out, thus believed to produce high yield of milk in women and animal's breasts after birth*

*- The leaf of **šiña**, which grows around rivers, is cooked and eaten with porridge.*

There are many other roots, leaves and used by the community in the area. Gumuz elders claim that their "strength" and "alertness" are derived from these foodstuffs, which are said to be full of medicinal contents. Although it needs professional and laboratory experiments to establish the food and medicinal contents of these foodstuffs, one can argue that, as vegetables, they are rich in vitamin contents.

In general, hunting is generally reduced and confined to small games and remote areas, itself not openly as before, whereas gathering and using forest resources continued to form part of Gumuz's diet. Thus, hunting, gathering and fishing were (are) among important livelihood strategies of these people.

3.1.1.2. Land Tenure

The Gumuz settlements are based on territorial occupation and their member's belong to territorial groups, which are divided into several distinct clans. Each clan possesses its own land and area of authority. Clan property expected to be recognized by other clans but their boundaries are not carefully delineated. Each member family of a clan has a right to use the land for cultivation. A man claims land simply by clearing and using it but nobody has a right to sell or buy it in any circumstances. Since collectively owned by all clan members, land is seldom a source of dispute,

and one can farm as much as he can within a clan territory. But as soon as a farmer leaves the area it is available to others to move in. Cultivation on another clan's land may cause conflict.

The people of **Burqa Met`i** and **Mender Mesereta** produce with their own labor for their own subsistence. The production is subsistence oriented. **Dusinia** and **Daro** clans of my study sites have natural resources including land, which could be divided into land under cultivation, fallow and unutilized one. The fallow and unutilized lands are used for the replacement of the exhausted one. Thus the clan has at least three times greater than the one under cultivation at the moment. In addition, the clan usually owns woodland, which provides supplementary resources to collectivity, and has access to large forest areas and water resources, which are used for hunting, gathering, fishing and agriculture. Other clans or territorial groups may share these large resources. Rights to the bush land are very general but once it has been cleared and cultivated the group entitled has clear rights over that part of the fields. We can deduce from this that land ownership among the Gumuz society combines individual possession with collective ownership of the clan since each family cultivates the land it has cleared until it abandons it for a new plot. Leaving the clan is also abandoning the right over the clan property. Water courses, mountains, hills, paths and roads may form clan borders but since there is no clear demarcation one clan member can farm another clan's land through the permission of its head.

Theoretically a clan member can farm as much land inside his own territory as he is able. But, practically, Gumuz's plots are small in size due to the simple nature of agricultural tools and limitation of labor in clearing and expanding the farm area. The actual size of farmlands depends on the farmer's initiative, size of his family, and the amount of labor and tools at his disposal. Land is not inherited since anyone can farm on uncultivated land but sons may continue using of fields cleared by their fathers which is mainly the case in **Agalo Met`i** and **Yaso Woredas**.

Since there was no private land ownership, the land distribution in the country after the 1974 revolution was not carried out in the Gumuz society. However, PAs were organized though weak due to the mobile nature of the people or their move into inaccessible regions whenever they wish to avoid government interference. Moreover, the PA leadership was absorbed within the indigenous system or subordinated to it.

However, PAs began to be strong since the last five years when they were reorganized by the current leadership. 93 PAs were reduced into 67 and many clans were included in every PA. At least theoretically land acquisition falls under the responsibility of **Kebele** and **woreda** councils. But the only change observed is the transition of theoretical ownership of land from clans to **kebele** and **woreda** councils. Still there is high communication gap between **woreda** and **kebele** offices due to lack of roads. PAs in far remote rural areas are still weak and the farmers practically follow their own traditional system of acquiring and using land for cultivation and housing. However, "outsiders" who come to settle in the Zone can get land for both cultivation and housing quarters through **woreda** and **kebele** councils. This land acquisition itself is only applicable to **woreda** centers. Request of clearance doesn't apply to incoming government workers. In **Burqa Met`i** and **Mender Mesereta**, people follow their traditional system of using land, that is, a member can use land and its resources within the clan boundary without any restriction.

Compared to the total area of the Zone, a very small proportion of land is cultivated. Currently, according to Region Six Planning and Economic Development, about 279,914.6 hectares of Zone's land are considered to be convenient for agriculture. Out of this, 12,370 hectares are said to be cultivated; 21,500 hectares have been taken over by agricultural investors, and the rest is virgin land remained to be cultivated. Low population density and abundance of land, thus absence of pressures on land, are reasons behind the long period of fallow and shifting cultivation.

3.1.1. 3. Shifting Cultivation

The Gumuz's way of life is characterized by shifting cultivation, and practices of hunting, gathering and fishing. Gumuz groups move from place to place and change their environment to maintain their subsistence economy. Shifting cultivation is a farming strategy in which fields are cropped for fewer years than they are allowed to remain fallow.

Agriculture is the main source of almost all Gumuz's staple foods, cash income and condiments. They move frequently in search of virgin land in response to the decline in fertility of soil. The duration of Gumuz shifting system is based on the fertility of land and its yield and infestation of weeds. If it is a good soil it remains usable for long time. A plot of land can be used for three to six times depending on yielding capacity of the soil. Annually different crops may be sown on the same plot, turn by turn, like finger millet first year and sorghum next. Thus, crop rotation may be applied on the same field until the farm shifts to another plot depending on the yield of the harvest and condition of weeds. A decision is made to move if the harvest is less and the weeds are very serious. The older plot is left fallow for up to twenty years. Shifting may be made from one plot to another within the homestead and this continues until the distance between the plots and the homestead is so great that the Gumuz have to move the homestead also.

Shifting cultivation within **Burqa Met`i** and **Mender Mesereta** villages is made possible by favorable conditions such as availability of land, the absence of population pressure on vital natural resources and free access to them, and the existence of domestic organization to mobilize labor for clearing the forest, constructing huts and conducting the cultivation. Since kin groups depend on one another, they usually leave an old plot for a new one altogether. However, some with usable land may stay behind. Rarely they are from different sub-clans but usually from the same lineage or from different lineages within a sub-clan. There are certain conditions to select a new farm field. Appropriate soil has to be identified and its location should decrease labor cost and pest damage.

Since the nature of the vegetation is an important sign of land's suitability for farming, the Gumuz look very closely at the trees and bushes. Grass-covered land is generally considered to be bad for farming while the presence of tall trees and bushes are considered to be good since they indicate that the land was left fallow for long period, say from 15-20 years. A selection of a new site is followed by shifting and land preparation for crop cultivation of coming rainy season. Steep rocky area is not selected for cultivation See the case below.

Case 1. *Wajira Abuna, Babo Bila, Qeneni Delena, Agemse Jara, Tefera Gojjam, Algeweraš Worqe, Tefera Amara, Woreda Wolteji, Yadeta Wolteji, Abera Wolteji and Hika Woltegi Shifted their plots last year after using for 3-6 years at an average. Mulugeta Abuna has cultivated his old plot for 6 years and has already made up his mind to shift it next year while Gutema Wolteji, Asfaw Wolteji, Č'irisa Worqe, Mijena Dorsa, Duguma Dorsa and Ejeta Gomoro have cultivated their plots for only 3 years but have already planned to shift them next year. Č'ali Gomoro has a plot cultivated only once but has decided to change it due to the manace of wild animals (see case 3). Dafisa T`iliqa's case is special: he has cultivated his plot for 10 years and still has no plan to shift it. All farmers reason out that they are forced to change their plots because of decrease in soil fertility and invasion of weed and wildlife. Mostly they move their plots together to nearby farmlands, mainly based on their intimacy, that are fallowed for many years. They say that they can identify fertile land simply by looking at its vegetation, which has to be full of big trees and thick bushes; but not grass.*

In short, the Gumuz economy is best characterized as shifting cultivation. Shifting of fields is more frequent than rotation of crops. Clearing by means of fire, short period of cultivation and long period of fallow, use of human labor alone due to absence of tract animals, and use of hoe or stick as tools of planting, which helps to cultivate small plots of land, are the main features of the Gumuz cultivation system.

3.1.1.4. Land preparation and Shifting of a Farm Field

Felling a big tree and leaving it as a sign of occupation begin preparation of a new field. This is usually done during September to January. Then, a work party is formed to clear the grass while it is still green so that it is possible to take it elsewhere before it sheds its seeds and burn it with an aim to prevent the seeds from spreading. (There is also a belief that malaria is caused by flowering grass. This belief is related to the season when mosquitos breed and cause malaria in the area.) The bush and savanna areas with grass and trees are burned in order to make it easier to

work in the fields or to hunt wildlife, eradicate mosquito and poisonous animals, protect against predatory wildlife, or generally to clear the forest for farm. The method of clearing the forest depends on the preference of the farmer: either leaving the young trees and clearing grasses or clearing completely the whole vegetation. Cutting the grass first also makes felling the trees easier. The stystem of lying down the grass by 'bent stick' to keep soil's moisture is also employed and usually done in Semptember and October. Bent stick and small scythes are used to clear the grass and axes **(dala)** to fell the trees. Not all trees and grass are burned down. While some fresh grass is used for thatching the hut and stores, trees are also used for constructions and firewood (fuel). If the farm field is far away from the settlement, farmers may build a farm hut. Separate houses are built for boys and animals. Some of the family members may go back after sowing the crops but one or two persons have to stay around the field to guard the crops. However, if a new field is far away from the settlement the whole homestead may be dismantled for a new site. When they shift to the new plots they leave huts as they were and build another new one in the new area. The farmsteads are built outside the farm fields but not very far from a watercourse. Previously the Gumuz villages tend to be small, impermanent and shift within very few years though movement is now becoming limited to the homestead within the village except in cases related with government policy (see chapter 7). Their houses tended to be grouped around hills for reasons of security and along river courses to make easier for women, who carry water in gourds from river to home. But hamlets are built not very near to the banks of rivers because of the danger of floods to maize and also to be near to the sorghum field that usually lie around the hills. This is also to make the cultivation easier for men and decrease the distance for women who often transport crops, food and water from fields to home and vice versa. Thus, hamlets must be at convenient position between the watersource and the sorghum fields.

The Gumuz take cooking utensils, hides, sleeping mats, tools and clothes with them to a new farmstead. A grindstone is brought from nearby riverbed. The blacksmiths, take smithies and tools to the farm field for repairing implement or making new ones

3.1.1.5. Crops, Cropping System and Agricultural Calendar

Since the area is found in hot humid agro-climatic zone, it is suitable for growing perennial and seasonal crops. Grains, haricot-beans, **t`inqiš** and tobacco are grown everywhere in the Zone while oil crops and vegetables can be planted in most areas of the Zone. Cotton and spices (ginger and cardamon) can be grown in different parts of the Zone. Onion and garlic are grown in the silt along the rivers. Tomato, **t`ef**, sugarcane, orange, lemon, coffee, avocado, okra, etc. can also be cultivated in some limited areas of the Zone. In general, the Valley is suitable for growing crops, oil seeds, vegetables, pulses and fruits. The community in the area has not fully adaptaed to the cultivation of most of these crops though almost all have got start to some extent. The case of **Girša Teso** confirms that changes are taking place in the economic activities of the Gumuz society.

Case 2: *He has many plots and backyard gardens on which he cultivates a variety of sorghum, maize, sesame, haricot-beans, pepper, **boya**, coffee, groundnuts, tomato, cotton, banana, organge, mango, papaya, and avocado. He was taken to Gimbi by Adventist teachers and worked in Gimbi and Dongoro Adventist gardens for six years. He brought banana plant from Gimbi Adventist Mission compound. In his words, "The best I am benefiting from are banana, mango and pepper. I have three plots of banana and still I am planting them. Two mango trees are bearing fruits; and 100 are big trees and almost about to bear fruits. I have many small mango trees. 46 out of 96 pepper plants destroyed by termites but I have many seedlings to be spread in the near future. I also have 6 orange trees almost about to bea rfruits; 20 papaya and two avocado trees are bearing fruits. I have two coffee plots with 1300 trees- all loaded with heavy repening coffee beans. I also have some cotton plants, Okra, and some beehives. I have no problem with land; it is fertile and condvcive for agriculture. My main problem is shortage of labor; I have no ox; my little children are attending school; me and my wife alone are to provide labor for all these works". In reasoning out his adaptation to the cultivation of fruits, Girša said that he herd Adventists saying "children's gum would bleed due to the lack of fruits" and planted them after he returned to Hena Duda Gibe. "Now fruits both as consumption and cash crops, are backbone of my family," he wound up (see plate 10).*

It is true that Girša was influenced by missionaries and became a typical farmer. But I also saw fruits, coffee and vegetables in **Kenteri** and **t`ef** just on its suburb. However, when it is generally observed, only sorghum, maize, millet, sesame, pumpkins, gourds and haricot beans are cultivated on

relatively better scale (see plate 12-15 & Table One below). Although there is almost no surplus production, a limited amount appears on market. Sesame, nigerseed and cotton can be produced widely and contribute to the development of simple scale-industries.

The Gumuz have their own cropping system. The cultivation of sorghum, maize and sesame occupies most of their time. A single family of Gumuz often has a number of fields, sometimes on distance up to three hours on foot from the homestead, on which to cultivate these crops. Sorghum and millet are usually cultivated on main plots while maize, sesame, and other plants are grown on minor plots. When sowing, the Gumuz digs holes with bamboo sticks or hoes and put many seeds in each hole and turns the soil on it. They put many seeds in a hole with the assumption that some destroyed by insects. Many varieties of sorghum are cultivated in the hot lowland areas. It is sown when rain starts in June. Its harvesting is during the dry season, especially from November to January, depending on the type of the soil and seed, which affect its maturity time. Likewise millet is sown and harvested according to the same timetable. Maize is sown in June and harvested from August to September. Beans are sometimes planted in mixture with sorghum and maize. The former should be ready for harvest before the latters whose stalks are burned off after harvesting.

Tobacco, groundnuts and some root crops are not planted with sorghum lest they be destroyed when fields are burnt off or when the sorghum is harvested while it is possible to plant, pumpkins, gourds and some beans with sorghum since they would be ripen before it. Other crops such as sesame, pepper, ginger, cotton, limited vegetables and fruits, varieties of tuberous plants and those mentioned in this paragraph can be cultivated along the water courses, especially in the silt after water level drops. Sesame is sown everywhere in the bush, far away from the homestead, than other crops. It is sown in June and harvested in October.

Table One shows the conventional agricultural calendar, cultivable crops and possible area of cultivation. However, we have to keep in mind that calendar of clearing, sowing, weeding and harvesting mainly depends on the type of crops and soils and beginning and end of rain, and also that

all crops, given convenient soil and protected farmstead, can be grown around settlment, in the bush and along the rivers.

Table One: Agricultural Calendar, Crops and Their Growing Area Coverage in Kamaši Zone*

N°.	Crops	Sowing	Weeding	Harvesting	Growing area Coverage
1	Sorghum	May-June	July-Sept.	Nov.-Jan.	All Parts of the Zone.
2	Maize	May-June	July-August	August-Sept.	
3	Millet	June-July	July-Sept.	Nov.-Jan.	
4	Haricot- beans	June-August	July-August	Oct.-Nov.	
5	Banana	Mainly June-July but any time along the river courses	Any time whenever necessary	Anytime when it gets ripe	
6	Mango			March-June	
7	Papaya			March-June	
8	Avocado			Feb-July	
9	Orange			Sept.-Nov.	
10	Lemon			rainy season	
11	Sesame	June-August	July-Sept.	Oct.-Nov.	Most parts of the Zone
12	Groundnuts peanuts	June	July	Oct.-Nov.	
13	Niger seed	June-August	July-August	Nov.-Dec.	
14	Cabbage	May-July	June-August	July-Sept.	
15	Potato	June-July	July-August	August-April	
16	Carrot	June-July	July-August	August-April	
17	**Anč`ote**	June-July	July-August	August-April	
18	**Boya**	Jan.-April	May-June	June-April	
19	Sweat Potato	June-August	July-Sept.	Oct.-April	
20	Tobacco	June-August	August-Sept.	Oct.-Dec.	Some areas of the Zone
21	Pepper	June-August	August-Sept.	Sept-Jan.	
22	Pumpkins	June-July	July-August	Sept.-Dec.	
23	**Godare**	Jan.-June	June-July	Sept.-May	
24	Cotton	June-July	July-Sept.	Oct.-Jan	
25	Ginger	June-July	July-August	Sept.-Dec.	
26	Cardamon	June-July	July-August	Oct.-May	
27	Onion & garlic	June-July	July-August	Sept.-Nov.	along the rivers
28	Tomato	June-July	July-August	Sept.-Nov.	limited areas
29	Coffee	June-July	August-Sept.	Nov.-May	
30	**T`ef**	July-August	August	Nov.-Dec.	

* *The information is condensed on the basis of fieldwork and defferent sources given in the References.*

N.B. . *The given time span shows the period when dominant activity goes on.*

. *Mango, avocado, papaya, orange and lemon take 5-7 years and banana and coffee 2-3 years to bear fruit.*

. *Root crops can stay in the ground for the most part of the year.*

. *Vegetables and fruits are consumed on the spot of their collection and period given indicates time of their consumption or selling.*

Cereal grains (especially sorghum, maize and millet), sesame, pumpkins, and variety of tuberous plants are cultivated for food. Condiments like ginger, pepper, onion etc are used to flavor and relish food. Tobacco is cultivated for smoking. Cotton and its seed, sesame and ginger are the most important cash crops. Others like nigerseed, bananas, mangos, avocado, and cabbages are mainly exchange crops that are in great demand among the highland neighbors. Some Gumuz are also seen selling grains in Kamaši town and in the nearby markets.

Cotton and gourds play an important role in the Gumuz economy. Cotton is mainly planted nearby the Abay, Diddessa and Dabus rivers usually at the end of August, and harvested in December. It is taken either by the Gumuz to Kamaš and neighboring Oromo markets or highland traders come to the lowland and exchange cotton for salt, cloth, cottonseed, etc. Since there is no knowledge of weaving among the Gumuz, there is no need of separating pure cotton from the chaff.

Gourds are another important crop planted in the lowland. They are used as container for water, beer and also for carrying food or crops. They are also sold in the Oromo areas to be used for domestic purposes, like for milk and milk products. Murdock and Bender (1975) mention the production as a common feature of the Nilo-Saharan economy. Grain is stored in cylindrical granary made of bamboo trees. The storage is built in front of the family hut in order to increase the possibility of protecting it against an accidental rise of bush- fire, which usually destroys all of huts, grain and even human life during the dry months. But these crops and plants are not sufficient to sustain family for a year because of various constraints (see 3.1.1.7.)

3.1.1.6. **Agricultural Implements**

The Gumuz cultivators use very simple tools in the agricultural works such as clearing the forest, and planting or sowing and harvesting crops. The very ancient implements of hoeing or cutting included sharpened stones and sticks. Some of them like **ajisia**, **andigua** or **intageba** 'sharpened sticks' are used to pierce the land and put grains in the holes. They are still under use in some areas.

A little bit improved implements than the above after the Gumuz learned to make or use metal tools include **taba**, digging or weeding stick with metal tip; **dala** or **dora** (axe) and **guda**, both sticks with metal tips for clearing the forest; **bangeda**, **čaga** (sword) and **soga**, all made of steels for harvesting millet and sorghum; **begaita**, made of stick for harvesting maize; **meka** (made of stick) and **gundo** (made of grass or bamboo stick) both for threshing grains; **begaqula** and **jigda** (made of hide) for collecting or carrying crops; and **t'aba** or **kesa**, (made of bamboo) for storage. What is mentioned here is the main use but every implement may be used for different purposes, like **dora** for felling trees, grass, sorghum and maize stalks, etc. **Taba** (hoe), **čaga** (Gumuz's saw), **dora** (axe); **guda** and **bangeda** (both local sickles) are the main implements used in clearing the forest, uprooting weeds, and cultivating and harvesting crops (see plate16).

Plough and animal traction are almost unknown to the Gumuz except among those few who are close to other communities, especially Oromo. Human labor is an important source of energy for every aspect of agricultural work.

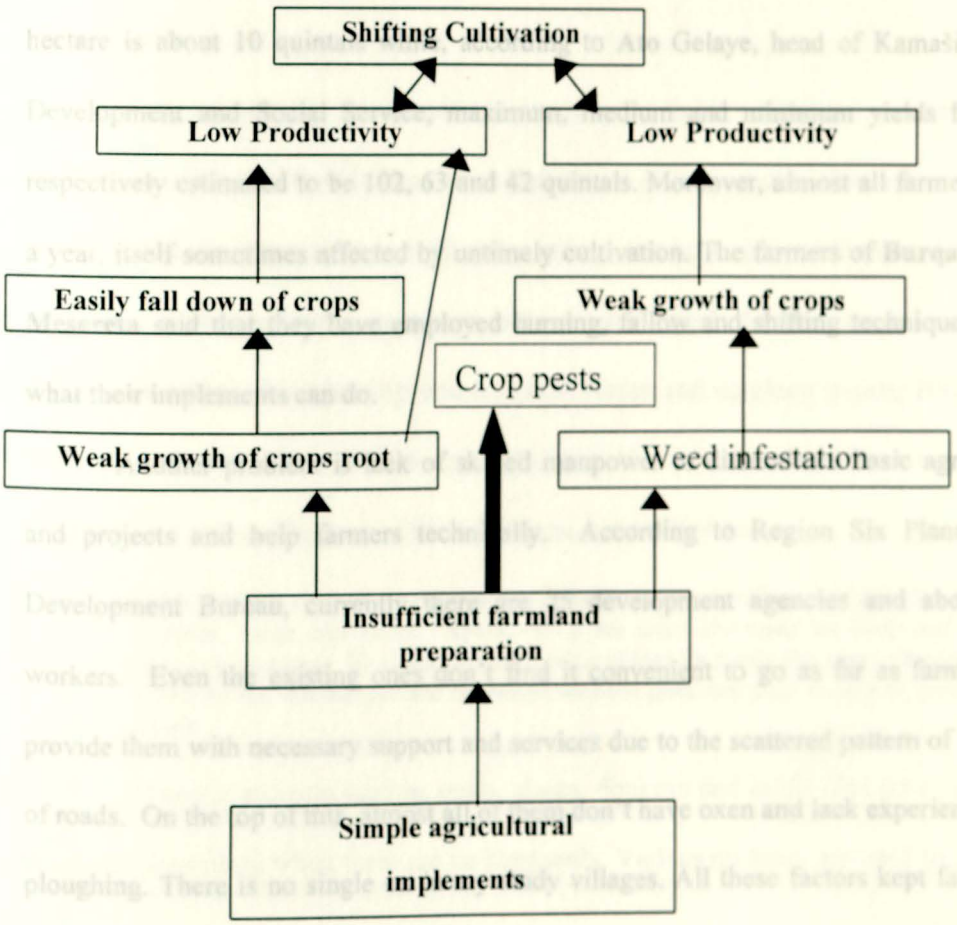
3.1.1.7. Problems and Constraints in Crop Production and People Reactions.

Despite the suitability of the Kamaši Zone in climate and geographical conditions for cultivating a variety of cereals, oil seeds and pulses, the Gumuz often face food shortages since they can't produce above their subsistence needs, especially when previous harvest is used up and the new crops are still ripening. The agricultural yield per hectare is very low, 8.5-10 quintals as estimated from my study sites. Many reasons can be postulated. Much of what is planted or produced is spoiled or destroyed. The major causes for low agricultural productivity in Kamaš, however, are ineffectiveness of implements and shortage of skilled manpower, inputs, infrastructure and limited use of draught animals—itself limited to areas bordering Oromia. Crop pests and diseases play no

fewer roles in keeping agricultural productivity at low level. These and other contributary factors need treatment here below.

Theoretically each family can cultivate as much as it can but the cultivated field is very small in actual fact. One reason is that the Gumuz are hoe cultivators and have not adopted the use of plough and ox. Their agricultural implements can help to cultivate only small plots of land and are insufficient in weeding operation. They are simple, consisting sharpened sticks, some with metal tips (see 3.1.1.6 and plate 16), and not suitable to raise agricultural productivity, because they are not effective to prepare farmland, which causes obstacles to easily growing of plant roots and bearing of fruits. The problem induced by simple agricultural implements is conceptualized on the basis of Region Six Planning and Economic Development Bureau's views.

Fig. Chain of Problem-Induced simple agricultural implements



Crops with weak roots can't get enough soil nutrients thus fall down and are exposed to pests, flood and wind. Moreover, the tradition of slash-and-burn system and cropping on hilly and sloping land for easier sowing and weeding (digging by standing than bowing) exposes the ecology and crops to various destructive agents such as wind, flood and erosion. The inhabitants of my study sites say that they can only choose from available options and that their ability to buy oxen and better implements is limited. In short, it is also my view that Gumuz's implements are not efficient to prepare farmland effectively, which in turn induce serious problem of weed, itself weakening crop growth and ending up in low productivity. Inefficient land preparation also brings about weak growth of crop's root, which easily fall down and results in less productivity. Shifting cultivation is both the cause and result of low productivity. As already pointed out maximum yield of Gumuz's product per hectare is about 10 quintals while, according to **Ato** Gelaye, head of Kamaši Woreda Economic Development and Social Service, maximum, medium and minimum yields from an hectare are respectively estimated to be 102, 63 and 42 quintals. Moreover, almost all farmers grow a crop once a year, itself sometimes affected by untimely cultivation. The farmers of **Burqa Met`i** and **Mender Mesereta** said that they have employed burning, fallow and shifting techniques because these are what their implements can do.

Another problem is lack of skilled manpower to disseminate basic agricultural knowledge and projects and help farmers technically. According to Region Six Planning and Economic Development Bureau, currently there are 25 development agencies and about 30 development workers. Even the existing ones don't find it convenient to go as far as farmers' compound and provide them with necessary support and services due to the scattered pattern of settlements and lack of roads. On the top of this, almost all of them don't have oxen and lack experience of using oxen for ploughing. There is no single ox in my study villages. All these factors kept farmers at subsistence

level and detained them from participating in extension intervention program and in development activities of the nation.

Exhaustion of the soil fertility after repeated cultivation is vivid. This calls for shifting plots and /or homesteads. Clearing of the forest, farmland preparation, construction of huts and granaries, using simple tools, and moving of house utensils to new farmland--all share time and labor of cultivation. Shifting to a new field requires much time, energy and implements. Erosion is a problem in riverine fields especially with the conversion of trees into firewood and building materials after the first year of farming. Inefficient method of land preparation, hot climatic condition and rainfall distribution favored the breading of crop pests. Insects and termites are harmful to all crops from the day of their germination in the soil to the time of their usage for food. Guineal fowl and geese scratch the seeds out of soil by feet and eat. Some like rats are a danger to crops both in the fields and granaries.

Wild animals are also menace to crops in the fields. Monkeys and baboon like maize and sorghum and they are troublesome since they travel in large packs. Porcupines eat maize, sorghum and pumpkins and root crops at night and warthogs and bush pigs are feeders of maize, sorghum, and pumpkins. Rats, porcupines, monkeys, baboons and lizards feed on groundnuts. Bush backs and duikers are mainly interested in beans, young maize and sorghum plants. Birds such as weavers, starlings, red and yellow bishops, pigeons, guineal fowl, etc. eat different crops such as maize, sorghum, and millet. The case of **Č'ali Gomoro** is described below.

Case 3: *Č`ali's house is located on outer part of **Mender Mesereta** village and likewise are his plots of sorghum, maize and millet. Almost all of his crops destroyed by birds and wild animals, especially monkeys. He is worried about what to feed his family this year. Though still new and fertile, he has already decided to change his farm plots next year to nearby farmfields of other people.*

Domestic animals such as goats, sheep, donkeys and cattle also pose problems to crops on the fields, especially when there are no shepherds. Various methods are used to protect crops against

them during the rainy season: tie them in the pasture area; pay herders to look after them during morning and evening times and keep them in their huts during the day; and use their own children, mainly boys, to look after them outside the school times if they are students.

Boys and girls may protect the fields. Older boys may build huts around or inside the fields and remain during the night to drive away pigs and porcupines. Various methods are used to chase away these wild animals. Farmers may attempt to hunt and kill pigs, warthogs and baboons with spears. They may also use traps against porcupines, baboons, monkeys, and birds or set a fire nearby the fields and chase them away by whistling, shouting and by beating sticks on fallen trees. Farmers also farm together or near one another to cooperate in guarding the fields. But farmers have no means of protection against insects, termites and also rain, all of which spoil grain in the granary. Infestation of farm field by striga is also a serious problem, which forces the cultivators, who have no real means of defense against it but abandon their plots. Being another source of problem, accidental bush-fire usually destroys huts and grains like sorghum and millet that don't mature before burning time. Diseases like rust are also problems to maize and sorghum species.

Beliefs about days of cultivation in some areas have adverse effect on the productivity of the community. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday are considered to be the only days of farming. Wallmark notes, "Wednesday is the day of the wind, Sunday is **Kmusa**, 'the day of musa', and Saturday is **dumusa** 'the son of musa'. One should not work on Wednesday in September–October since 'a big wind may come and destroy the fields" (1981:92). Gumuz farmers also don't work on a day thunder drops and on the worshipping days mentioned above. They also believe that 'evil spirit', ancestral spirit, and various medicines can be used to spoil, steal or protect crops.

The Gumuz community also used to give less value to agriculture than hunting in which males get high satisfaction by achieving fame, heroism, honor and high status. Hence, the Gumuz males used to prefer buying of guns than purchasing farm implements. They also believed that

cultivating extensive crops would invite robery by other clans; the belief resulted from prevalence of clan conflicts and disagreements that existed within the community before. Cheap crop prices, lack of sufficient cash and surplus production to buy ox and farm implements, and to mobilizing festive labor and hot climate-induced diseases like malaria have negative effect on crop production.

Thus, all these problems, constraints and beliefs combined to lessen the productive capacity of the shifting cultivation. One may argue that less exposure of the community to sedentary life of neighboring people, especially of Oromo and Amhara, has contributary role. However, Gumuz strategies were acted or applied in response to the existing circumstances. Non-existence of excess land and other substitutes during the shortages might have forced the Oromos and Amhara communities to adopt sedentary settlement whereas access to land, existence of substitutes such as games and wild foodstuffs, and their mistreatment by highlanders in past might have induced the Gumuz to practice their own agricultural system and other economic activities on their own terms.

In general, the Valley seems to have suitable climatic and soil conditions especially for lowland agricultural production. Paradoxically, agriculture remained at subsistence level because of employment of simple implements, inefficient methods of land preparation, less participation in the extension program, non-existence of market for agricultural products; infestation of weeds, crop pests and diseases; limitation of skilled manpower, development agents and workers and development projects; and poor conditions of road, transportation and communication facilities.

3.1.1.8. Livestock Production.

Livestock rising is another strategy, though limited, used to supplement the diet. Like in rural parts of the country, different animals can be bred in the Valley. Goats, sheep, poultry, equines, cattle, dogs and bees are kept as domestic animals. The latter three are widely bred in the lowlands. However, Gumuz's raising of livestock is limited.

Goats form the largest livestock population. The area is conducive for their reproduction and

that is why they have been raised for many years without much effort and veterinary service. Many of them give birth to twins. The female can give birth eleven months after she was born and may continue to reproduce at an interval of six months. The farmers have an experience of building huts in which goats should stay during the night and day times. The hut is made of bamboo and grass. Its inside floor is about 50-60 cms above the ground. This is with an aim to protect them against their waste materials since goats 'don't like dirty things'. Their huts are constructed either separately or by partitioning a room within the main house. I have also seen goats passing the night in the dwelling house in **Mender Mesereta** village.

Compared to goats, sheep breeding is limited. Farmers' reasons include their lack of experience and sheep's susceptibility to lowland diseases. However, the Gumuz give more value to sheep than to goats and chickens, because meat of the former is considered better and "blessed". Thus, the former is preferred for sacrifice to **musa** and other deities. Sheep's huts, pasture, water and care are not different from that of goats. A female sheep usually gives birth to one kid but sometimes to twins. A sheep can give birth thirteen months after she was born and may continue to reproduce at an interval of seven months.

All community members like to raise chickens. They are found in most houses and used for meat and laying eggs. One hen can lay an average of eleven eggs (8-14) at a time; four times a year but for only three years. Most of the eggs are used for chick production. Eggs are hatched in the baskets, made of bamboo, inside a house. Since they have small bodies and feather, they can't hatch many eggs and their chicks too. Chickens in the area have less weight and thus less meat. Two types of chickens are observed in the area: One with feather on the whole of its body and the other not having hair on its neck. They usually feed themselves by scratching the land but are sometimes given grains. Most farmers allow them to pass the night on dry rack in the main house but a few have independent shelters for them.

Limited heads of cattle are raised and most of them are owned by non-Gumuz ethnic groups living in the area. Recently some Gumuz began breeding cattle for food, ploughing and generating income them. Even few of them started to use an ox for ploughing, and cows for milk and milk products. Previously, the Gumuz were not used to breeding and using cattle and their products. According elders and Zone agricultural department, these people left cattle straying in the wilderness and shot them for meat when they want, because they were untamed and almost like wild animals. They simply used to throw their hides into the bush or use them as sleeping mats. Gradually, some Gumuz learned the value of cattle from neighboring people. Currently, animals pass nights in the villages or streets. The number of cattle in this **Kenteri** is estimated to be more than 1,500 excluding calves and heifers but most of them belong to non–Gumuz.

One cow may give birth once within a year, and gives one litre milk at a time for seven months on average. A heifer reaches age of giving birth and calf age of ploughing from 3.5 to 4 years. However, their age of reproduction and production may differ based on their species. Some cattle said to come from the Sudan are physically big, produce higher amount of milk and are not attacked by disease easily. Others, which are said to be from neighboring regions, are smaller, have less milk production and are easily attacked by diseases.

Of equines or pack animals, only donkeys are found in substantial numbers. Very few mules—I saw only one in **Kenteri**—are found in areas bordering Oromia. Pack animals are mainly used by traders to carry goods to market and pass nights in the streets around houses.

Although there are many flowering plants that are conducive to honey production in the area, modern system of breeding bees and removing honey is not developed. Honey production is based on gathering it from hallows of trees and caves of stones and from traditional beehives hung on the branches of trees. Being made of bamboo and grass, these beehives are short and thin and the method of removing honey hurts bees and reduces quality and quantity of honey. Honey is removed

from beehive two times, mostly in October and June, annually. Although its amount depends on the type of hive, number of bees, ecological factors (existence of water, flowers, etc.), protection and month of its removal, production from a hive range from 3-6 kgs, as estimated by elders. Generally, animal husbandry is increasing since the last five years.

Unlike the Oromo who use cattle for meat, ploughing, milk and milk products, the Gumuz are still limited in breeding and using livestock and their by-products. Currently goats are mainly used for both milk and meat, sheep for meat and sacrifice; chickens for meat and eggs; donkeys as pack animals; and to some extent cows for both milk and meat and oxen for meat and ploughing.

Moreover, hides of cow and ox are used as sleeping mats, after being dried stretched in the sun. Goat and sheepskins are dried similarly and used as bracelets and carrying bags for goods and babies. Hides are also used as generating income to some extent. Thus, the use value of animals and their products are getting recognition among the community but not without constraints.

3.1.1.9. Problems of Livestock Production and Community's Responses

The Gumuz farmers have not as such benefited from the extensive importance of animals for food, ploughing, transportation and generating cash income, as discussed above, because of some problems such as less knowledge of livestock's advantages and methods of raising them; vulnerability to diseases; less cash to buy and breed them; seasonality of pasture; menace of predators; non-existence of road and livestock markets; and less convenience of hot lowland area.

The experience of using animals and their products is limited. Rather than using for themselves they rent their animals to or leave them with highlanders. Hides are either thrown away or used for carrying goods and babies, making seats, sleeping mats and other furniture rather than presenting for market, because the community is far away from market and selling price is very cheap

when available.

The hot and forest-covered feature of the Valley has created suitable condition for various livestock diseases, parasites and disease-carrier pests. In addition, insufficient method of caring for animals and absence of adequate veterinary services contributed to the spread of livestock diseases and consequently less number of animals. The main problems of care for animals include lack of additional fodder and night-shelter; moving them from lowland to highland and vice versa for keeping or business reason, which contributes to the spread of diseases; confinement of veterinary service to limited centers and lack of money to treat them.

The main problem constraining the raising of animals in the lowlands is sleeping sickness, which is caused by tsetse fly and attacks cattle and equines, and goats and sheep to lesser extent. Fowl cholera and typhoid are diseases that attack chickens. In spite of the existence of all these livestock pests and diseases, there are only three veterinary clinics (one each in Kamaš, Beleo Jogonfoy and Sirba Abay woredas) and 12 health care giving centers with only one doctor for the Zone agricultural department, two assistants, (one each for Beleo Jogonfoy and Sirba Abay) and 19 technicians in charge of veterinary services in the Zone. Wide areas of the Zone are not covered by the service. The existing clinics and centers themselves are short of manpower, equipment and medicines and served by technicians with low training. The scattered feature of the settlement also contributed to its problem. Of course, provision of free vaccination and medicine at a fair price from government contributed to an increase in livestock production mainly since the last five years.

There is also difficulty of feeding animals, especially cattle, during the dry season though this is not very severe compared to those of highlanders. The main sources of animal fodder are natural pasture (grass and leaves), reminants of grains and sediments of local drinks and local fodder prepared by people. Shortages occur from December to April due to bush-fire, over–growing of grass to the extent it can't be consumed and non-existence of tradition of keeping pasture and reminants of

grains for the later consumption. In response to these problems, farmers take animals to areas around rivers, provide them with sediments of local drinks, and straw of grains and leaves of evergreen plants and take some measures to control bush-fire. But these form only part of temporary solutions. In the face of an increase in livestock population, competition over pasture area is inevitable. On the top of this, biting flies don't allow animals to eat as they like; and most grasses are not soft to eat and hard for digestion Some grasses and leaves are less resistant to bush-fire and also don't grow on hilly areas or animals can't mount and eat them. Of course, the resistance of some plants to bush- fire and dry season and convenience of grasses for animals to feed on at early stage are among the advantages of the vegetation in the area.

Another coping strategy of the Gumuz is common use of pasturelands since there is an excess land. There is also seasonal movement of cattle among people of the area and with people of neighboring regions. The cattle are moved to highland areas to stay there during June to December and brought back during January to May. Draught animals are bought from January to February and used for ploughing from April to June and sold after then due to the fear of livestock disease. The supposed reasons for this movement include spread of biting flies and diseases, and cultivation and growth of crops during the rainy season. Since the cattle are a menace to crops and the Gumuz have no strong tradition of herding them during the day and keeping them in shelter during the night, cattle have to stay with highland people who want them for their by-products during the rainy season. Moreover, most of the cattle belong to the highlanders who want them during the rainy season for various works and because they have relatively sufficient veterinary service and pasture lands. However, moving of animals is limited to cattle alone since the Gumuz have tradition of preparing shelters for goats and sheep that stay with them throughout the year. They also burn the bush in order to allow new pasture to rejuvenate.

Although bush-fire causes damages, it has many advantages. Burning may allow new grasses

and leaves to rejuvenate and germinate and helps to increase its biomass during the rainy season if burned during the dry season. By burning dry plants, it is possible to increase mineral content of the soil and contribute to the growing of new plants. Burning may also eliminate plants that are harmful to those useful ones and reduce the population of biting pests.

Some changes with respect to livestock care are also taking place. Before, animals were simply left straying in the wilderness. But now boys (sometimes girls too) from 7-12 years old watch animals, because farmlands are now expanded to the extent to be protected against animals and valuing of livestock and thus their care are also recognized by the community. The herders are required to know animals' names, color, number, to whom they belong and where water and grazing grounds are found. In the rural areas they watch animals of their father, uncle or any nearby relative and are entitled to one animal as a reward from each household after keeping them for many years. In **Kenteri** herders are employed for 3.00 birr per cattle monthly and I have observed many herders taking cattle to rural areas on different directions. Their main duties are to protect them against predators, keep them out of farmfields and from straying into the wilderness, and locate places of water and pasture areas. In the rural areas, when boys go to school, girls take care of animals. If both are students animals are tied to trees just outside the farmstead or kept in their huts or looked after by a householder until the students come back from a school. Animals are also allowed to roam around settlement when and where there are no crops.

However, introducing modern and improved fodder (pasture) into the community has not been started. Generally livestock raisig in Kamaši Zone, as in whole Region, is based on traditional methods. Animals are usually fed on natural pasture and range lands. The feeding management that entails cutting, carrying and keeping grass, as fodder is not experienced widely. But feeding of animals is not very difficult when compared to those of highlands. In short, the community's limited knowledge and ability to purchase, livestock diseases and pests, lack of market for livestock and their

products, shortage of infrastructure and exhaustion of natural pasture and range lands during the dry seasons combined to lessen the productivity of livestock production.

3.1.1.10. Traditional Gold Panning

Digging and washing of gold is another Gumuz's mechanism of mitigating their social and economic problems, especially when they found themselves short of agricultural products. Traditional production of gold from silt or alluvial areas, which has a long history, is usually taken as regular work among those who live around rivers and as a supportive economic activity in other areas. Sandy soils of the silt have more gold content than soils from the hilly areas. Production is based on the gold content found in the silt or soil and the presence or absence of washing water.

Gold panning is practiced in all **woredas** except Beleo Jegonfoy and its surroundings. It is usually carried out by washing the soil either from the riverbed, riverbanks or from far away. It is very hard work with little reward. Elders say that their maximum income doesn't go beyond 3o.oo birr per week. Gold production is mostly observed during the months free from cultivation.

The females have to carry the soil with a wooden plate called **batiya** from the steep and hilly areas to river and use the same utensil to wash it in the water while males usually use donkeys to take the soil from one to another place. There are some places where gold production is practiced more frequently than agriculture. Here all able-persons participate in the work from dawn to the sunset. Although the work is difficult and its production is limited, the community spends a large amount of time doing it, because of short agricultural season and low agricultural production to sustain their families. Sometimes they have to go up to 20 hours for panning gold and selling its products. People of Yaso **woreda** produce gold from sandy soils of Diddessa, Abay and Č`aliya rivers and sell their products in Nejo and Bullen markets while those of Agalo Met`i pan it from sandy soils of Beles, Bor, Qilt`u, Jejeba, T`iša, Diddessa and Abay rivers and sell it in Agalo, Nejo, Wambera, Werejiru, Mendi and Sirba Abay markets.

Gold production is carried on widely in Sirba Abay rather than in any other **woredas**. Gold is wanted as main source of income and is even more important than agriculture in some PAs. It is produced either from sandy soil brought from steep and mountainous areas or from Abay, Sirba, Boqa, Finč`a`a, Met`i Č`abi, Berkesa and Otisa rivers and sold in Fap`iro, Qonč`o, Gosu, Agemsa, Qilt`u Kara and Oda Godare markets.

Unlike other areas, gold production in Kamaši **woreda** is not regular. It is panned on a small scale from sands of T`iša, Čabi, Jejeba, Sai, Diddessa, Ura, Met`i and Beleqi rivers and sold in Kamaš, Nejo, Gimbi, Dongoro, Gilgila, Agalo and Bila. Ato Gellaye said, "Gold production in this **woreda** is laborous. One person gets an insignificant amount of gold costing not more than 10.00 birr after digging and washing for a week. So we don't recommend its work not only because of its low yield but also since it exposes land to erosion and disturbs the ecology." Table two sums up the whole condition of gold production in the surrounding areas of the Diddessa Valley.

Table Two: Areas of Gold Production and Selling Markets

Gold Producing Woredas and PAs	**Panning and Washing Rivers**	**Selling Markets**	**Remarks**
1. Yaso-Lugo Boqa -Dibi Arengema -Dega Gurača -Boji T`ebela	Bedesa; Lugo Abay & Deddessa Abay & Diddessa Diddessa & Čaliya	Nejo Bullen & Nejo Bullen & Nejo Nejo	Gold producing rivers are about ¼ to 20 hours from PAs of producers while selling markets take 10-40 hours on foot. 4/14 PAs participate in gold production.
2. Agal Meti-Ate Met`i -Qilt`u Badinsa -Kutala Bedet`ino -Šimela kuno -Qersa Diddessa -Selba Jengara - Mukerba Met`i -Bedesa Met`i -Danč`i Ebiča	Belesa & Bor Qilt`u Jejeba Jejeba & T`iša Diddessa Diddessa, Jejeba& Bor Diddessa Abay Abay	Agalo & Nejo Agalo Agalo Agalo Agalo Agalo Agalo Agalo Wambera, Werejiru, Mendi & Sirba Abay	9/13 P.As participate in gold panning. Gold panning areas are about 4 to 4 hours away from PAs while selling markets take them from 2/3 to 10 hours on foot.

3. Kamaš - Mirmit'a -Hen Duda Gibe -Deguba Bedesa -Jalo Leqa -Demosega Oda -Sire Siyoma -Kobe Bedessa -Mukerba Gagura -Gilgil -Daž Leko	Tiša, Čabi &Jejeba Sai Sai Diddessa Diddessa Diddessa Diddessa Ura & Sai Č'abi & Jejeba Met'i, Beqi & Sai	Kamaš & Nejo Kamaš Kamaš Kamaš Kamaš Gimbi & Kamaš Kamaš Dongoro Gilgala, Nejo, Agalo & Kamaš Nejo, Bila & Kamaš	10/14 PAs are engaged in gold production. Gold producing areas are about L' to 3 hours far away from the given P.As while selling markets take them 1½ to 20 hours.
4. Sirba Abay- Abegole -Sirba Abay -Boqa Abay & Boqa Wayu -Meko Finč'a'a -Beji Sirba -Berkesa, - etc., (see table 4)	Abay Sirba Boqa Fenč'a'a & Met'i Sirba & Č'abi Berkesa,Abay & Atitisa	Fap'iro & Qonč'o Qonč'o Qonč'o Gosu, Agesa & Qilt'u Kara Beji, Fap'iro & Qilt'u Kara Qonč'o & Oda Godere	15/16 P.As, except Qonč'o participate in gold prodution. Production areas are about ½ to 3 hours far from their dwelling while selling markets take about 0.35 to 7 hours

Source: Region Six Planning & Economic Dev't Bureau, 2000:82-87
**People of Beleo Jegonfoy Woreda are not reported of panning gold.*

In general, gold producing areas take secondary position to agricultural activity, and even there are few places in Sirba Abay where it takes the first position. Although it is laborious work with insignificant yield, and couldn't bring significant improvement in the life of the people, the Gumuz employed traditional gold panning as one supportive strategy of livelihood.

3.1.1.11. Handicrafts and Artisans

The people under study make or produce simple implements and instruments depending on their needs and necessities. Agricultural, hunting and gathering implements, house utensils and musical instruments are produced or repaired by some members of the community. These products are observed in the study sites, **Kenteri** and markets.

Agricultural implements such as axes, sows, woden plates, baskets, bent sticks, sickles, etc are made or repaired by the smithies and woodworkers (see plate 16). Gumuz-made hunting weapons include arrows, bows, spears, daggers, traps, etc. Most of these implements and weapons are sticks but some of them with metal at their tips. Some of the dining utensils are woden plates, clay-dishes

and containers or drinking vessels made of gourds and horns. Beds made of wood and bed-sheets of barks and hides are also among the community's furniture.

The community also makes many musical instruments. Drums called **andinga**, **tora** and **serma** are made of hide and trees. **Ezebeda, Pina** and **duha** are all trumpet-like musical instruments; the former made of wood and the latter two of gourds. **Yambeleya**, **andiriña**, **ekulitya** and **qomia** are flute-like musical instruments. The former two are made of bamboo, the third of wood and the last of wood, wrapped by a rope. Other musical instruments include **turka** (made of a wood), **bolunga** (made of horn), **senqua** (lyre-like instrument made of wood, and nerve of baboons or monkeys before and wires now), **egatiqula** (holes made on the ground by girls) and **aśiśa** (tree fruits connected by a thread) (see plate 18).

There are also local ornaments made of nickel, steel, horn, skin, teeth, tin, bone, porcupine spines, fruits, grass, cartridge or sticks for identification of hunters, bride/groom and clan membership. They are used for decorating ears, hairs, necks, waists, legs and fingers. Local ointments are mode of soil, castor oil and oil seeds and used for adorning body parts (see 3.1.1.1. & 4.8). Clothes are also produced out of hide and barks (see 4.7).

Thus, dictated by needs and necessities, people of the area produced or made agricultural implements, house furniture, ornaments, clothes, weapons and musical instruments out of local materials in order to cope with living condition of that area. This doesn't mean that there is certain group entitled to produce these items. Any Gumuz with an interest can make an item out of a local material. In **Burqa Met`i** and **Mender Mesereta** villages, I have seen females making pots, dishes etc. out of clay; males producing axes, knives, hoes, sickles, etc. out of steel; and seats, beds, baskets, etc. out of wood. Beds are made by inter locking their legs and sides tied with rope. Artisans also make **bidiru**, something like boat, out of wood for fishing or crossing the river, etc.

However, what are unique to the Gumuz in the area are the positive attitudes and great respect for smithing, woodwork, pottery, basketry, and other handicrafts. None are inherited. Unlike other neighboring societies, there is no caste system or classification of people doing these works. Iron and woodworks, and also basketry to some extent are almost men's duties while pottery is females' exclusive work. Other Gumuz obey artisans and bring clothes, charcoal, bellow etc. for them; help them while producing and also pay them some amount of money or in kind, usually agricultural products. The craft products mainly used for domestic but also for generating income within the village by an individual.

Weaving and tannery (except softening hides by removing hair and drying them in the sun) are non-existent. Softened skins are used for making belts, drums, bags, bellow, mats, etc. Most spears, swords, axes and other materials are still brought from Oromia in exchange for cotton, gourds, grains, etc. The beginning of the use of double bellow, made of skins of goat, sheep, etc., to increase heating of iron, is a sign of development of knowledge of iron smelting. Oval-shaped stones, clay stove, charcoal and firewood are also used. The above local products show the extent to which the Gumuz used their knowledge and skills in their struggle to survive within their challenging ecology.

3.1.1.12. Forms of Exchange and Other Income Generating Activities

As we have seen, the community's basic livelihood is tied to what nature provides and everything they use to fulfill their needs is limited and natural in feature. Wallmark's article plus the current limited trade relations tends to indicate the absence of trade during the earlier past. However, the establishment of social, economic and administrative relations with neighboring nation/nationalities over time enabled the Gumuz to use cotton and gold as a medium of exchange to buy implements of production and other items like salt.

Since there are limited numbers of markets in the area, most of the Gumuz have to visit markets in Oromia and Amhara Regions or have to create friendly relations with the Oromo traders called **Abba-Miču** or **d'ibenta** (bond friend ship). There are 28 markets in 5 woredas of the Zone currently. All are held weekly except the two in Beleo Jegonfoy and Sirba Abay that are held twice a week. Markets for livestock and its by-products have not yet developed. The Oromo traders come to the lowlands with some items like salt, clothes, coffee, bracelets, beads, tobacco, soap, etc. and exchange them for grains and cotton or sell it for paper money or coins. They are seen selling these items in my study sites and Kamaši town. Cotton, gold, ginger, gourds and sesame are the most important exchange crops greatly in demand among the highlanders. The Gumuz of the Diddessa Valley go as far as Nejo, Mendi, Gimbi, Dongoro, Bullen, Qilt'u Kara, Arjo, etc. to sell gold, cotton, sesame, etc. They also visit small markets in rural Oromia especially during the dry season. Gumuz females and males are seen in Kamaš and Arjo Gudatu markets selling grains, oil seeds, cotton, tobacco, gourds, banana, and animals like chickens and goats. Wooden beds, seats, shelves, baskets, floor mats, roofs, fences, and other items are usually sold by males while selling of charcoal, firewood, and local drinks (**keya** and **agaqe**) are the duties of females (see plates 17&22). Wooden products, produced by prisoners, are put up for sale on the field around the prison compound of **Kenteri**.

However, the Gumuz have not developed attitudes towards trading for profit. Town dwellers sell some items in small amount for profit. Other income generating items are almost agricultural and wood products as well as honey and gold. Clay and iron products also help to generate income for some households to some extent. Oromo, Amhara, Gurage, Tigre, Šinaša, Mao, Komo and Berta are other participants of Kamaši market though very few in number. The medium of exchange is Ethiopian birr and coins.

Nevertheless, intra-Gumuz trading is limited and mainly dictated by shortage and needs. Someone in need of something tells others, who offer it in exchange soon or later but here too money can sometimes be used as medium of exchange. Grains like sorghum and maize are largely exchanged in this form. Wallmark writes, "Trading among the Bega, as distinguished from trading in the multi-ethnic markets, is mainly a matter of shortage and needs. A person who needs something tells his neighbors; before long the " rumor" has spread around, and someone offers to sell the needed item" (1981:94). For measuring, a common village container made of gourd is used. Small trading activities mainly handled by females who often use the income to meet family's needs or to buy items like cloth for themselves. Culturally it is the duty of women to carry things to market but usually to be sold, especially if to "outsiders", by men lest their females may be cheated.

Trade relations with "outsiders" mostly conducted by males who walk long distance to sell items like gold. As "outside" traders have "host families", as observed in the study villages, that provide them with food, drinks and lodging, Gumuz students and traders may also be hosted by highlanders.

Nowadays Gumuz attitude towards profit and usage of money is changing. Previously profit-oriented barter or cash transactions were usually avoided within the community and exchange of goods was expected to take place in a spirit of generosity. In addition, money used to play marginal role in their subsistence economy and it was not needed for survival. There was no involvement of money in marriages. But now money's role is tending to take root in economic and socio-cultural activities though what existed before also survived especially in areas far away from centers and Oromia. Many indicators of change can be observed. The foundation of **Kenteri** as the Zone's center and the establishment of various offices in 1993 there created conditions for the expansion of trade. There were 53 different kinds of commercial activities (15 general merchandises, 10 restaurants, 3 snack rooms, 6 butchers, 4 tailors, 2 mead **(t`ej)** houses, 4 bars, 6 carpenters and 3 grain mills) in Zone's center alone, according to the Kamaši woreda finance office's report of 1999.

Most of them are service-rendering activities, followed by a small number of retail trade and small-scale industries. Currently rapid change is taking place in the field of commerce, especially in **woreda** centers. However, since there is no agricultural surplus and only limited artisan products in the area, both internal and external exchanges are at low level. Moreover, individuals are not aware of international and national prices and trade terms may take place at their disadvantage. Anyway, exchange of products formed part of community's strategy to meet their needs in the face of shortage.

3.1.2.Coping Strategies With Hot Weather and High Humidity

The climatic condition of the Diddessa Valley extends from warm to hot temperature. This area is very hot especially during the dry season (25°c to 40°c). In their struggle to cope with hot climate and humidity, the Gumuz adjust their work time, dressing styles and construction of residential houses accordingly. These are current realities observed in **Burqa Met`i** and **Mender Mesereta** villages.

Cultural adjustments to hot climatic conditions include establishments of settlements around a watercourse, construction of a house with open design and use of convenient clothing styles. Villages are mainly located just above a watercourse, which can provide comparatively cool weather and also reduce difficulty of transporting water. Dwelling houses are also constructed in such a way that they could allow fresh air or cool weather to get in during the daytime and warmth during the relatively chilly nights. Walls of houses are built up with bamboo in a circular manner and their roofs are thatched with grass. One thick pole is errected at the center to hold up the tip of the roof and many minor poles form the circular wall. Reinforcing beams are also stretched diagonally from the center of the roof to its edges and the strips of bamboo are woven horizontally into the wall. The walls of houses, which have no windows, keeps the sunlight out but not air. They are not daubed with an intension to allow fresh air to get in (see plate 12& 19). Almost every house has two doors_one from front and the other from backside- usually used by males and females, respectively. Census of

my study sites shows that almost all of the dwelling houses (31 out of 35) have one room with an averege of five persons, itself shared by domestic animals during the night in most cases. Bamboo mats divide those houses said to be with two rooms. Some households have small kitchens just outside but most of them use one house with one room for kitchen, sleeping, dining, and the like (see plates17, 19, 21,& 24).

Dressing styles are also simple and seem to be adjusted to the hot weather condition. This is said to be the reason for some not wearing clothes above their waist. Some of the people in the area don't use clothes or use them minimally. Most females and children, and also some males in the rural areas don't wear on upper parts of their bodies (see 4.7 and Plates 6, 7, 23, 24, &27).

Some daily tasks are also adjusted according to strength of sun's radiation. Fieldwork and construction of houses and stores are usually done either early or late in the day when the weather is less hot. They may also avoid heavy work and engage in minor activities under shadows of the trees or even shift their settlements to avoid high humidity and hot temperatures. Schools in the area, for instance, don't function in the afternoon.

Thus, settlements, house construction, dressing styles and work times are usually arranged and adjusted according to the suitability of hot and humid climates.

3.1.3. Organization of Production and Division of Labor

Within their own ecology and production system, the Gumuz adapted different mechanisms of organizing and mobilizing production and labor forces. Labor is reciprocated or pooled within domestic or kin group.

With an aim to tackle the problem of labor shortage the Gumuz of **Burqa Met'i**, and **Mender Mesereta** usually organize social work groups whose members are expected to obey and respect the rule of laboar cooperation. **Debo** and **dados** are the two systems of labor mobilization. **Dado** is the

system of reciprocating labor on the basis of drawing lot and rotation. It is less frequent; is formed by few members; and has strong rules and regulation with respect to work time, type of work, feast to be provided and persons to participate. Members are expected to fit the work, punctual and be able to provide expected feast, which doesn't go beyond porridge or **injera**, soup and coffee. Its main disadvantage is that every one has to wait for his turn and, in the meantime, time of sowing, weeding, harvesting, etc. may pass and expose crops to untimely cultivation or damage by weeds and pests. Thus, **dado** is not favored and infrequent among the community.

Debo, also called **yua** or **igiyu** in **Gumuz,** is more frequent, has many members and its feast mainly consists of goat or chicken's meat and **keya,** in addition to those mentioned for **dado**. In this case, unlike **dado,** males and females may work together in lines. They drink **keya** and eat porridge or roasted leaves in the field. Towards the end of the day, females go home and make food and beer ready for males coming from the field. Males come home towards the evening and eat, drink, chant and dance and go to their respective houses before the mid night. Next morning they go to the home where work feast was prepared as of the day before, drink coffee and the second round of **keya** and disperse for another household's work. The case of **Tefera** is described here.

Case 4: *One day able males responded to the call of Tefera Amara and helped him in clearing the forest to prepare a new plot for cultivation. On the evening of that day porridge,* ***keya*** *and* ***araqe*** *were provided to the participants. Other community members in the compound shared the feast. A big fire was lit just outside Tefera's house, around which all sat in a circle and ate, drank and played until mid-night was approaching. Then, all went home. Next morning all came back, drank coffee and second round of* ***keya*** *and left for another debo, after a moist on grass has gone away (see plate 20)*

Both systems of labor mobilization have their own respective acting leaders who are posted to arrange the working days for each member and control the beginning and ending times of work and absence of members. Every member is expected to come with tools on time. The work for each household may be conducted turn by turn but one with urgent work can ask for special arrangement in the case of **debo,** which may not be reciprocated immediately. Absence without reason ends up in dismissal from the membership or financial punishment but not in physical punishment. Group or

common labor is usually organized for large works that require much labor such as clearing the forest, planting or sowing and harvesting crops like cotton, sorghum, maize and millet. The plots of these crops are usually far away from residential units. Small works are done usually by an individual household. Adult and young boys may be organized into separate groups on rota basis. Women may also have their own **debo** is some agricultural works like weeding, harvesting maize and millet and preparing food and beer for big beasts. They may also help each other on the basis of intimacy. Sometimes they remain behind and prepare food and beer for work-parties or work on gardens around their houses.

The main aim of Gumuz's production is to satisfy the current needs or to contribute to the sustenance of the family. Surplus production is almost not a part of their economic activity. One cultivates not to save but for consumption by himself, dependents and other clan members. By norms and values of the society, every one is expected to help in the fields of those with whom he lives. Individual cultivation doesn't often happen since people from whom one expects most help in the collective works on the fields are kinsmen and that cultivating near one's kinsmen helps to protect crops against the ravages of birds and wild animals. In short, while public expectations impose some obligations on an individual through the network of conventional obligations or norms, the individual himself can rely on support from kinsmen and neighbors for the same reason. He expects this support with respect to illness, old age, times of trouble and field works. The individual behavior is judged in terms of conventional expectations of cooperation and sharing. Thus, free support for weaker members or during difficulties, mostly for half a day or before and after **debo** laboring, is a third component of labor mobilizing mechanisms.

Although there is no clear-out demarcation, conventional division of labor based on sex and age is observed in the Gumuz community. There are duties to be carried out dominantly by men, women or both. Preparing tools, clearing forest, hunting wild games, fishing, trading with non-

Gumuz in distant markets, collecting wild honey; constructing houses and stores and making beds, seats, bags, baskets, sleeping mats and rope are dominantly works of men and mature boys while preparation of food and beer for work-parties, cooking meals, fetching water and firewood, harvesting of millet and maize; transporting grains, firewood and charcoal, and building materials from fields to home and from home to market; gathering wild roots, fruits, leaves and mushrooms and taking care of children are mainly duties of womenfolk. Works like planting, weeding, harvesting, gold panning, threshing grains, carrying on petty trade, attending marriage, funeral and other feast ceremonies, and visiting houses of **musa** and traditional "healers" are usually common duties of both sexes. However, high workload on females is manifested by, besides agricultural activities, transportation of items from their respective area to home, farm fields or market (see plates 21 & 22); grinding of grains, spices and coffee (see plates 6&7); pounding of vegetables; gathering of wild food stuffs; preparing of food and beer for social occasions; taking care of children, washing clothes, etc. all that consume much of their time. Even sisters or mothers should help in preparing food and beer for work-party of a bachelor man. Divorced or widowed women can also cultivate some crops, often with the help of brothers or neighbors.

Boys often look after animals and help their fathers with some work. Girls too help their mothers in fetching water, firewood, carrying children and in other household chores. Wives, daughters and resident sisters cooperate in doing some works like preparation of food and beer for feasts. Likewise husbands, sons and resident brothers cooperate in some cases like construction of houses and stores. Moreover, men making economic implements and house furniture out of iron and wood and women produce house utensils out of clay and wood to generate income are seen in **Burqa Met`i** and **Mender Mesereta** settlements and likewise are activities mentioned above.

Nevertheless, division between works of males and females are not always rigid. Males are seen fetching firewood, carrying kids (see plate 23), washing clothes, preparing coffee, etc. and likewise

females are in watching animals and crops and in other agricultural activities. But one can't deny the existence of higher workload on females and the consequent result is that less girls attend the school. It is true that men do bulk of the actual cultivation and women house chores. While the tasks of men becomes hard with the beginning of rain in April/May and continues until the harvest of sorghum in December, women's work goes on at almost similar level through out the year. Women are always busy preparing food and beer for work parties during cultivation and harvesting seasons and for ritual and social occasions at all time but with intensity during the dry season. House chores are the same all through and don't give women spare time; even taking part of their sleeping time from a night.

3.2. Indigenous Knowlege

It is implicit in the preceding discussions that the Gumuz used their own knowledge in deciding and choosing means of their livelihood from available alternatives. In their efforts to adapt to the ecosystem these people switched their options between various economic activities in reaction to shortages and on the basis of what their ecology provides.

As observed in **Burqa Met`i** and **Mendar Mesereta** villages and pointed out by informants, indigenous knowledge and skills have been employed in preparing farmlands, shifting plots, choosing crops and livestock adaptable to the lowland resource, organizing production and reciprocating labor, producing implements, instruments, utensils, ornaments, ointments, clothes and condiments and construting dwellings out of local materials and in response to constraints and problems imposed upon them by their ecology. Indigenous means and techniques are utilized in processing natural resources and using them to satisfy their needs thereby adapting to a new ecology and habitat of the Diddessa Valley.

The techniques the Gumuz use to operate different types of scars on various parts of their bodies for the purpose of beauty and indication of identity, age and strength plus their making of ornaments and ointments out of local resources to beautify themselves and identify bethrothed girls, heroic men

and social statues show their knowledge of decoration. Production of ointments called **qoša**, **fala**, **gefqa** and **et`eqila** out of castor fruit, red oil, honey by-product and oil seeds is the case in the point (see 4.8). Another interesting issue is the making of traditional salts called **muba** (out of bamboo's stem), **yajisia** (out of tree's bark), **begzqua** (out of niger seed) and **betania** (out of millet) to flavor food and to be used as medicine (see 3.1.1.1.).

Therefore, the knowledge and skills employed in producing agricultural implements, hunting weapons, musical instruments, clothes and house utensils have facilitated community's adaptation to a new ecosystem of the Diddessa Valley.

To sum up, the Gumuz used numerous livelihood strategies including shifting agriculture, hunting-gathering economy, livestock production, gold panning and craftmanship, and employed various mechanisms to mitigate constraints of crop and livestock productions in the process of their ecological adaptation. Collective and festive labors are mechanisms of performing large works. The pattern of settlements, house construction, dressing styles and daily tasks are adjusted on the basis of available resources and according to the suitability of hot and humid climates. The available means, resource and economic implements dictate their options. By utilizing natural products and local materials the community maintained almost every aspect of its socio-economic life. Thus, these people combined indigenous knowledge and skills with adaptive and coping trategies and managed to confirm their survival and continuity. A socio-cultural adaptation, theme of the next chapter, also has substantial contribution.

Chapter Four: Socio-Cultural Practices

Like any other culture group, the Gumuz have their own distinguishing features that they produced in the process of their struggle to survive. Being almost in line with ideas of Barrett, Moran and others, Gumuz's cultural elements are both products and aspects of their adaptive or coping strategies employed in the face of challenging problems. Some of the socio-cultural practices such as language, beliefs, initiation of youths, marriage, funeral, delivery, clothing, decoration and food habits and taboos are treated here below.

4.1. Language

The Gumuz speak their own language with the same name, which falls into the Nilo-Saharan language family. Their knowlege of other languages has some strategic importance. There are at least ten ethnic groups in the Kamaši Zone; Gumuz, Oromo and Berta being the numerous ones in their order and the same order is true regarding language distribution.

The two main languages spoken in the area are Gumuz and Oromo languages; Gumuz being the main language of indigenous people. The indigenous people who live in towns like Kamaš, participate in trade relations and attend schools are observed communicating in Amharic. Gumuz and Oromo languages are used alternately in rural villages and the latter is mainly employed in communication between the two communities. The Gumuz's easy usage of both their own and Oromo languages is considered by James as central and important fact in the life of the people. She writes:

> *In Wollega [nowKamaš], all the male Gumuz speakers know a good dealof [**Afaan Oromo**] and most of the women and children also know a certain amount. This is partly because of direct contact with [Oromo], mainly through trading contacts both on the highlands and in the valley, and partly because the [**Oromo**] language is regularly used among the Gumuz themselves on certain social occasions [such as in addressing a newcomer, in complaints and in the condition of religions* services] (1977:16).

Problems like illness for example are described through interpreters who translate Gumuz into Oromo and Oromo into Gumuz language. This is reflected even in ordinary concerns and everyday relationship, as also observed in **Burqa Met`i,** and **Mender Mesereta** villages. While the

dry season is relatively suitable for more visitors to come and be addressed in Oromo language, swelling of rivers and over-growth of grass during the rainy season basically reduce the number of visitors thereby making Oromo language rarely useful in general conversation.

Hence, the Gumuz used their own language both as a communication strategy and "storage" of cultural traditions and the Oromo language as **lingua franca,** which served and still serving them in communicating with "outsiders."

4.2. Traditional Beliefs

People of the Valley follow different religions like the Orthodox, Protestant, Catholic, Islam and traditional beliefs. Although the number of traditional believers is decreasing in favor of modern religions, especially Protestantism, there are many traditional elements that survived as a part of Gumuz's cultural practices.

There are many traditional beliefs found in different parts of the area and they are all related with people's daily activities. The belief is that every activity of the community has to be blessed in the name of local gods or deities; otherwise hunting, cultivation, marriage and the like won't be successful. Beliefs are also used to control theft, lying; adultery, homicide acts and the first three are especially counted as shameful acts and condemned by the community. Elders and spiritual leaders play the role of settling disputes, forming families through marriage, holding funeral and other feasts and leading the traditional worshipping.

There are other elements of traditional beliefs related to socio-cultural practices of the Gumuz community. As explained by elders, traditional beliefs are conducted under the big tree called **cča**, around rivers, on mountains and main roads and stones and in the houses of spritual leaders. At all these places, selected by the latter in most cases, they worship not things but their lord called **musa.** A person entitled to be **musa** is found in every clan or sub-clan. He is worshipped, feared and

honored for his "knowledge" of medicine and people's destinies. Worshipping is conducted two to four times annually when calamities arise and in commemorating hunting ceremonies and new ripening crops. They pray for peace, good health and for blessing of gains, and against calamities. The Gumuz around the Diddessa River call their traditional deity **Rebba** (Wallmark, 1981), equivalent to the **musa** of others. Cerulli asserts that **Rebba** and **Musa** are respectively derived from Arabic **Rebbi** and **Moses** (1956: 113). A musical instrument called **yambeleya** is blown by males on ceremonial worshipping of **musa** around mountains, while **senqua** a violin-like musical instrument and **pina** are respectively beaten and blown by males to call **Ga yeha**, "spiritual leader of the community", to control diseases and natural calamities.

Musa miša or **mida** 'house spirit', **Ga yeha** 'spiritual father', **Demir sagua** and **qališa** 'sorcery' are among the individuals, who can be either men or women, given spiritual power and authority in the Gumuz's traditional beliefs. It is believed that **musa miša** has a power of blessing or cursing harvest, hunting, children, villagers etc., thus entitled to the sacrifices of poultry, sheep, etc. and to the feasts of food and drinks as well as to the first fruits of ripening grains to be presented at worshipping places if blessing and protection is needed. Worshipping **musa mida** is conducted in the house of the eldest man who alone is allowed to enter that house. It is in the honor of house spirit that women should stay outside the main house during menstruation and delivery and follow some food taboos and restrictions.

Ga heya is believed to be the "spiritual father", and head of traditional worshipping ceremonies, thus has a power of knowing evil spirits that would bring calamities and diseases on people and the ability of protecting the society against them. It is believed that **Ga yeha** use traditional medicines to cure sick people. Thus, it is taken as the " real spiritual father" (see case5). **Dimir sagua** is another one believed to have a power of "reading" goat's abdominal fat to forecasting the future destiny of each individual as well as all villagers and predict when peace, war, hunger or

good harvest would come for or against them. **Qaliča** 'sorcery' is believed to be borrowed from neighboring Oromo because of more than a century interaction between both communities since the 1880's. Thus, **Qaliča**, also known as **t'ut'a** in Oromo, as a part of Gumuz worshipping ceremonies, is conducted in Oromo language. Babo Bila, one of my informants, described the case of **t'ut'a**, literally "sucker", and here below.

Case 5: *When a person is sick a man known as **t'ut'a** "sucks" and cures him/her. He starts curing by whistling and bringing water with gourd called **imbeda** in Gumuz. Then, he puts a little stone in it; takes it out and throws it to the sky and catches it again. He puts it again in the water. Consequently, he touches water and then body of the sick person with his hands and takes out parasites like askaris. The sick person gets cure soon. **T'ut'a** is advised and ordered by another **ogessa** (the Oromo word to mean wise) called **gaheya**, leader of the ceremony. Currently this is dying out due to the influence of new religion*

Currently people living close to health units and towns prefer to visit health centers while a majority of the rural population still depends on the traditional healers. See the case below.

Case 6: *In **Mender Mesereta,** I observed while a traditional healer, a **ga heya** called **Duguma Dursa**, was treating a young Gumuz called Belina Woltegi who has swelling on his leg. Lying on the mat put on the ground he was caught by many men and pierced on his swollen leg by a **ga heya** who used a hot iron to do so. Mixture of pus and blood came out of his swollen leg. While crying, that young used Oromo words. Responding to my question one old man said, "this is the outcome of **musa's** anger, which attacks people especially during the harvest. It also attacks females disobeying their parents and husbands and also hurts those who work in the field during mornings, evenings and midday. To agree with people **musa miša** needs sacrifices of animals and food and beer to be put under the central pillar or spat in the house. Otherwise it creates health problems on the family members."*

Some individuals are also believed to have "unique" knowledge, like having ability of making rain or stoping it. They are called " fathers of rain." The medicine they use is believed not to work outside the hands of clan members. A person with a power of making rain is called **wušašima**. An instrument made of wood and called **ekulitiya** is blown by males when sacrifices are made to him. It is also said that community members use many leaves and roots, especially of rodents, to be successful in killing wild animals or enemies.

On the other hand, when a person is sick or any other problems occur, people go to the nearby river, kill hen or goat and ask **musa** for forgiveness in a belief that a sick person would be cured or any other problem would be solved. In some areas people slaughter an animal and spray its blood on graves in looking for cures for sick persons and solutions to other problems. If a person is ill and his disease is unknown, someone who comes to the sick person in a dream while he is asleep is considered to be "evil".

Believing that he is the one who " has eaten" him, the sick person follows his footprints to get his saliva. If he finds it, he rubs or massage his body with the saliva, because it is believed that "saliva of an evil cures". Sometimes a person considered to be evil is directly asked to "spit his saliva" on a sick person. Admitting or not admitting to this request may lead to conflicts. A person believed to be "wise" may also tell a sick person, "so and so is the one who ate you" and others may use his/her statement to tell the concerned person to spit his saliva on the sick person. If he volunteers to do so but his spitting doesn't cure the sick person, he can accuse him/her on elders of spoiling his name and gets compensation in animal or cash. The conflict coming out of these conditions may lead to homicide. Specially if one is said to be an evil and confirmed by **ga heya**, he may be whipped, killed or buried alive but elders say that it is not functioning today.

It is also the community's belief that if any female tastes food before a male she would get sick and die. Thus, whenever they prepare food, if there is no male at home, one from a neighbor is invited to taste it. Culturally females in some areas are not allowed to eat meat of animals slaughtered by their husband's clan; others don't eat meat from the animal's head, chest and part of its guts in other areas; and and still others don't consume egg and chicken's meat in most areas, in a belief that they will get sick or not bear children if they do so. In some areas they don't eat meat of hunted animals because it is believed that hunting weapons and the hunter will never kill game again. Females are also not allowed to eat food prepared in utensils belonging to their mothers -in-law, and are forbidden from shaking them or passing on the way at their back sides.

Another element of traditional belief is that the corpse should be buried near the dwelling house lest burying at far distance would increase the possibility of being "eaten" by evil and/or in a belief that a beloved person shouldn't be buried at a distant place. Ancestor worshipping supports the jural authority of elders and it is a means for the establishment of adult status. (See 4.3 to 4.9 for the details of traditional beliefs related with menstruation, circumcision, marriage, delivery, funeral,

decoration, and food taboos). Nevertheless, these and other cultural elements and traditional beliefs in the Valley are either disappearing or becoming reduced due to the introduction of "modern" religions and education (see Chapter 7).

4.3. Menstruation and Circumcision

As pointed out in 4.2 just above, females are expected to maintain some taboos in most areas inhabited by the Gumuz. One of these is segregation during the onset of menstruation. It is believed that if a female with menstruation stays in the main house **musa miša,** 'house spirit', would "kill" her and also spoil all furniture, hunting weapons and medicines in that house.

Particularly, if it is the first onset of the menstruation, a female has to stay in a separate hut. As soon as she sees it, the girl tells her parents and leaves for that hut. She is oriented about it by mothers prior to its occurrence. There are some rules to be maintained by her. Her body is covered with new cotton clothes. She is not allowed to go out of the hut during the day (currently possible) and to talk to any body but must use signs in asking for necessities. However, she can play with her closest relative who has already celebrated her first "period". On the first night of its appearance, peer groups congratulate her and start to come frequently during every night to dance and sing around the fire lit just at outdoor of her hut. Only circumcised boys, and girls who have celebrated their first menstruation can participate in the dance. She greets them by gesture or signs but doesn't take part in the play. It continues until a ceremony called "mouth releasing" is celebrated.

The preparation of the feast depends on the economic status of her family. It determines time of celebration and quality of its feast. If her parents are wealthy; a fast celebration may allow a girl to enter the main house within a month; otherwise she has to wait for two months or so.

Early in the morning of the celebration day, a close female relative takes her to the river where she washes her body, shaves her hair and paints her body with local oitments, **gefqa** or

et'eqila. Girls of above 13 years old accompany her by dancing and singing on the way back from river to her compound. Soon after her arrival, her father slaughters a goat or sheep after which she rushes into the main house. Then, elders spit water on her body from their mouths and she herself takes water into her mouth and spits it to the ground. **Keya** is also used for this purpose. With this her mouth or tongue is "released" and she starts to talk. Previously a bullet was fired as a sign of congratulation but now this has ceased due to dispossession of guns. All people in the vicinity and guests express their wishes of a good husband for her later career. The first onset of menstruation is a sign of maturity, of transference from childhood to adolescence, for a girl, after which she can have a boy friend or be ready to be asked for marriage.

During the consecutive monthly menstruation periods, females should stay in a separate hut from 3-6 days, depending on the disappearance of the "blood". Before leaving for that hut, if there is no other mature female in that household, a woman is responsible for preparing food to be consumed by other members of the family during her stay in the hut and relative or neighbor females should help in carrying out house chores. Covering with clothes continues during the later periods also but has now ceased in some areas.

The females on menstruation are considered "impure", thus don't touch or use house furniture until they are "cleared" from it. Goods to be used by her during the "period" are insignificant and thrown away after she is "cleaned". They are not allowed to open or close doors of the main house, use stools, shake males's hands, sleep on beds, wash hands or body in the house, grind grains, prepare food and **keya**, milk cows if any, go through the garden, etc. In addition, if she brings water from a river, she has to put it just outside the door and others take it in. If the blood is seen inside the house or on any furniture, the house is considered to be "highly spoiled" and sacrifice of chicken or goat is made to "clean" it through asking **musa** for forgiveness. The case of Beqelech is described here.

Case 7: *While enlisting family members of Ato Tefera Gojam in* ***Mender Mesereta*** *village, I discovered that one female was missing from the coffee ceremony. I asked her mother who said that Beqelech was in a separate hut due to the onset of minstruation. I called her. She came to the point of outdoorbut didn't dare to enter. She moved to the backside of the house and took a cup of coffee from Shakene, an Oromo girl broughstup in the family, through the hole of the wall. Beqelech was married but separated two years ago due to a disagreement with another wife of her husband.*

Elders argue that, since there is high workload on females, the menstruation period is a good opportunity for females to take rest. However, when it is generally considered, the event tends to count females biological feature as "dirty", and segregates and puts them under psychological tension. Minor differences may exist in the ceremonial process of different areas but what is said above is the most occurring process. Some elements like covering with clothes, not going out during the daytime, etc. is already given up and talking to small children has also started.

The initiation ceremony of boys is related to circumcision that is usually practiced at the same time among boys of a village from about 7-10 years old. Circumcision is strictly forbidden and condemned among the females of the Gumuz community. Digging of garbage pits, building a hut of confinement and selection of a person to cover their eyes are preconditions for circumcision of boys. After circumcision, things touched by that blood are buried in the already prepared pit and boys stay in that hut until they are cured. All boys of the village born within a gap of about three years are circumcised on the same day. Every boy of that gap will take a stick lit with fire and put it under the house pillar of a traditional circumciser who can easily judge a number of boys by counting the sticks. He informs the chiefs or elders who mobilize villagers to build a hut for boys to be circumcised. Then, the circumcision day is decided. The position of circumciser is not inherited.

Early in the morning on the circumcision day, the foreskin of each boy's penis is marked by ash and circumcised turn by turn. Then, items touched by the blood are buried in that pit. Likewise is the foreskin lest an enemy, who could afflict him with genital diseases, as it is believed, takes it.

Circumcised boys are confined in a hut called **arakuba** until their wounds are cured. Frequent washing is made along with plants considered to be medicines in order to promote healing.

Traditionally they are not supposed to be seen except by small children because it is believed that their wounds won't be cured if seen by mature persons. They don't utter their own names and respond to a call and referred to as **šampa.** It is believed that any action against these rules would expose them to trouble, incurability, defective sexual inter-course and other genital diseases. Thus, they are provided with food and drinks by small children; otherwise old women take food and put it around the outdoor of their hut and boys take and eat it in hidden way. If one of them is seen while urinating or taking the food from his outdoor, he rushes into the hut or bush saying "**šampa!**" "**šampa!**" "**šampa**!" with a connotation of telling that he is a circumcised boy. Sometimes there is an individual circumcision, mainly when peer groups are not found.

After their wounds are cured, the boys wash their bodies, shave their hair, wear new clothes if any and run in the village spitting water. Community members shake their hands declaring that they are henceforth mature and wise. Then, they return to their hut. **Keya** is prepared in advance and chicken, goat or sheep is killed for meat. All people and guests in the vicinity are invited to the feast except the uncircumcised boys. Soon after every one is served, a dancing ceremony is opened by the circumcised boys and attended by all persons. Then, blessing by elders brings the ceremony to an end. Finally, boys return to their parents' houses. Each boy has to offer a gift in cash or kind to the circumciser; otherwise, it is believed, the wound may revive.

Henceforth, the circumcised boys could attend ceremonies, armed with guns (not now), hunt with spears and guns (unlike before when they used bows and arrows only) and are entitled to marriage. Here also it is seen as a transition from childhood to adolescence, tending to be independent of parents and their readiness for various responsibilities. Previously, when hunting was fully functioning, they managed to buy guns, hunt together, help each other in working and reconcile each other if quarreled. Boys who get circumcision at the same time are still considered to be intimate friends. Nevertheless, common circumcision is tending to change in favor of individual

circumcision. Thus, initiation ceremonies are the indicators of transition of girls and boys from childhood to adolescent hood and their readiness for marriage.

4.4. Marriage Systems

Gumuz society is polygamous and endogamous. Prestige and authority is mainly maintained through father, which is a feature of patrilineal and patrilocal family. Thus, marriage is conducted between patrilineal clans and a girl should leave for her husband's residence, that is, viri-local or patrilocal residence. The Gumuz within the Diddessa Valley have various marriage systems such as marriage by exchange, kidnapping, elopement, levitate, and bridewealth.

Though currently changing, exchange marriage, **mandiqo daguna**, occupies a dominant position among the Gumuz people of this area. It establishes a double marriage bond and is sealed neither by bridewealth nor dowry but by exchanging of sister or other close relative female. Its main feature is that there is a balance between marrying parties. Its pursuit involves concepts of justice and honor and tends to ensure the continuous circulation of sisters, daughters, cousins and other female relatives. Like any type of marriage alliance it involves not only a series of interminable obligations on the part of in-laws but also a choice between those with whom one allied and with whom ties are ignored or severed. The custom was the most preferred method of obtaining wife and proved durable and internally coherent until the last five or four years (see chapter 7).

Its historical prologue (origin) is unknown but James Bruce reports in 1770s that Agew and Gumuz communities exchanged their females to maintain their trade relations. James' quotation of Bruce indicates these relations. "The way this trade, though very much limited, is established, is by two nations sending their children mutually to each other; there is then peace between these two families which have such hostages; these children often intermarry; after which that family is understood to be protected, and at peace, perhaps for a generation"...(1986:119). She goes on saying

that " we know from Salt that exchange marriage flourished among them in the late 18th century in central Gojjam" (**Ibid**, 121) and elders of my study sites argue that their ancestors brought it with them from Wambera to the Diddessa Valley.

Elders or fathers who have considerable authority over both sides of the youths normally arrange the exchange, which involves four individuals at a time. However, the initiative is usually taken by one of the two males who have to secure a relative for exchange, choose one he wants to marry and notifies the elders the girl he desires. Boys choose girls for marriage either at market, funeral, wedding or initiation ceremonies. Girls have no right to choose. There are even cases when a girl is forced to abandon her lover and comply with the interest of her brother. Brothers, fathers, paternal uncles or cousins can exchange sisters, daughters or female relatives. This indicates that different generations on both sides would be involved in the exchange marriage. Any Gumuz, both on the bride or groom's side, is caught in the network of debts within the groups. Borrowing or lending a girl is usually operated within the group from which one doesn't marry. In its operation the debt incurred in the transfer of a girl in marriage would be re-paid in transfer of her daughter in the next generation. Female's father and brother have virtual authority over her. The number of wives a man can have is determined by the number of sisters and brothers he has. He can also inherit wives of his brothers in case they die.

After arrangements for exchange are completed, preparations for weddings go on at the same time and ceremonies are conducted in villages of both families on the same day. These marriages take place mainly during the dry season, lest they affect the cultivation time. The whole procedure and involving events could be vivid from the following narration.

Having information through ceremonial or public occasions that a girl is not from a **gečenga**, 'evil eye', but from a hard-working family, a man who wants to marry sends a messenger with a white sorghum and a thread tied on his hands. The mission of such messenger is traditionally known. If her

parents receive these items from him, which shows their willingness, he returns with an appointment and tells a male that her parents are willing to give her.

Accompanied by three or so friends, a man goes to her parents' house and checks signs of hoeing, grinding grains and splitting wood on her hands and also the whole of her naked body so that there should be no handicap and serious wound on it. This check-up is conducted by putting her on her mother's bed. Theoretically it is also her right to see male's body but she doesn't usually dare to do so since females are culturally reduced to inferior position in that society. Then, he comes back and informs his father about the girl he has chosen for marriage. His father selects elders and goes to the girl's house. The same process is followed in the selection and check-up of a girl to be exchange for the first one. However, before the final agreement is made on the exchange of the two girls, elders should examine dreams they dreamed on the eve of their departure for girl's parent's house and things they faced on their way. Dreams and omens they faced are considered either as "bad" or "good", thus inducing them to decide either to quit or continue the negotiations.

Omens, dreams or symbols entitled to discredit the marriage include the following ones. Dreams like shooting of bullets and being burned by fire are considered to be signs of deaths. If, when they wake-up in the morning, they get off fire's flame covered by ash in the evening and if, on their way to girl's house, they face some one carrying hoe (related with grave digging) or meat, or if it rains it is believed that either one or a couple will die. A man washing his bare body in the river is symbolized as a sign of getting poor while hearing of sounds of baboon and duiker or being crossed by them are seen as symbols of problems or evil things because baboon is seen as thief, cruel and cheater whereas duiker as the "horse of sorceress." Founding a closed door, when they reach girl's home, is another omen considered to be bad, because an empty house or closed door is taken as a sign of disagreement or less probability of reproduction.

On the other hand, dreams like being taken by river or caught by a mud are considered to be the symbols of being healthful or wealthy. Seeing monkeys on the way is related with bearing of many children; seeing a man with an ax and knife, especially since the former one represents power and authority in ancient societies, is a sign that their union will be strong; and if the house she belong to is found open and she herself is found on menstruation period or cleaning the compound, it is taken as a union leading to reproduction without any problem. People coming-bye them in even numbers and mourning ceremony are other events considered good things, because they are translated as signs of joy, love and successful career. After an examination of dreams and omens, if things are taken as good an appointment for betrothal pushes the negotiation forward.

Traditionally some ornaments are used to introduce a betrothed girl to the community so that another person for marriage won't ask her. Traditional cosmetics are used to distinguishing a behtrothed girl and beautifying and softening her body. In general in preparation for marriage a girl operates scars on her arms, legs and jaws, and ties ornaments to hands or hangs them on nose, ears and neck. An appoinment on wedding day is followed by preparation of **keya**, **araqe**, food and different kinds of soups. On the wedding day, each groom followed by almost an equal number of people from opposite directions meet on the way and decide where and when to meet on their way back. The guests are received by elders in the evening and entertained by villagers. Dancing with girls, even kissing them on their mothers' beds, but not in the bush, follows this entertainment. However, it is shameful and punishable to touch married females. All guests disperse to pass that night in the village except the groom, a man acting as father and the two best men (**mizes** in Amaric), who are given a sleeping place inside the house or just outside it.

Next day, just prior to their departure, households in the vicinity invite her to a farewell preparation, **čebiya** is tied on her arms and painted with **et`eqila** and finally elder women take her to a separate house, ask whether she is virgin or not, and advise her on how to treat her husband, respect

social values and norms and on how to handle problems she may face in her career. Then, the bride, groom and her best man are taken into the house and sit, respectively, in the middle, on the right and left sides. Bride's parents give **keya** to them to taste and bless them one by one. Bride's father holds her hands up to touch house pillar, which is called **mičelma nemučina.** After they go out, the groom walks quickly until he reaches the place they decided to meet.

Her uncle and other relatives accompany the bride until they reach a place of exchange. She seizes her paternal aunt and goes some distance for which **mize** should pay two birr, termed as "for carrying the bride" called **beneqo dongua**; otherwise her relatives won't leave her free. Every river, if any, is crossed holding her. Two men and two women from her clan follow her from behind at some distance. Accompanied by songs and dancing, they finally reach a place, mostly around a river, where the exchange is to be completed. The other bridegroom also follows similar process to reach the destination. Elders will fine, usually two birr, the group that is not punctual.

The ceremony of exchange is completed usually around the river. Uncles acting as fathers, one from each group, stand in the river. Companions of both sides cross the river forwarding their village. Brought together by their respective **mizes,** the brides shake hands of one another and acting fathers catch hands of their respective relative female and hand them over to their respective **mizes** saying "tell me her fault, laziness or any wrong doing secretly if any, don't tell it to any one." Then, **mizes** hold their respective bride and rush to cross the river. This completes the exchange after which they take ways to their respective homes. The groom again walks quickly to go and prepare things for his companions. Reaching their destination all are provided with **keya** and porridge. Culturally she takes food with her since she fears to eat that of her in-laws.

The bride is taken to the bed of her mother-in-law where she passes that night The groom's father gives one goat each to elders and groom's companions who feast throughout the night. Next morning girls take the bride to a river, wash her body and paint it with **gefqa** and **et'eqila** of mother-

in-law and bring her into the **kogua** 'nuptual house' where the groom is waiting. Soon after sexual inter-course the bride brings a bloodstained white cloth to an old lady who moves around and blesses her saying "be productive, peaceful...in your career". A bridegroom buys tobacco, which is cut into pieces and given to dancing females by **mize**. This ceremony of blessing is called **mombočemenga**. The haves may contribute one or so birr to be given to her. She has to stay in **kogua** hidden from in-laws for a few days until she prepares ceremony of **keida**, during which she covers her body, walks slowly and talks with little sound only to her husband and children.

Some days later the **mize**, after washing and painting her body, takes the bride to the house of groom's parents. She kneels down on the straw mat put in front of the gate where the **minze** rubs her hands with sorghum, smoke-touched grass from the roof of the hut and water in a belief that **musa miša**, 'house spirit' won't endanger her. Then she enters the main house. This ceremony of introducing her to in-laws is called **makorčima**, that is, to be seen by the others.

After the bride enters the house of parents-in-law, the **mize** holds her hands and makes her grind the grain. This is called **met'ohelma ni giša**, that is the sign of starting work. Then, he puts a dish on fire, holds her hands and makes her stir in it in a pretext of preparing porridge. Consequently he stretches her hands up to the rack, then into the big pot of **keya** and finally puts her on the bed of her mother-in-law. This process inaugurates her starting of work. Girls give her porridge a coffee ceremony follows. Then, the bride, husband and **mize** begin collecting one **qent'o** (half gourd) sorghum from each household in the village starting from her parents-in-law. At this spot she has to kneel down and greet every household member. The collected sorghum is used to prepare the ceremonies of **keida** (for youths) and **kemisera** for parents.

Keida is prepared for the youths and peer group of her husband and celebrated just a week after the wedding day. She doesn't prepare and eat herself until she celebrates **keida** but eats the food from the main house. All youths, mainly relatives of her husband, are invited. The bride washes

hands of the siblings of her husband, but not of the siblings of her father-in-law, and invites the youths to eat porridge and drink **keya**. The bride, groom and the **mize** are also entertained after the youths go away. She begins to prepare food and hold household chores after this ceremony.

The second ceremony, called **Kemisera,** is prepared for siblings of parents-in-law, to be held just a week after **keida**. Early in the morning of **kemisera** day, father-in-law slaughters a goat, prepares one called **mediča** from its skin and puts it on her body, after which elders are invited to **kemisera** by the **mize**. Half of a goat's meat is cooked with **wupa,** a type of haricot-bean. She holds a hand-washing ceremony as she did to children. The process of tasting, eating and drinking food and **keya** is also carried on in a similar manner as it was done to youths. The bride, her husband and the **mize** eat and drink after elders are entertained.

Next day people in the vicinity are invited to **ayiza**, a second round of **keya**. Finally, her mother-in-law boils sorghum or maize, roasts any grain, prepares porridge and the eldest man makes the bride taste from each food item. Then, elders through spitting keya on their hands, after which the bride will be considered "self-reliant", bless the couple. She joins fieldwork after this occasion and forms an independent household after sometime.

This is a general process of exchange marriage but minor differences may occur in the processes of selection, betrothal, wedding and introduction ceremonies of the bride. A female found to be not a virgin attains less honor and value. Virginity is valued very much in the community. A virgin girl is honored far more than one that is not.

If she is found to be virgin a congratulation message is sent to her parents. This event marks consummation of the marriage. The bride's parents feel happy at their girl's being found virgin. On the other hand, not being found to be virgin is a great shame for the bride's parents and relatives. If she is not a virgin girl the situation brought to light by **mize,** and five women of her husband's clan take her back to her parents who tie, whip and force her to expose a male responsible for that event.

Elders say that girls of this type suffer from the punishment, which would be severe if she does not tell the truth. In the case she was forced to commit it, the punishment on the male would be more severe and in case it was done on the basis of her "pushing" she herself suffers from severe whipping punishment but this hard punishment is currently given up. If the right man is discovered, he may be hunted and killed by her parents or clan members. However, if elders intervene the problem is settled by his paying of compensation consisting of a cow, goats and money. He gives one goat to those five women, two goats and some money to her parents and four goats and one cattle to the elders. All animals are to be killed and eaten by clan members. However, though not honored as such the bride is kept as a wife and this may push her husband to marry another wife.

Other types of marriage unions may also occur. A young man with no sister or relative female may be forced to pay bridewealth (**meñarqua gafa**), kidnap or elope a girl. Though very rare, a man may collect cattle and goats from his relatives and pay them to bride's family. The amount of bidewealth may differ depending on the locality and agreement of both sides. But it could generally be up to 10 cattle, 6 goats, 10 bars of salt, one gun, one spear and one cloth. Since he paid for her the husband has a "right" to beat and hurt his wife. Moreover, if she gets sick soon after marriage, parents should take, treat and bring her to him after she is cured. If she dies or disappears suddenly, her parents have to re-pay the bridewealth. For this reason, that is, expecting that it would be paid one day, her parents should take care of wealth gained through marriage until she bears children. No question of repayment if she bears children before escaping or death. Some Gumuz say that they don't oppose replacement of exchange marriage by bridewealth marriage if repayment is not requested and also if it is not considered as selling of females.

Kidnapping and elopement, **mesaqua daguna**, are other types of marriage though both are outside the framework of the exchange contract proper. They occur mainly due to a refusal of girl's parents or lack of a relative girl for exchange. Sometimes both sexes may love one another and get

married by elopement outside the rule and knowledge of their parents. The Gumuz males call it "stealing", "I have stolen her" is the way they respond. This type of marriage is becoming more common since the last four or five years. Another one is kidnapping of a girl by force. Since both elopement and kidnapping are outside the interest and knowledge of parents they may precipitate armed conflicts between clans or families of both sides, but the matter may be settled either by releasing the girl or providing a substituting girl sooner or latter, depending on the availability of female relative or a future daughter of the union. To avert a conflict the groom's group should send elders quickly to the bride's group. The kidnapper has to pay compensation in animals for the lives destroyed in the conflict if any and for things like dough, **araqe**, **keya** etc. she was doing but left incomplete because of kidnapping. Parents may agree to repayment in future at a daughter of the union if they like the man and want the marriage to be consummated. Sometimes a little girl from husband's clan, if there is no mature girl, may be given for exchange on condition that she would be brought up as an adopted female with her parents and taken later on. Thus, both kidnapping and elopement invite not only conflicts but also early marriage.

If a father with a little daughter, or brother with a little sister wants to marry, he can marry by promising to give her when she grows up. But this type of marriage is not practiced widely. Another type of marriage is when a female is given in compensation for death in hostilities. The brother of the slain may marry her without exchange if she is from another clan or use her for exchange if she is from within his clan. Sometimes, if both families want friendship of each other, a small girl is given and brought up with a boy and married later on.

Another type of marriage is levirate marriage, **mekola gafa,** in which mainly a younger brother marries a wife of an elder brother in case the latter dies but also by elder brother in some areas. The inheritance is implemented a year or two years after his death, that is, after a feast finalizes funeral ceremony. Sometimes, when a deceased man has many brothers, the one to inherit his wife is

decided by elders. If he doesn't have a brother, one of his relatives, especially sons of uncle, may marry her. If a deceased man has more than one wife, other younger brothers or sons of an uncle can inherit the rest. A bachelor or husband can inherit a widowed woman. If she is not willing to marry his brother or relative, her substitute woman may be brought back and she may be allowed to go to her parents. The main reason for the practice of levirate marriage, according to elders, is to take care of or protect his children and wealth against falling into the hands of non-relatives who may degrade and mistreat them. Even if the widowed woman has no children but the one exchanged has offspring, a man entitled to inheritance can request and get a substitute girl. Death and being barren are the main reasons for requesting a substitute girl.

There is also a case when a young man inherits another wife of his father. This is mostly practiced, according to **Č'ali Gomoro**, by those who are called **dina**, not by those who are called "Oromo". According to him, **dina** and Oromo are the recent and earlier settlers respectively; the former not obeying the taboo between father and son's generations but the latter behaving like the Oromo people, thus termed "Oromo." Hence, according to him, it is the one from **dina** group that inherits the stepmother. But a ceremony called **milmoka** has to be conducted. First a chick's head is cut off by hand and passed between legs and under arms of the widowed woman with a right hand towards the west. This is carried out in a belief that **milmoka** cancels the taboo between her and her stepson. But nowadays this practice is dying out. Theoretically, a widowed woman can leave children and wealth to the lineage of her ex-husband and go away but, since it is traditionally believed that such a woman would die, her only alternative is to accept the inheritance.

Nevertheless, kidnapping, elopement, early (adopted), levirate and bridewealth marriages are either consequences of one another or exchange marriage. The main connecting factor is lack of relative female for exchange and also keeping of widowed woman as a substitute of the one already exchanged in case of levirate. Early or adopted marriage, **meñarqua dida,** may result from marriage

by kidnapping or elopement. Thus, each marriage system can't be treated as independent of the other. Polygamy itself is related to exchange marriage in a sense that if one has "extra" sisters or daughters than a number of males in the family he can marry many females by exchange.

Exchange marriage is considered to be a powerful force in preventing divorce, especially at the absence of special sanctions binding families. For one thing, a girl to be selected for marriage should be obedient, innocent, and honest and has to be able to carry a high workload. This careful selection of a girl may contribute to the marriage stability. However, adultery, disobedience to mother-in-law, laziness in work, and being barren may lead to divorce but these handicaps are traditionally not considered on the side of the male. A male may be an adulterer, barren and lazy but these issues are almost not counted as his defects. In case divorce occurs the woman's substitute will be brought back if she has not bore children. For another thing, the presence of one's sister in another village induces moral consideration for that family, as James also agrees.

Exchange marriage could be seen as both a system and technique in converging the dispersed society of the Gumuz and reshaping them in the Diddessa Valley. Groups of people who came from Gojjam to Diddessa at different times are tied mainly through marriage unions. There is a high marriage stability due to a sanction against ill-treatment of a wife by presence of the husband's own sister in the other village and negative consequence of one's measure on the other. Thus, moral consideration of one's sister by in-laws contributes to the stability of families. The husband may not ill-treat or divorce his wife for moral considerations of its consequence on his sister's family, or even he may, if his sister deserts her husband, push her to return in order to save his marriage. It is true that one divorce precipitates the other but it does only if it happens. Thus, good will of a couple and of the affines, and legal and moral norms of a society are contributing factors behind the stabilization of marriage.

Death and being barren of " a wife ", since men are believed not to be barren, are the main causes of divorce. In both cases, a new girl has to be substituted; otherwise the sister of a husband is to be returned. If the problem of death, barren, etc. continues other replacements could be found. James writes, "Exchange marriage is a long-standing contractual relationship which should last a full generation and is fulfilled by the plentiful birth and survival of children on either side. Many adjustments may be made during the life of such a contract " (1986: 133).

Therefore, exchange marriage could be seen as one of strategies used by the Gumuz to create their society in the Diddessa Valley. It has not only defended the society against the influence of highland economy which would come through the operation of bridewealth but also reduced circulation of socio-economic systems between highland people and themselves and enabled them to resist highland penetration. James writes, "...within it [the south bank of the Blue Nile] the immigrant Gumuz have created, partly through the repeated making of exchange marriages among themselves, a distinctive society marked off by defensive political hostility, endogamy, and various barriers to economic penetration by the Oromo highlanders..." (1986: 120). Underlining James' argument, Jedrej writes, "... The Gumuz marriage institution of sister exchange not only serves to distinguish Gumuz culturally from Oromo, but in practice prevents the establishment of affinal relationships between Gumuz descent groups and Oromo " (1995:6).

The network of exchange marriages between settlers of different places and duration or between various immigrant groups has contributed to the reconstitution of the Gumuz society. Small settler groups are amalgamated into major section through continuous and repeated exchange marriages. The coming together of these various groups has contributed to their own security and survival. If some conditions are fulfilled a pledge on an exchange contract will become an integrating bond. In James' words, "In the ideally balanced contractual relationship, if all goes well on both sides, if the husbands cultivate and support their wives handsomely, if the wives work hard and bear

healthy children, the initial pledge can become a strong and integrating bond-a divinely- sanctioned bond, the Gumuz say, of peace and love" (1986:133). It was in this way that marriage bonds contributed to the reshaping of the Gumuz society in the Diddessa Valley, now kamaši Zone. However, exchange marriage is losing ground currently due to acculturation, the need of elite groups for change and imposition from local government bodies. The most prevailing one, especially since the last four years is elopement (see chapter 7).

4.5. Delivery Customs

Like while they are on the menstruation period, the Gumuz women are segregated during delivery. A pregnant woman should leave for the surrounding forest or bush when her delivery time is ready and give birth alone outside the house. Traditionally, a female has to bear or go through any problem related with delivery. It is only after she gives birth, removes placenta and washes the baby that other women hear baby's voice and take her to the hut built for this purpose. According to elder males and females, the main reason for giving birth outside the home is to be obedient to **musa miša** who does not like "filthy" women. Thus, he exposes them and their babies to sickness and even death if they stay in home while on menstruation and delivery.

Some changes, though insignificant, are taking place with respect to delivery. Previously women used to leave home for the forest or bush some time, say a month, before the day of delivery and stay there for some days after delivery. At some unknown time they have begun to leave home when they feel a symptom of delivery and also have started to enter a hut soon after a delivery. Recently females in some areas have begun to enter the main house soon after delivery but some of them still have to stay in a hut for some time. The women of **Burqa Met'i** and **Mender Mesereta** villages leave home when they feel symptom of delivery and enter into the main house soon after delivery. The woman continues her usual works until the delivery day. There is no medical treatment

for delivery. Two cases, one each from both villages, **Buzune Jireña** and **Telile Dibisa**, respectively, are presented below.

Case 8. *Buzune was grinding maize on the eve of her delivery. I expected that her deliverywas not yet ready, simply from the fact she was carrying out difficult work (see plate 7). But when I went there next morning she was on the bed and she responded to my question that she gave birth to a female baby. She said, " I felt the symptom of birth in the evening. Then I had to go out in the bamboo bush repeatedly, because I didn't know the exact symptom or time since it was my first time. I feared also* ***musa miša****, because my parents cursed me to death since I married by elopement out of their knowledge and still have not settled the problem. This was my tension. Finally I gave birth to a female baby at 5 o'clock in the night. The placenta was detached off the baby by my mother in-law but I should do it myself after the first birth. It is myself who washed the baby. I should stay on the bed for three days only and start working on household chores.*

Case 9.*Telile was the fist woman in the village to invite me to a coffee ceremony. It was her house that I first entered. She gave birth to a male child one week after my arrival in the area. She said, "I gave birth to a male baby on Saturday early in the morning when a cock cried. I went out barely when a symptom of birth came to me. It took me less than an hour to give birth and remove its placenta. It is our tradition to give birth in the nearby bush, because, if not, we will get sick and even die. All my children were born outside home. All are males. The last one, seventh of my children, this one, is named* ***Abaya Delena*** *because you came just after my delivery. Others have also been named after Oromo names, because usually Oromos visit our village, except one who has been called* ***Begezi,*** *because I gave birth to him unknowingly while I was walking in the* ***begezi****,'grass". Asked about why she gave birth outside, Telile responded, "we know that it is "bad" for us women, but what can we do? We ourselves suffer and die from it if we do what our ancestors did not do. God of our forebears,,* ***musa misa,*** *doesn't like it. No one dares to break the rules except the followers of "Mekhane Yesus" and "Full Gospel". Not only this. We are also punished for staying in the house during menstruation, eating egg, cock and some parts of meat, for eating food prepared in goods of our mother-in-law, shaking her hands or passing on the way at her backside ...".(see plate 24)*

There is no large feast to celebrate delivery but relatives and friends may visit a woman on the baby-bed with food, drinks etc. The parent welcome boys and girls, the former to manage the family's affairs if a father dies and the latter for exchange marriage. Both parents want a large number of children due to a high infant mortality. It seems that all females except a few Protestants accepted all these traditional elements and thus have to practice them. Most of them claim to be followers of Orthodox religion but it has hardly influenced them. It is rather Protestant religion that is winning some of them, especially around towns or administrative centers, to its churches.

4.6. Funeral System

The extent and time-gap of mourning among the Gumuz is determined by age of a deceased person. When old persons and elders beyond productive age die relatives do not weep and cry as such but celebrate the mourning by dances, songs, beating drums and firing guns. It is believed that such person is lucky to reach an old age and should be buried with less mourning. Thus, people don't enter into deep mourning but dance and play by enlisting deeds of his bravery in hunting, taking revenge on enemies, cultivation and the like.

When an old person dies village boys are dispersed to tell all relative and affinal kins at far distance and traditional drums such as **andinga**, **tora**, and **serma** are beaten and traditional flute-like musical instruments such as **ezebeda, dua, qomia** and horn of bushbuck are blown and guns also fired by males to call and gather people for funeral ceremony. Females tie **aśiśa*** on their legs and dance. Since the history and deeds of the person are mentioned in a traditional funeral play called **akoša**, it is easy for a guest to know who the person was. One of his in-laws brings the corpses shroud called **teka** in Gumuz and hands it over to the females. Friends help the family.

The grave area is selected at a backyard of the house because sons will hold some worshipping ceremonies on the grave of their parents in the future. There is also a belief that the corpse will be taken out and "eaten" by "evils" if his/her grave is far away and that a "be-loved" person shouldn't be buried at distant place. The grave has a circular shape, dug first vertically for about 1½ meter; and then horizontally for a place of a corpse to the right and left sides depending on its height. The eldest son indicates a place of the grave by scratching it with a hoe. Then, youths and adult males dig it under the supervision of two elders. One animal is killed soon after the grave

Aśiśa is made by passing a thread through the holes of many fruits of a tree called* ***aśiśa**. Sands are also added through their holes to create good melody. It is a traditional musical instrument best liked among the Gumuz females.*

is ready to ask **musa miśa** to bless the spiritual life of the dead person. A corpse is buried on the same day as a person's death.

When males beat **andinga and serma**, females take out the corpse wrapped in a shroud through the door at the backside of the house and enter through the front one and go out again to the grave area through the back door. At this time elders dance carrying spears, and youths blow **ezebeda** and **qomia**. Going out through a back door shows that the man who died was a hunter or aged person. As soon as a corpse reaches the grave, males receive it from women and put it in the pit to right side if male and left if female. Elders say that it shows male-female's sexual position with a belief in life after death. The eldest son, brothers and sisters throw soil to the grave and youths who dug complete it by covering with stone and soil. A horizontal pit is closed by sticks and daubed with mud and a vertical one by stone or soil. Since this kind of burial system is practiced among the Muslim Gumuz of Guba, those of the Diddessa Valley might have brought the tradition with them from Metekel. Though this has ceased, some properties of the person were buried with him/her.

Some attendants follow the elder son to fetch water, bamboo and grass while others play **akoša**, in which they express history and deeds of the dead person. Then, a hut is built with bamboo and grass and its wall is daubed with mud. Part of a clothe used to wrap the corpse is tied to a bell-mouthed flask and put on the top tip of the hut to show that it is a grave of a hunter or aged person. If the one died was a hunter, the hut is daubed with mud and surrounded by fence, and branches of trees called **badessa** and **qeraro** are inserted into different parts of the fence. Signals of wild animals he killed, such as ruff of lion, tail and claw of tiger, horn of buffalo, etc. or their pictures made of wood are put on the grave's fence. To remember a famous man, especially in leadership, hunting and in war with enemies, the community plants a memorial tree near or on the grave instead of a tomb. Except for the things conducted as an indication of being a hunter, the funeral process is the same for both males

and females. To express their feeling of mourning people shave their hair with a knife called **qereba** before and with a blade now.

If the person is killed by someone the funeral ceremony is similar except that his son or brother is not allowed to see the corpse, because it is believed that if he sees its blood he fears to take revenge of his father or brother. If he will not take revenge, he and other clan members will be insulted at feasts of funeral and other ceremonies. Moreover, an avenger of the deceased person has prior right to the slain's wife and property. The avenger of his father's death must have the circumference of his hair trimmed and shaved in the middle. These reasons push the concerned fellow to take retaliation. Many people may lose life in relation with this tit-for-tat retaliation.

Unlike for the aged persons, Gumuz's mourning for death of the children is very serious and deep. Mourners especially cry and weep for a young person who dies on his/her coming to age but before celebrating his/her marriage. Accordingly, mourning for them may extend up to one month in some areas but not less than two weeks generally while it is one to two weeks for aged persons. The grave of children and youths is not different from that of old persons except for the manner in which the surrounding hut is built. While that of aged persons is almost like a residential hut, only fences surround graves of children but those of youths especially hunters may be a complete hut. The bereaved family members shave their hairs, remove ornaments and stay indoors for the mourning period. Neighbors and clan members not only present food and drinks consisting of **injera**, porridge, **keya**, coffee and **araqe** but also help the bereaved family in cultivation and other works.

The funeral feasts, which vary on the basis of age, wealth and social status, are prepared two times: the first one is a smaller feast called **mambušenga** and prepared for all persons one or two weeks after the burial ceremony and attended only by neighbors and relatives while the second one called **kemša** is prepared after one or two years, is more vast and attended by all relatives, affinal and neighboring people. **Keya**, porridge, and chicken's meat are prepared, carried in gourds, and put

inside the fence or hut. This is with an aim to provide the dead spirit with its share and protect the family against "evening disturbances". All implements used to dig the grave and build its hut are made to "taste" from the items provided in the feast and hen's blood is also spat on them in a belief to protect gave diggers against those implements. It is believed that, if they don't prepare a feast, family members fall ill or encounter misfortune.

Not only songs and dances but also the second larger funeral feast is confined to aged persons. It is initiated by the decision of elders who respond to the call of the eldest son and his need to celebrate the feast. They estimate the grain in the store and animals at his disposal and decide on his ability to celebrate the feast. If it doesn't go beyond the subsistence level of his family, they advise him to cultivate more and prepare the feast the next year or allow him to start its preparation soon if it is enough to do so. Then, if told by elders to go ahead, the eldest son calls his sister married by exchange, intimate friends and neighboring females and start the preparation. Relatives and affinal kin contribute grains and animals in aid to bereaved family. All clan members and affinal kin participate in its preparation and in contributing cows, goats, grains, goods etc..

Finally, all friends are invited to the feast. Females come with **keya**, carried in the big gourds on their shoulders by balancing stick of about 1½ meter long. On the feast day, all people including guests eat and drink and dance with **andinga**, **qomia** and **ašiša** throughout the night. The ceremony is supervised and controlled by elders lest it leads to disturbance. The funeral system and memorial feast are not different for sudden deaths.

Currently changes are taking place with respect to some funeral affairs. The corpse was previously wrapped in a shroud and laid down on a skin in the circular grave. Nowadays a corpse is put in a coffin and buried in a rectangular grave dug only downwards to the bottom, not sideways from inside. This may be an influence of neighboring people. Things related with heroism in hunting have almost ceased to exist. There is no firing of guns and extreme large funeral feast as before.

Burying around residential house is also getting reduced. Some who claim to be Orthodox followers are buried in the compound of the Orthodox Church and likewise are Protestants within their church cemeteries. But still there are traditional believers who conduct the funeral ceremony around the parameters of their houses. Changing elements will get emphasis under chapter 7.

4.7. Clothes and Dressing Customs

Like any earlier community, the Gumuz used to depend directly on nature and produce clothes out of skins and/or hides of domestic and wild animals, barks of trees, cotton and the like and used them for dressing, worshipping and administrative purposes. However, these traditional forms of dressing are still one element that distinguishes the Gumuz. In most cases and in most areas children are still seen without clothing. Adolescents do not wear clothes above their waist. The reason for this is said to be hot climate of lowland area though being bare body above the waist is also taken as part of Gumuz's cultural identity. Moreover, elders argue that if females wear clothes on the whole of their body they get warmth, which could prevent them from doing hard works and also scars on their body, which they operated with great sacrifice, is not seen. Although various reasons could be suggested, a major reason seems to be to uncover the scars that they operated with iron with great tolerance in order to be accepted among the community members, especially opposite sexes. One may also argue that since they lived in an inaccessible areas the Gumuz were less open to the influences of not only other economic activities but also dressing styles of neighboring people.

However, dressing styles are changing currently. In **Burqa Met'i** and **Mender Mesereta** villages, as also in other areas, small children are mostly seen naked. Females usually wear apron-like skirts around their hips and shining T-shirts just above. Occasionally they are also seen bare above their waist (see plates 25&26). Males wear cotton shorts and under-shirts mostly but also trousers without clothing above their waist. Their using clothes or not, or the type of clothe they use is also dictated by the weather condition. Clothing is more common in the rainy season than in dry

season or in the mornings and evenings than during the midday. Nevertheless, those in towns, students and office workers and those who are living mixed with other communities have begun to wear clothes on whole of their bodies (see plates 8&9). Most of the clothes currently used in the Valley are products of non-Gumuz communities unlike the earlier time when the Gumuz mainly depended on their own products.

Some of males' traditional clothes are **ampola**, **beša, gurda, jala** and **jeriwa,** all made of skins and worn below waist, mainly around their genital organs. **Kita** are short trousers made of cotton. **Zir** and **zela** are made of skins and used for the body above the waist, mainly by clan chiefs. **Awa** is **gabi**-(Amharic) like cloth and worn by elders on their shoulders. It can also be used during the night.

Females' traditional clothes include **jibadima**, **čeča, beša, liba** and **dongua,** all worn below their waist. The first two are made of trees' barks with the same names, which are put in the water for some days to separate the soft parts and used to cover the body around the genital organ, but **čeča** is mainly used by wives of chiefs. **Beša** is made of skin while **liba** and **dongua** are products of cotton material. **Yeča** and **waga** are made up of trees' barks with the same names in the same process as were **jibadima** and **čeča** and worn by females on genital organs like "under wear" to control blood flowing during menstruation and delivery. Both are still serving the people in the form of tampons.

Therefore, in response to the problem of ragged dressing, the Gumuz used their indigenous knowledge and skills to make clothes out of local materials. Now it is possible to deduce from the foregoing discussions that the Gumuz have almost depended on natural and local materials for their basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing.

4.8. Scarification and Decoration

The community has its own recognition of beauty reflected in the decoration and scarification systems that have been practiced since earlier time. Beauty, heroism, and identity can be reflected in the process of decoration, which is done either by scarifying and perforating parts of body or by using different local ornaments. Scars are tattooed on a skin with different designs.

Beautifying oneself through scarification begins between almost ten and fourteen years for both sexes. Both sexes operate scars called **meqota kosa** on their jaws. Besides beauty, **meqot kosa** shows the clan he/she belongs to. An instrument used to scarify it is called **giša,** sharpened white stone. Nowadays, where it is still operating, different sharpened irons are used. Among the signs or scars are, +, **X,** ⊠, ///, ≡, ⊟, ⟠, etc. For males, beautifying by perforating body also indicates their honorable place in hunting and the type of wild animal they killed. To mention some: One who kills a lion hangs **kolba gumba**, a white ornament made of teeth of warthog and hippopotamus, to his ears while a hunter who kills a tiger hangs **sošia**, a red ornament made of iron or cartridge to his ears. The killer of a buffalo hangs **kolba gemgua**, black ornament made of ox or buffalo's horn to his ears. Those who kill different wild animals can hang earings called **širara**, made of wire, iron or tin. Hunters also use necklets. A hunter who kills lion ties necklet called **qočogo**, made of lion's teeth. A killer of elephant ties **kirkirižna** 'bracelet' made of cartridge or elephant tusk. In addition, to show their heroism hunters tattoo straight scars called **meqota p`ia** on the nape of their neck along both ears and likewise females to indicate that they are wives or companions of hunters. Honored religious fathers also use finger rings made of tin. Moreover, other male adolescents and elders tie strings of beads on their ear, waist, hand, neck and leg.

Like males, females also have traditions of beautifying their body by scarification, even a more frequented manner. It is still practiced in some rural areas. However, females have some more

reasons for operating scars. In addition to beauty and clan identity a female scarifies to show that she is a wife or companion of a killer. Social outlooks consist of the belief that her daring or resistance to ironing her body enhances her social value within the community, increases a chance of being chosen for marriage and witnesses her ability to give birth and being a strong worker.

Young females operate the scars called **meqōta doqitina** with an "X" shape for beauty. It is scarred on their chest and backside, one starting from the upper part of their right breast and crossing to the left hip and the other from left breast to right hip. Females with this scar usually don't wear clothe on the upper part of their waist (see plates 6, 23&24). They also operate **meqota-bongua** (≡≡ ≡) on their backsides and **meqota-čoga** (⊕ **and X**) on their legs as the signs of beauty. The above female scars reflect their recognition of beauty, clan identity and social value of being wife of heroic man. It also shows whether they are betrothed, married or old. However, elders' opinion is that, if a female marries without passing through scarification for different reasons, she may be forced by her husband to operate the scars. This could happen if her husband thinks that it would reduce his value within the community or if he is a one who is devoted to the maintaining of tradition, thus wanting to keep it up.

A custom of perforating edges of noses and inserting a splinter of steel, stone or spines of porcupine, known as **ireta**, is practicsed by young females for beauty. The nose ornament used by old women to express their eldership is called **su`a.** Moreover, they also perforate edges of both ears and hang **ira**, made of steel, and **kolba** made of horns to them. **Ira** and **kolba** are mainly used by married females.

Another means of Gumuz's decoration or tattoo design to make the skin and hair more beautiful is the preparation of traditional ointments or cosmetic materials out of plants, oil seeds, honey by-product and soil. The best-liked traditional ointments among the community's females are **qoša** and **fala**. **Qoša** is produced out of fruits of a **qoša** plant 'castor', and likewise **fala** from sesame

and other oil seeds and honey by-product. They are reduced into liquid form and put into use. **Qoša** is utilized by both sexes regardless of age but mainly by females. Other cosmetics are called **gefqa** and **et`eqila,** made by mixing soils with water. **Gefqa** is a reddish soil which is mixed with castor oil by water and used to paint body, hair and ornaments like **čibiya**. Mothers also use it to beautify their children. **Et`eqila** is brownish soil. Girls grind it by stone near the river, mix it with water and use their fingers to operate different designs on skins of one another. Both cosmetics are named after the name of the soil. Other females' decorating materials include **ñañiwada,** a sort of necklet made of bead. It is connected by a thread and hung around the neck. Items made of **zagol** 'shell' are also made and used in the same way. Other necklets are made up of grass, plants and spines of porcupine.

The grass used to make necklets has a good smell and is collected from the shore of a river. It is cut into pieces and connected by thread in circular form called **minzawa**. Another one made and used in the same manner is named after a plant called **galiya**, which is also used by males. Still another necklet is prepared from fruits of **zeja**, and called after the same plant. In addition, reducing porcupine spines into pieces and connecting them by a thread make a necklet called **čičikada**. It is mostly used by young females and children. Moreover, Gumuz females use different things to decorate their hands. Among these are items made of iron called **sowehera,** of bead called **minzahera** and of duiker's skin called **čibiya**. To make the latter the skin is reduced into thin and mixed with **gefqa** and tied on both arms of females. It is believed that, besides decoration, **čibiya** contributes to the fatness and strength of females. Other decorating items made of shels, beads, cotton, etc. are used by females as waistbands.

Thus, it can be seen that, regardless of sex and age, the Gumuz utilize natural and local materials such as soil, oil seeds, by-products, water, beads, steel, cartridge, horn, skin, tusk, shells, plants and their fruits, grass, spines, etc. to prepare various cosmetics, earings, bracelets, anklets,

armlets, necklets and also to operate scars. These strategies are employed in decorating body, and showing beauty, identity, strength, heroism, betrothal, honor, social values and the like.

4.9. Food Sharing, Habits and Taboos

Gumuz's food etiquette is related to the available lowland foodstuffs such as crops, animals, fruits, roots, leaves and vegetables. Although the type and quantity may differ from place to place, food habits of the area is described on the basis of data provided by the study sites.

Sorghum, maize and millet are used in the form of porridge and beer, respectively the staple food and drink in the area. But it is the former that provides the main basis for the preparation of **inga** 'porridge' and **keya**, a local beer by which the Gumuz are best known among the highland people. Porridge is eaten with sauce that is prepared from leaves, roots and haricot-beans. A plant called ***kima*** or **indeha** is used to make the sauce sticky. It is either dried, ground and its powder is mixed with sauce or used simply by adding its leaf in it. Garlic, onion ginger, cardamon and pepper as well as local salts (**t'isa**, **begzqua** and **betania**) are sometimes used to flavor or relish the sauce.

A type of haricot-bean called **wup'a** is a creeping plant widely grown in the Valley and every household in **Mender Mesereta** and **Burqa Met'i** is surrounded by it. Being like a shoot of a creeping plant it goes up on sticks as long as four meters. Its beans are used while fresh or dry both for sauce or boiled and eaten. Other species known as **gagua** or **areguya** in local terms, '**ashotare**' in Amharic, are also used in similar manner. Pumpkin (**fatuya**) is also boiled and eaten alone or in the form of sauce and likewise is potato. The leaves, stem and seeds of pumpkin are all eaten in different forms. **Indegi** or **indeha**, 'Okra' is also used to prepare soup to be eaten with porridge. **Boya**, **emandila** 'sweat potato', **sinsa, mijira** and many other roots and leaves are boiled or roasted and eaten with salt or pepper. Meat of domestic and wild animals and fish, either boiled or roasted, is eaten alone or in the form of soup especially at feasts.

The number of meals per day depends on how much they harvest, gather, hunt or catch and the season of each economic activity. One meal a day during food shortage and two meals when available is the rule but occasionally it may be three times a day. There is no exact mealtime since it mainly depends on the existence of food and presence of the head of the household. It is the Gumuz's tradition that family members should not take their meal in the absence of husband. In the morning coffee and, mostly, roasted grains are provided in the form of snacks. People smoke during and a little after coffee ceremony and leave for work. Among the etiquette conventions are that food and drink is first served to elders; a head of a household may spit food in the corners for "house spirit" or youngsters may offer prayers in the name of Jesus, before a meal.

Gumuz's food varies from season to season depending on the time of harvest, gathering and hunting. January to May is a good season for availability of grains, and easily hunting of wild animals (especially before 1994), while June to August is not and considered to be "hungry period" during which wild roots, mushrooms, leaves, fruits and bamboo shoots, most of which can't be stored but used on the spot, are gathered to form people's dietary system. Maize, cabbages and pumpkins are the first to ripen and solve the problems of shortage.

Any crop may be used anytime given its availability, but there are times one is dominant depending on the time of production. The people in the area use sorghum mainly from December to August; maize and haricot-beans from August to November; fish and wild animals from January to May; roots like **boya**, and sweat potato after July, mushrooms and bamboo shoots from June to August and pumpkin from August to December. Vegetables and fruits, though very limited, are eaten during the rainy season and the first part of the dry season. Fruits, vegetables, honey, **tinqiš** and roots are eaten on the spot of their collection. Animals and their by-products are utilized any time they are available and needed for certain feasts. The Gumuz are becoming adapted to cattle, milk and milk products.

Keya, local beer, and **araqe**, distilled local liquor, are prepared of maize, especially from September to January, or sorghum and millet mainly from January to April or a mixture of all during the shortage period of May to September. Sorghum beer, is the best-liked drink. **Keya** and **araqe** are served at celebrations and feasts of social and ritual occasions, mainly to work parties.

Food shortage occurs during the rainy season. Not only its shortage but also the fact that porridge with sauce doesn't contain the necessary amount of protein and vitamin made the people under study susceptible to various diseases such as malaria, diarrhea, kwashiorkor and marasmas. Bamboo shoots, mushrooms and other roots and leaves are used as alternative foods mainly during the period of this shortage. The Gumuz claim that they are lucky since rejuvenation of vegetation to be used a part of their diet corresponds with exhaustion period of grains. This seasonal shortage comes to an end with maturity of maize on cobs in August and September. It is when the maize is ready to be roasted and eaten on its cobs that the Gumuz express their happiness by blowing a musical instrument called **andiriña,** a flute made of bamboo, and beating five holes called **hegatikula** prepared on the ground by girls. The **hegatikula** is mainly played during the moonlit evenings and **andiriña** is blown mostly from August to September, especially on the first day of a year and when maize ripens.

Smoking of tobacco by **dawiya**, a water pipe made of bamboo and gourd, is frequented among both sexes, especially old persons and non-protestant members of the community. Cake tobacco is broken into pieces, added on the water pipe, and a glowing charcoal is put on that tobacco after which the smoke is inhaled (see plate 17). Its water is changed daily. Some of them also put it inside their lower lip or snuff into their nose and others smoke its leaves reduced into pieces (**gemša** in Amharic) in the form of cigarette which is frequented among those who are in towns and vicinity of neighboring groups.

Food taboos and restrictions, religious in nature, may differ from one clan or sub-clan to another though is generally observed in most areas. It is a taboo and shameful for parents and the bride to consume from the meat of animals come in the form of bridewealth to the family in the sense that it implies hating of the girl. Thus, these animals are either to be sold or exchanged for other animals. Women are expected to change their eating customs after marriage.

The bride doesn't eat meat, porridge and any food prepared of fermented dough except porridge prepared of unleavened dough. It is believed that any bride, who doesn't follow this rule would die and likewise are females who eat food not tasted by males, some parts of animal's meat, cock's meat, egg, anything while on preparation, and food prepared in mother-in-law's utensils. All these taboos plus the segregation of females while on menstruation and delivery are included in a belief called **senfo**. It is community's belief that being out of **senfo** may cause misfortune, sickness or death, for example, to husband, children or the woman herself, and also that people die because of not keeping the rules of **senfo** or not following it in general. Because of these taboos females don't share some foodstuffs or, even if they are allowed to eat, they don't feed with males. A man is not allowed to eat and drink in his wife's village and is prohibited from being drunkard.

With respect to feeding system, family members in some areas eat together while females are forbidden to feed with males in other areas, because they are considered to be "filthy" due to menstruation and delivery. A utensil called **žumba,** 'wooden plate', is used for those who eat together and **antersa** and **č'abiya**, clayish dishes, for those who eat separately. A woman who prepares porridge invites every one in that compound to come and eat. One dish each of porridge with sauce is presented for men, women and small children separately. Small childern may eat with their mothers or brothers/sisters. Travelers, merchant or guests may be invited and share porridge and sauce but the guest is expected to obey some rules like taking rest for few minutes before greetings, not puting legs on each other while sitting and washing hands before touching any furniture.

The Gumuz were, more than nowadays, accustomed to a communal way of life. They used to show their bonds or intimacy by sharing food and crops during the hard times, and even under "normal" conditions. However, their current sharing habit is mainly manifested in the process of preparing and providing food and beer to work-parties during which other village members also share the feast. This is especially true among the people living within a village. Beyond the feast for **dabo (yiwa)**, the community reduced its sharing of food stuffs. Previously even the grain in the store was seen as clan's property, as the elders say, but individual cultivation and consumption is replacing the communal way of life. What is observed among the villagers of **Mender Mesereta** and **Burqa Met'i** is continuous sharing of drinks like coffee, **keya** and **araqe**. Meals are almost confined to members of households. However, the sense of being together is still there, especially in working together and sharing natural resources. The long and continuous attachment to a work-group and clan members gives any person a sense of security. Thus, individual and communal consumptions, sharing of some items, including food and agricultural implements, as well as collective works are prevailing side by side within the community.

Therefore, the Gumuz employed various mechanisms such as bilingualism, exchange marriage, cooperation and utilization of local resources to meet their needs thereby facilitating their socio-cultural and ecological adaptations but not without manifesting some differentiations.

Chapter Five: Socio-Economic and Cultural Differentiation

The Gumuz community as a whole is destitute. People of my study villages are devoid of any modern facility and service. No single cattle is seen but a few are reported having them with highlanders. Some have chickens and goats. Their dwelling houses are almost similar. In general there is no significant difference between households with respect to their economic and social positions. Nevertheless, when the conditions of these destitute people themselves are compared within households, some of them are at better condition with respect to their living situations and property ownership. The study shows that very few households of this society are self-sufficient and surplus producers while a majority of them fall into the category of food deficit and dependents though they themselves differ in livelihoods, strategies, constraints and opportunities. Successes in panning gold and collecting honey plus access to markets also have minor contributing roles. Likewise are exposure to "advanced" technology, occupational skills, modern beliefs, and income generating activities. Individual characteristic also matters. The beginning of transition of some from communal cultivation to individual production, especially after the fall of the **Derg** regime, has also contributed to socio-economic differentiation of the concerned people. Some of these inducing factors need special emphasis.

5.1. Access to Production Strategies

The Gumuz households may differ in access to and control over land resources, labor mobilization, livestock production including traction animals, and cash generating activities. To be specific, differences are explicit in possession of livestock, labor, cash income, gold, economic implements and the like. One who has a better position in one resource may have more opportunities in other activities since surplus of one economic activity can be used to introduce or develop another one. A farmer with better input supply, other things remaining equal, can produce more grains and

use the surplus to mobilize additional festive labor, and buy traction animals and implements for further economic activity. See the case below.

Case 10: *Tefera Gojjam has bond relationship with highland Oromo. He has even an adopted Oromo girl (see plate 27) and also some cattle with them. Tefera earns some money from the selling of milk products and renting oxen to highlanders. He uses this money to buy economic implements and mobilize festive labor, thus at relatively better position than other villagers.*

Previous better economic position or remittances may also enable concerned households to mobilize considerable festive labor and buy draught animals and agricultural implements. Possession of other cattle also gives the opportunity of using milk, milk products and hides either for consumption or generating income.

Labor resource is the most important factor of socio-economic differentiation in the community under study. The household that has enough family labor does not demand festive labor thereby saving expenditures to be spent on feasts. Possession of enough labor forces also helps to carry out household duties of sowing, weeding and harvesting of crops on time which in turn reduces the possibility of exposing the crops to untimely sowing, weed infestation, bush-fire, pests and wild animals. On the other hand, a large family, if it wants to participate in labor mobilizing mechanisms, has the advantage of reciprocating a greater number of laborers since it has many individual members than a smaller one. Both aspects of using family labor are decisive especially when labor is highly needed during the peak seasons.

Case 11: *Wolteji Sasiga of Mender Mesereta village has 11 sorns (some married) who were born from two wives. All sons providelabor force to the family and also visit that household for food consumption in most cases. This family is at a better position in reciprocating labor and working on its own plots. The villagers frequently visit that homestead for sharing food and drinks (see plates 1&5)*

It is not the high number of family members that matters but the amount of the work force at the disposal of the household. A household with more working persons has more producing capacity than one which consists of more dependents. It is implicit that a family without enough labor finds itself economically on the lower ladder of society's strata.

Individual characteristics in diversifying adaptive strategies like expanding farm plots, introducing various crops (see case 2& plate 10), raising livestock, exchanging oxen for labor, grain, cash, etc, during the shortage season, and ability to generate income from on-and off-farm activities also contribute to the differences. It has already been pointed out that some community members generate income from selling of wood, iron and clay products, firewood, charcoal, and local drinks (see plates 17&22).

Access to market areas, gold deposits, and honey hallows and other forest products may also contribute to the occurrence of differences in the socio-economic position. All are interrelated and reinforce each other to carry out further economic activities. Some farmers who participate in the extension service also have better position (see plate14). Having access to and control over strategic resources may also enable a person to have a superior position in social and ritual activities such as marriage, funeral, initiation and other ceremonies.

Conversely, an annual single harvest, sudden bush-fire, livestock and crop destruction by pests and diseases (see case 3), limitation or lack of resources (labor, cash, draught animals, etc.) and other constraints adversely contribute to the differentiation. Moreover, household decisions are affected by caution of the household, extent of family labor, ability to mobilize festive labor, differential response to economic innovation programs, responses to risky and uncertain choices such as selection of economic activity, farmland, crops, etc; application of traditional mechanisms to protect soil fertility, crops and livestock; engaging in off-farm activities and individual characteristics with respect to labor intensity and skills.

Thus, possession of greater household labor and draught animals, ability to mobilize festive labor and other energy sources, and production strategies combined to form a basis of socio-economic differentiation among the members of the Gumuz society.

5.2. Location of the Households

The fertility of soil in the Diddessa Valley varies depending on location, type of weed and fallow period. Some areas with waterlogging and steep or rocky lands are difficult to cultivate. Hence, farmers whose settlements are located around leveled and fertile area have more advantages than those who are around steep or rocky areas. Moreover, the plots in the peripheral regions are also vulnerable to pests and wild animals. Thus, those farmers who possess suitable land in protectable areas can produce and harvest more yield than those who don't.

Moreover, Gumuz who are found around Oromia, previous Diddessa agricultural project, and where veterinary clinics are available have better opportunities of possessing and using traction animals, farm implements, learning craft skills and improving knowledge of raising and using livestock and its by-products. Location may also help to have access to markets where agricultural products, gold, honey; iron and wood products are sold to generate income, that is, from on-farm and off-farm activities.

Some Gumuz are exposed to relatively better agricultural implements, methods of cultivation, dressing styles and the like and are becoming adapted to plough ox, livestock products and some food etiquette of the Oromo. Similar influences were generated from the Diddessa agricultural project and its workers that once operated in the area. The same location yields benefits of human and veterinary clinics and learning of craft skills and improving knowledge of raising and using livestock and its by-products. Śelote Tigre, who was born around the Diddessa agricultural project on the border of Oromia and currently in charge of **Kamaši Woreda** women affairs, stressed that the Gumuz nearby the missionaries, projects and other ethnic groups were better dressed and fed since they have learned plough-based cultivation, raising and using cattle and its by-products and being exposed to modern education thereby becoming salaried workers.

Location of households may also determine access to other resources. Those Gumuz who are found in Sirba Abay and other **woredas** have more access to gold deposits than those in Beleo Jegonfoy. Those who settled around big water bodies like the Abay, Diddessa and Dabus rivers have better opportunities of fishing and gold panning. Moreover, the households located near the Protestant churches are also provided with better education and health services. Most of Zone's staffs today are from mission schools and they are also on a better social and economic position. Job opportunities are also wide for those who settled around **woreda**, NGO and mission centers. Even, women around **woreda** centers and market areas are benefiting from preparing and selling **keya** and **araqe**. Location may adversely contribute to the lower standard of living. Those who settled in the areas far away from where facilities available are devoid of the opportunity of getting services to be derived from them and also improper location may expose crops and animals to pests and wildlife (see case 3). Location along the road is also beneficial in some cases. Thus, location has it own part in socio-economic differentiation of the Gumuz. Others who don't have such opportunities adapt diverse coping mechanisms like selling their labor power, renting their land or giving it for crop-sharing, especially to highlanders, borrowing things during the hungry season, etc. They also depend on wild foodstuffs.

Therefore, access to and control over the main production strategies and location of the people themselves brought about some socio-economic differentiation and this difference is getting widen due to infrastructure improvements taking place in some areas, like **Kamaši** town for example, but not in others like remote areas of **Yaso** and **Sirba Abay**.

5.3. Gender-based Differentiation

Differentiation with respect to workload and taboos is also observed between males and females. The premises of this differentiation are reflected under chapter four but highlights and effects of the cases are given here.

Females form almost all the labor force of the household work and not less than that of males in the other economic sectors. One point of arguing in favor of exchange marriage is to marry many women in order to increase the work force. Eight out of 29 householders of my study sites have two wives each. In the conventional division of labor most of the fieldwork are the duties of male-gender while some of the field and almost all household duties are to be carried out by females (see 3.2.3). Besides agricultural activities, gathering wild food stuffs and transportation of grain, firewood, water, charcoal, gold soil and building materials, females have to carry out routine household works such as grinding grains, spices and coffee, pounding vegetables, preparing food and beer for family and social occasions, washing clothes and taking care of children. They also produce clay and wooden products and **araqe** and **keya** to generate income. The tasks of men become intensive with the beginning of rains in April/May and continues to be so until the harvest of sorghum is over whereas that of females goes on at almost similar level throughout the year since they are always busy preparing food and beer for work-parties during cultivation and harvesting seasons and for ritual and social occasions at all time. While males may take rest and enjoy drinks outside the work time, females continue working on household chores until almost mid night and until the day of delivery if pregnant (see plates 6,7&24). Buzune and Telile continued their ususal works until the days of their delivery (see cases 8 and 9). In the gold panning operation females have to carry soils from hilly and steep areas to the riverbanks where it is "washed" while males usually use donkeys for transporting the soil. Both sexes have to walk long distance, up to half a day, from their home to gold panning areas *(see 3.1.1.10)*.

As part of maintaining traditional beliefs, females have to observe some cultural rules and taboos. Restrictions may differ from one clan or sub-clan to another though some are generally observed in most areas. A male is not allowed to eat and drink in the village of his wife's clan, itself now possible after paying some money for elders' invitation to drinks, but, as already pointed out (see 4.2, 4.3 and 4.9) food restrictions and taboos of females are more than that. Disobedience to the

rules is believed to cause sickness or death to the one who disobeys and her family members. It is in relation with carrying heavy workload and observance, thus obedience, of some cultural rules that great attention is given to girl's selection for marriage but this due right is not extended to females (see 4.4). The consequences of heavy domestic and agricultural works, frequent pregnancies, early marriage and cultural taboos are factors behind females' poor health, low participation in the literacy program and insufficient participation in other development processes. Any reduction in the routine household work, like looking for alternative to fetching water and firewood (see plate 21&22) for example, and cultural taboo not only improves their health condition but also their participation in the community's development. In this aspect, followers of Protestant religion are in a better condition.

Hence, the field realities revealed that the belief in which females have to carry heavy workload and maintain some cultural taboos forms a basis of gender-differentiation, thereby reducing women's health and educational statuses.

Therefore, access to and control over strategic resources, close location of the people to economic sources and public services, exposure to better livelihood strategies and opportunities, and gender differences form the bases of socio-economic and cultural differentiation.

Chapter Six: Relations Between Ecology and Gumuz's Adaptations

A knowledge of Gumuz's adaptations with respect to the relationship between ecology and socio-cultural elements must be based on a thorough understanding of ecology, change and interactions between human beings and environment. Human activity is the most important factor in changing ecological relationships of a society with environment while the latter imposes its own constraints on human's adaptation processes. The Gumuz have used their own simple technology in an attempt to change the environment to their ends. Thus, ecological change involves the reciprocal impact of a society and environment on one another. Like many other groups in Northeast Africa (Johnson and Anderson, 1988: 9), the Gumuz have employed supportive strategies in adapting to or cope with a changing environment.

Selecting the Diddessa Valley as a defensive area against incursions of other groups the Gumuz employed various adaptive mechanisms in an attempt to adjust their livelihoods and socio-cultural elements to the ecosystem of the area. In order to survive the people have not only shifted their environment within the Valley but also employed diversified economic activities on the basis of available resources and in the face of limitations that go with physical environment. Based on available resources and ecological responses, people of a society under study adjusted their dwelling quarters, dressing and decoration styles, food habits and restrictions, funeral and marriage systems and other economic and socio-cultural elements. Socially they organized themselves into domestic groups of production and consumption units, mainly based on intra-clanship relations, which has enabled them to share labor, implements and other means of life and defend themselves against enemies and wildlife. Changes have occurred in some aspects or parts of a society in the processes of adaptations mentioned above. Most of those that survived may have ecological manifestations and

others symbolical importance to the society. Change and continuity with respect to societal adaptations are the thematic issues of the current chapter.

6.1. Environment as a Source of Means of Livelihood

It seems that the first arrivals of the Valley totally depended on what nature had provided through hunting and gathering. Pushed by the expanding groups into the lowlands and isolated within that ecology the Gumuz combined their indigenous knowledge and skills to invent weapons and utensils out of local woods and stones (later of iron) and used them in hunting wild animals and gathering wild honey, fruits, leaves, mushrooms and roots. Since their weapons included simple hunting technology (spears, bows and arrows in the main) people of this society employed different techniques and skills such as trapping system, using poisonous plants, litting fire to expose a wildlife by depriving grass, and using its footstep, sound and type of vegetation it feeds on to identify its location. Guns were also used until 1994 (see 3.1.1.1.). In the process of exploiting what the environment provided, hunting became not only the source of economic value but also of social status for both sexes. Meat and vegetables formed an important part of the community's diet while animals' skins were utilized for sleeping mats, carrying bags and covering body and their horn and hair as decorating ornaments. It is, therefore, due to their ecological or economic importance that both hunting and gathering economies survived until the present though decreasing in importance. If it was not for the intervention of the government hunting, might have continued to dominate the Gumuz economy, at least more than its current position.

Nevertheless, when hunting lost its prominence with depletion of the wildlife and government's ban on its activity, the community moved its option mainly to cultivation (see 3.1.1.2-3.2.1.7). Shifting cultivation had probably existed side by side with hunting/gathering economy but, sometime later, the latter were reduced to secondary position and continued to supplement the former. With the

decrease in the returns of hunting, the community tilted more to the application of shifting and fallow systems. Here also it is within the possibility of existing simple technology, abundant land and low population density that the Gumuz farmers adapted to slash-and-burn system. Their existing technology has not allowed adaptation to sedentary life of the highland people. Various techniques were employed to maintain shifting cultivation.

In response to a decrease in soil fertility, reduced farm yields and increase of the distance between home and farmsteeds, the Gumuz used to dismantle their villages or homesteads before and their farmplots since the recent past. Moving of homesteads or plots remained the alternative solution since there is no any mechanism of controlling weeds or increasing soil fertility. In order to ease the burden of shifting, domestic group is organized and people of the village move together. Domestic organization and moving together help to mobilize labor for all variables of cultivation and common protection of crops. Homesteads, like in **Burqa Met'i** and **Mender Mesereta** villages, tend to group around hills, where sorghum fields are mostly found, but not very far from the river courses, to make easier for the transportation of water, crops, food and beer.

Another technique of facilitating the system is the use of fire in land preparation. They cut the grass and remove it to another area while it is still green and burn it before sheds its seeds lest they spread on the farmlands. Moreover, burning takes place believing that flowering grass through inhaling its nectar causes malaria. This belief is related with a season when mosquitos breed and cause malaria in the area. Burning the forest allows new pasture to rejuvenate and increases its biomass; improves soil fertility and thereby yield; eases work in the field or hunting wildlife; eradicates mosquito, poisonous or harmful animals, pests, and insects and chases wild animals thereby protecting crops and domestic animals. It is also argued that, by shifting system, the nutrients accumulated in the forest biomass are made available to crops the periodic basis. Digging by stick or hoe and leaving some trees in the farm field may lessen erosion and maintain ecological balance.

Gumuz's choice with respect to the raising of chickens, goats and sheep, the most common animals of the area in their order, is dictated by some ecological factors (see 3.1.1.8). These animals are more resistant to the lowland diseases like sleeping sickness, and easy to buy and breed than cattle and equines. Some donkeys and limited number of cattle are also found but cattle rising are recent development.

To fill the gaps of shortage the community employs other minor supplementary off-farm income generating activities such as gold panning and handicrafts (see 3.1.1.10-3.1.1.12) and local beverages. In order to survive these lowland people utilized whatever their environment provided, like local materials as "salt", "ointment", "ornament", economic implements, house utensils and musical instruments; rivers, streams and ponds as sources of water and fish; stone as grinding mill; plants as medicines; barks and leaves as "clothes" and so on (see 3.1.1.1. and 4.7 to 4.9). Thus, the Gumuz are people quite adaptable to alternative options. Their history (chapter two) indicates their continuous effort to make any of their own choices among alternative strategies including to relocate defensive areas and economic resources. It is through flexible choices and continuous efforts that the Gumuz survived as a society in the face of hot climate, lowland diseases, harmful wild animals, non-existence of public services, sudden bush-fires and destruction of crops by weevils, pests and wild animals.

6.2. Relations Between Ecology and Cultural Practices

While some adaptations have been achieved, as we have seen above, in certain circumstances, physical and cultural continuity are also attained in some other cases. The former idea falls within the framework of those who believe that customs have certain practical utility and respond to genuine needs in the life of that society. Some degree of relationship must exist between economic enterprises and customs of a society in a sense that norms, knowledge and beliefs may serve as guidelines for behavior thereby contributing to the process of adjusting oneself to a certain

environmental context. Some cultural elements may persist due to their contribution to adaptation and other customs also persist but without contributing much to the survival of a society. It is likely that adaptive success and continuity of traditions have operated side by side in the Gumuz society.

The physical survival of the Gumuz as a minority group, and the continuity of their language and larger part of other cultural elements owes a great deal to their commonly recognized geographical location on the Ethio-Sudan border in inaccessible areas. Using the opportunity of their location in the western periphery they moved into remoter areas of the greater safety and survived in the face of the predatory expansion of the state. Some cultural elements are protected against the neighboring influences for the same reason. What are the other contributing factors of this protection? The response depends on the type of cultural element.

One source of protection of the Gumuz language came from the inaccessible feature of the area (see 4.1). While the dry seasons are relatively convenient for more visitors to come and be addressed in Oromo language, swelling of rivers and over-growth of grass during the rainy season basically reduces the number of visitors thereby making Oromo language rarely used in general conversation. It is also possible that the use of the Gumuz language through translating it into the Oromo language has it own contribution to its survival. Even the Oromo words absorbed by the Gumuz into their own language became enriching material rather than as competitive or replacing it. The fact that the Gumuz language serves both as a communication strategy and "storage" of other cultural elements tends to protect it against extinction. It serves as preserving experience of the community and has inner strength of its own tradition that can't be easily translated into Oromo that link them to the neighboring world. Thus, the Gumuz language not only coexisted but was also protected by the wide use of the Oromo language as a **lingua franca**. The same or similar could be said of Amharic and Arabic, though on less scale, influences and protection of the Gumuz language

against them. Thus, geographical location and its importance as carrier of customs and experiences and communication strategy are factors behind the continuity of this cultural practice.

Like any other society, the Gumuz have their own belief system (see 4.2). Traditional belief is still not only the dominant belief but also related with every social or cultural activity of the society since they have to be blessed in the name of local deities. The belief system is used not only to control hunting, cultivation, marriage and the like but also theft, lying, adultery, homicide acts and robbery since there was no act or sanctioned law. Still they are used in many areas of the Valley not only for the purposes mentioned above but also to settle disputes and hold various socio-cultural activities. An example of using belief elements in settling problem of homicide is described by **Šiferaw Gense**, my key informant, just below.

> *In case a person is killed, clan leaders hide the slayer and his parents in far village from the revenge of relatives of the slain and elect the elders from both sides that are entitled with a responsibility of gathering both families around a river and settling the problem. Being elected the elders examines causes of the crime carefully and invites both sides to a specified place around the river. On the appointed day, relatives of the slayer, accompanied by elders go to the river with one sheep and relatives of the slain also appear. Both stand on the shore of the river, one group on the left and the other on the right side. A piece of cloth like curtain is placed between them lest they see one another. Then, the slayer, the eldest brother and paternal uncle of the slain touch the knife and slaughter the sheep. As soon as the blood flows, curtain like cloth is removed and the slayer and relatives of the slain shake one another with blood-touched hands. Then, elders declare that there is no more revenge afterwards.*
>
> *Wishing not to see such bad occurrence again, all relatives present on the ceremony shave their hairs and cut their nails and add them into the river. Throwing of hairs, nails and sheep's blood into the river is in a belief that sin and idea of revenge will disappear and never come again. Then, parents of the slayer pay blood compensation by giving a girl of his sister or relative in a belief that she would substitute the deceased person. This girl is brought up within the households of the slain and used either in exchange marriage, if from the same clan, or married by the brother of the slain. Finally, all participants of the ceremony are invited to feasts of meat, food and* ***keya****, to be prepared by both families and blessed by elders. Elders' acts are obeyed and honored. Families of the slain and the slayer don not share from the feasts. This is a still surviving cultural element though currently courts at* ***woreda or zonal*** *levels may also deal death cases.*

Other belief elements are used to establish social strata among the members of a society. Elders and spiritual leaders are respected and entitled to lead the community, settle disputes, begin meals and ceremonies by blessing in the name of **musa** and supervise other socio-cultural activities such as marriage, funeral, etc. Ancestor worshipping supports the jural authority of elders and forms

a basis for establishment of adult status. To meat their supernatural forces, in contrast with responses to the physical environment, the Gumuz often display things on the grave, inside the house or at any place selected for worshipping. The implicit meaning is that supernatural measures are taken to protect them from unseen forces that may threaten them from all sides. The observances of taboos are the most important means of warding off danger. In virtually all spheres of activity there are various acts that are thought to be dangerous. Ceremonies before and after hunting and in relation with other socio-economic and cultural practices are manifested in belief system. Men who would achieve fame and heroism in hunting and conflicts are entitled to higher statuses and likewise are their wives. Some restrictions with respect to women are even religious in nature and tend to establish hierarchical relationship on gender basis. All community members, especially females and youths, don't dare to go against rules and norms of the society due to their fear of parental and deital curses which would invite local deities to punish them.

Thus, elements of traditional beliefs have become mechanisms of establishing peaceful relationships within a community through restraining the members from deviance of norms, values and rules of a society. Here, spiritual, emotional, experience and customs are combined to provide guidelines for the Gumuz society thereby, in the absence of any legal sanction, contributing to their survival and continuity at least indirectly.

Other cultural elements are related with initiation ceremonies (see 4.3). Celebrations of menstruation for girls and circumcision for boys are parts of initiation ceremonies used to inculcate social norms and values in building mode of behavior. Both events are signs of maturity and transference from childhood to adolescence for both sexes and also show their readiness for more responsibilities. Thereafter both girls and boys can participate in the dances and songs of other ceremonies and manifest their readiness for marriage. Circumcision of boys together has more socializing value in a sense that boys, who go through the ceremony together form a work-party, hunt together, help and reconcile each other and become intimate friends.

Thus, initiation ceremonies also have their own contribution, especially in socializing the youths into the norms and values of society.

Exchange marriage is another contributing element to be considered here. It played a role of converging the initially dispersed groups of the Gumuz society through amalgamating smaller ones into a higher section (See 4.4.). The isolation between different clans due to a natural barrier is eased to a lesser extent by the establishment of affinal relations (see 2.1.3). Thus, exchange marriage is one mechanism of establishing relations between various clans. Coming together in its turn has defensive value in the face of enemy's encroachments. It also defended its practitioners against the influence of highland economy through preventing affinal relations with other communities. If it was extended to the highlanders, the acceptance of bridewealth in marriage settlements could pull non-Gumuz societal elements and overrun their ethnic distinctiveness. Since the Gumuz cannot afford the bridewealth to marry, exchange of sister or a female relative was an option to form a family. It also facilitates marriage or family stability through providing a good will of a couple and affines and maintenance of moral norms and values of a society at absence of any legal sanction. Thus, exchange marriage has/had defensive and economic values.

The funeral system and memorial feast may also reflect people's living condition, age, deeds, wealth and social status (see 4.6). Bravery and heroism in hunting, war, leadership and the like are carried in funeral dances and songs in mourning for the death of an old person. Taking out a corpse through a backdoor, use of musical instruments in burial and funeral dances and songs, planting of a memorial tree around or near a grave and construction of daubed and complete hut around a grave are indicators of elder person's grave. Besides, reminants of hunted wild animals and type of a tree to be inserted into fence and hut of a grave show a kind of game he killed and who the man was. Likewise is putting of a bell-mouthed flask and a piece of a

white cloth, mostly part of a shroud, on the top of grave's hut. Burial within the residential units is with respect to the protection of a corpse against "evil spirit", worshipping on its grave and to reflect their love to the dead person. Horizontal position, the left pit for a female and right one for a male within a vertically dug grave, shows gender difference. The use of local materials in conducting funeral and memorial feasts is also based on existing option. Grave huts and fences are constructed of bamboo, grass, branches of trees and mud. Shrouds, skins, memorial trees, fences, huts, bell-mouthed flasks, a piece of white cloth etc. are used instead of modern tombs and coffins. To meat supernatural forces and ancestral spirits, feasts are also held on the basis of ability. The type and time of feast itself is dictated by age, wealth and social status of a person or his relatives. Thus, the funeral system and its feasts tend to have economic and socio-cultural importance and show social and economic differences not only within a community but also with neighboring people.

Although some changes are taking place, earlier cloth and tampons produced out of local materials are still used to protect body and indicate social statuses. Employment of indigenous knowledge and skills in the production of clothes out of natural resources is dictated by need and necessity of the community. The same is true of its partial continuity.

The community's decorating system through scarification, perforation and use of different local ornaments and ointments tends to shows one's strength, heroism, betrothal and honor, in general high social value. They use different locally made implements to tattoo various designs on skins. Perforating ears and noses may indicate beauty, age and honorable place of a person in hunting and type of wild animal one kill. A sort of cosmetics such as **qoša**, **fala**, **gefqa** and **et'eqila** also parts of decorating system. Thus, people of this area applied indigenous strategies in decorating and identifying themselves. The use of local materials implies community's preference and option to fulfil its need of high social value and status.

By adjusting their food habits and meals (see 4.9) to the foodstuffs provided by nature and yields of lowland's cultivation; using forest resources for healing and alternative food options during the shortage; producing **t`iša, beqzqua** and **betania** as alternative salts to flavor sauce; preparing local drinks and sharing whatever available, the Gumuz community has confirmed its physical continuity and economic and socio-cultural adaptations but not without some implicit or explicit changes.

Thus, adaptations with respect to shifting agricultural system, hunting/gathering, livestock production, gold panning, handicraft, house construction and related organization of production and mobilization of labor are dictated by ecological or economic importance whereas exchange marriage, funeral system, dressing styles, decoration and food sharing and habits are also partly related to economic significance and partly to a role of providing guidelines, leadership and shaping of behavior. The latter three are also provisions of language, beliefs and initiation ceremonies. Beliefs, initiation ceremonies and taboos and restrictions with respect to food, delivery, and menstruation are practiced to maintain relations with "supernatural environment." In sum, some societal elements provided material or economic basis while other cultural practices formed spiritual, intellectual and guidelines of socio-cultural institutions. Dynamic or changing elements in the processes of adaptations will be considered in the next chapter.

Chapter Seven: Change and Continuity of Socio-economic and Cultural Institutions

The preceding chapters have indicated not only Gumuz's diversified economic and socio-cultural activities and ecology but also corresponding changes. The latter had been very slow and gradual but began to take a form of dynamism since the coming to power of EPRDF. The initial element of change was transference of their niche from Metekel to Diddessa area. It has been in the processes of adaptations that dynamic elements began to penetrate the Gumuz society.

Hunting seems to have been dominant occupation of the community. Initially it was reduced to minor economic activity due to the depletion of wildlife and then lost significant position because of confiscation of guns and effective government's ban on its activity some six years ago. It was long ago since hunting was abated but not materialized until recently due to an inaccessible feature of the area and remaining of weapons (arrows, bows and guns) in the hands of hunters. It is true that the community still hunts small game, mainly in remote areas, but hunting as an occupation has already lost its prestige, status and economic significance. Destroying of the forest resources by clearing and burning is also not as free as it was before. The sanction on wildlife and forests, at least within the reach of administration, contributed to the recovery of wild animals that once even used to cross the border and approached point of extinction. Ceremonies and social statuses related with hunting occupation went away with forbidding or decreasing of it operation. Gathering of wild resources still continued to supplement agricultural subsistence economy than hunting can do.

It was long ago since shifting cultivation took over hunting-gathering economy and became dominant economic activity of the community under study but it began to manifest some changes currently. Though still insignificant, land tenure system is becoming changed since clans have been

reorganized into PAs and went against previous delineation of clan's territory. Land acquisition, at least theoretically, falls under the responsibility of **Kebele** and **Woreda** councils. Practically, rural people follow their traditional system of using land for cultivation and housing. Currently traditional shifting of a village has almost stopped, except on the policy of a state, but households may move to the other place in the same village. However, almost all Gumuz farmers are still shifting their plots to the nearby area of the previous one except a few who are practicing "extension intervention program." Gumuz farmers are still hoe cultivators and they hardly adapted to the use of plough and ox. The community, which was not aware of the varied economic uses of livestock and their products before, is becoming adapted to the use of oxen for various agricultural works and preparation, preservation and use of milk, butter, cheese and hides for consumption and generating income especially in and around towns or **woreda** centers. Even possession of cattle is considered as achieving higher status. Community's recognition of livestock's value is reflected in the fast increase in the number of animals as condensed in the table below on the basis of NUPI's (1999) and Region Six Planning and Economic Development Bureau's (2000) studies.

Table Three: Livestock Distribution of Kamaši Zone by Woreda in 1997 and 2000.

Woreda	*Cattle*		*Sheep*		*Goats*		*Equines*		*Poultry*		*Beehives*	
	1997	***2000***	***1997***	***2000***	***1997***	***2000***	***1997***	***2000***	***1997***	***2000***	***1997***	***2000***
Kamaš	*125*	*1270*	*136*	*2142*	*412*	*5281*	*70*	*196*	*860*	*13948*	*61*	*1250*
Yaso	*137*	*1463*	*326*	*3807*	*632*	*6927*	*63*	*167*	*1501*	*12507*	*82*	*3107*
Agalo Met'i	*1856*	*6257*	*917*	*4123*	*1500*	*11757*	*300*	*518*	*1742*	*22783*	*1024*	*6998*
212	*1073*	*532*	*4024*	*499*	*5126*	*22*		*101*	*1076*	*15058*	*326*	*5330*
Sirba Abay	*1127*	*5927*	*400*	*3347*	*981*	*10674*	*400*	*558*	*1000*	*18159*	*481*	*3936*
Total	***3457***	***15990***	***2311***	***17443***	***4024***	***39765***	***850***	***1540***	***6179***	***82455***	***1974***	***20621***

The above table illustrates that each livestock respectively increased by 12533, 15132, 35741, 690, 76276, and 18647 within three years. Thus, keeping of cattle has already taken the place of straying them in the wilderness. Correspondingly, the Gumuz are in the process of adapting sedentarized and plough-based agricultural system. The use of the latter method eases the problem of

weed infestations while shifting system causes a problem of cropping perennial crops mainly roots and fruits. Farm implements are also becoming changed from stone and stick to iron products. Nevertheless, shifting cultivation remained the dominant occupation of the community.

New crops such as **t'ef,** coffee, fruits and vegetables are also getting adapted thereby creating favorable conditions for diversified means of livelihood (see case 1 and plates 10,11,& 12). All are observed in Kamaši town and its suburbs. The most widely spread fruit is banana while other fruits such as papaya, avocado, mango and orange have got start. Vegetables like onion, garlic, potato, tomato, etc. are also introduced though still on limited scale. Traditional healing is also changing in favor of modern medical treatment pertaining to availability of health institutions.

Changes are also taking place in socio-cultural affairs of the Gumuz society. Culture seems to be unchanging but it is dynamic since it goes with development of community, change in living conditions, dissemination of knowledge and information, and interaction with environment and other societies. The appearance or incoming of new elements may lead to, in the process of new interaction between nature and community, new inventions that would in turn induce cultural change. However, depending on its agents or ingredients, cultural change may be slow and gradual or dynamic and may occur outside the knowledge of people.

Gumuz's cultural practices are neither fully survived nor fully changed. Some elements of belief, marriage, funeral, dressing and decoration systems as well as of food habits and restrictions are either disappearing or weakened while some other traditions manifested their continuity. Traditional belief is losing ground and related taboos and restrictions with respect to food, menstruation and delivery is being disavowed among the followers of Mekhane Iyesus, Full Gospel and Seventh Day Adventist Churches.

Exchange of sisters or relative females was once the dominant marriage system of the community. It was one of the strategies used by the people not only to reproduce but also protect

against the influence of highland economic and cultural elements. However, currently, the most successful marriages are conducted by means of elopement in which some amount of money or a number of animals are paid in form of bridewealth after elders settle the case. Thus, bridewealth marriage is tending take a place of exchange marriage.

Some funeral elements are also abandoned: use of shroud alone instead of coffin; digging of a grave in a circular form and then sideways instead of rectangular shape; burial of personal properties with a corpse and firing of guns on its ceremonies are all given up. Currently, shroud is used to wrap a corpse, put in a coffin and buried in a rectangular grave.

Dressing styles and food habits are also changing in favor of that of neighboring communities. Students, government workers and those around towns and border areas of Oromia wear clothes in the same or similar manner to their neighbors. In addition to their staple food (porridge) and staple drink **(keya),** the Gumuz have started to use the highland food etiquette such as **injera**, **doro wat`,** mead, coffee, **araqe**, milk and its by-products and variety of soups though on limited scale. They have also almost given up eating of some wild animals that are not consumed by neighboring highland people. Scarification (tattoo of scars on body) and use of local ointments such as **fala**, **qoša**, **gefqa** and **et`eqila** are almost ceasing except in some remote areas. Youths and children of my study sites, unlike adults, don't have scars on their bodies. This indicates that the Gumuz began to deny the practice sometime ago.

The community members used to lead communal life and share everything including foodstuffs and labor but now tending to change in favor of individual consumption and usage. People within the same compound drink coffee and consume things prepared in the name of **debo** together but meals are consumed almost on individual family basis.

Changes may occur inherently or due to exogenous influences. However, it is difficult to draw a demarcating line between inherent change and the one happened due to external influence.

The shift from hunting-gathering economy to agriculture may be due to failure in returns and imposition of state in the case of the former and more gains in the case of the latter. There is a change in focus from shifting village to shifting farm plots and adaptation of broadcasting system along with preexisting method of putting grains in holes while sowing crops. There are even some few farmers who practice raw-planting under "package" policy. Different indigenous methods were also employed in curbing or mitigating problems and constraints in crop and livestock production. Tendency to form permanent dewelling is also part of this changing process. Moreover, exploitation of local or natural resources in response to needs and necessities are mostly dictated by inherent qualities of the community. Production of local "salt", "medicines", "ointments", "ornaments", implements, instruments, utensils, mats and other products of local materials may be induced inherently but are getting changed mainly because of external forces.

The people have received so far little support from NGOs. The missions were the first to assist some of them by establishing some primary schools and clinics for which they are fully responsible. The area is also benefiting from UNICEF's special program called WIBS(Woreda Integrated Basic Services) which is supporting only Kamaši Woreda since 1998 and expected to phase out at the end of 2001. Its health component covers training of health personnel and supply with vaccines, medical equipment and a vehicle. Another NGO called Food for Hungry International began to operate in Beleo Jegonfoy woreda since the beginning of 2000. It is a four-years project, which focuses on the rehabilitation of primary schools, construction of latrines and provision of health education. Ethiopian Social Rehabilitation and Development Fund is an autonomous governmental organization funded by different international organizations and directly accountable to the Prime Minister of Ethiopia. It operates at Regional level. Kamaši Zone is assisted since 1997 with respect to development projects such as education, health posts, veterinary clinic, spring development and hand dug wells. These are recent initiatives and have not yet brought recognizable

change. Though still minimal when compared to long period of interaction, changes have occurred due to the influences of exogenous factors such as state, neighboring people and religion.

7.1. State Policies

It has already been pointed out in chapter two that Kamaši Gumuz were subjected to slave raids and imperial incursions and received little attention from successive governments of pre-1991. The center seems to have ignored them due to its limited capacity and difficulties in building transport systems. Post-abatement of slavery in the 1930s saw an increase of Gumuz population in the lowland area. They were organized into PAs in the post-February 1974 revolution but remained loose and weak due to an inaccessible feature of the area and reluctant attitude of the people to replace their traditional leadership by that of the government. Their tactic to ignore government's action was to move into still more remote area.

Comparatively more influence of state was initiated after the construction of dry weather Kingi-Kamaši road in 1976/77. It is the only road that links the area with Oromia and other parts of the country. Substantial change began to take place after the establishment of Kamaši administrative Zone in 1993 with its center at **Kenteri**. People of various clans were organized into five **woredas** and first into 93 and then, recently, 67 PAs. Correspondingly various offices, departments and service-giving institutions were set up. Boundary delineation of administrative units is based on topography, administration or ethnicity. Zone's demarcation is based on Gumuz inhabited areas and its **woredas** and PAs on physical boundary. The Zone has 1125 kms of circumference with neighboring regions (see map 3). **Woredas** and PAs of the Zone are given in the table below.

Table Four: Kamaši Zone and Its Administrative Units.

No.	*Woreda*	*No. of PAs*	*List of PAs*
1	*Kamaš*	*14*	*Kamaš 01, Kamaš 02, Hena Duda Gibe, Daguba Beddessa Jirma, Julo Laqa, Kobi Beddessa, Demosega Oda, Demosega Č'ica Č'ugi, Gilgila, Mirmir'a, Daža Leko, Soyema Gawla, Sire Soyema, Mukerba Gagura.*
2	*Yaso*	*14*	*Yaso, Čigiša, Dibi Inč'ini Arengema, Dibi Inč'ini Degaguračа, Qersa Duleti, Halo Mukerba, Lugo Beqa, Beji T'ebela, Timoje, Kormi, Zedi, Witti, Jawji, Debanko.*
3	*Agalo Met'i*	*13*	*Ete Met'i, Qiltu Abadensa, Kutala Bedat'ino, Šumela Kono, Qersa Diddessa, Selba Jengara, Mukerba Met'i, Bedesso Met'i, Burqa Čoč'o Danč'o Ebiča, Burqa Ganti, Kambo Qalisi, Degena Č'emero.*
4	*Beleo Jegonfoy*	*10*	*Beleo Jegonfoy, Beleo Diddessa, Anger Met'i, Anger Waja, Anger Šonkora, Arjo, Beleo Didiga, Sene, Dimtu, Sai Deleča.*
5	*Sirba Abay*	*16*	*Fap'iro Sirba, Gosu Qorquandi, Qorquandi Finč'a'a, Abagole, Jeli, Sirba Abay, Boqa, Qonč'o, Berkasa, Wanjo, Gule Šegeda, Zenbe Dabus, Arengema, Papararo, Adinqiš, P'iabala.*

Source: Region Six Planning and Economic Development Bureau (2000,4-15).

Changes are taking place in relation with the promotion of the area into administrative status as Zone. Large population influx is taking place. Total population of the center reached 2291 within 5 years. The site had only eight huts when it was founded in 1993. It was small rural village, that is, not an urban center in 1994 census. The number of housing units grew from 8 to 762- of which 125 were made of corrugated sheet of iron and 637 tukuls-between 1993 and 1998 (NUPI, 23). Currently modern buildings are under busy construction: buildings for Zone Council (see plates 8&9), clinic, residential quarter, vocational training center and boarding school have already been completed but not inaugurated during the study time. Lines of potable water are under construction. Generators are producing light in the offices of Zone Council, education and culture and health departments. Radio Communication is giving services in government and NGO offices except Agalo Met'i **Woreda**. Other service-giving establishments such as hotels, tearooms, bars, shops, etc. are increasing rapidly and likewise are schools and clinics. Nevertheless, these changes are limited to the Zone center and, to some extent, **woreda** centers.

Job opportunities are given in **woredas**, but to a low number, mostly by government institution, and NGO. This limited job opportunities themselves mostly apply to unskilled workers and a few to qualified professionals like police, administration, nurses and teachers. The town is

expected to grow fast and provide more opportunities.

Political organizations, offices of women affairs, women's associations and a few development-based youth, female and male organizations are found in the Zone but most of them are not functioning except the former two plus one women's association in Kamaši town. Gumuz People's Democratic Organization, current ruling political party, is assisting several groups in all **woredas** like paying the chairperson of women's association.

Transportation facilities, marketing mechanisms, price structures and government policies influence economic decision. It is state's opinion that burning, indiscriminate hunting and clearing forests, digging the earth for gold panning, etc. cause damage on the ecosystem. State's effective forbidding of hunting has contributed to the recovery of wildlife, which is, however, becoming menace to crops and domestic animals. It is also pushing shifting agricultural system to sedentary life through a program of "package" or "extension intervention". State officials argue that shifting cultivation may not hold community's livelihood in the face of fast increase in population and not convenient for growing perennial crops unlike sedentary economic activity which allows extension program, and establishment of public services. Zone agricultural department has also contributed to an increase in cattle population through expanding veterinary services, forbidding killing of productive cattle for meat and through orienting the people about value of animals' by-products. Moreover, people's attitude towards generating income through selling agricultural and wood products is changing.

The scattered pattern of settlement, considered to be obstacle to development, is also tending to come together. Though not yet implemented, Region Six Planning and Economic Development Bureau has already completed a study entitled, "Kamaši Zone First Level Settlement Study" (2000). The government has already started an attempt to gather settlements together. It is after an attempt was made to bring others into an area that one of my study sites, **Mender Mesereta**, came to be

called so.

State policy's influencial role in facilitating cultural change also needs some spaces. Some cultural elements such as language, avoidance of female's circumcision, supervision of funeral feasts, condemnation of lie, theft and adultery, good treatment of a guest and the like are favored by the state. It is inaccordance of developing or keeping these cultural heritage that indigenous people were guaranteed due rights after the political change of 1991 and it is also in line with it, besides to achieve socio-economic development of the area, that states were formed on regional basis. Conversely employment of Amharic as medium of instruction and administration seems to have retarding role on the development of native's language. However, there are some traditional customs that state officials vividly termed as "harmful" practices and exerted some pressures for bring changes in them.

Among cultural practices considered to be "harmful" are exchange marriage, tattoo of scars on body, traditional healing and females' segregation during menstruation and delivery and their observance of some food taboos as well as leaving of some works exclusively to them traditionally. Exchange marriage is currently opposed by Gumuz People's Democratic Organization, Women's Affairs, elite group and other members of administration in a sense that it invites polygamy, kidnapping, elopement, early marriage and goes against females' rights in all cases. Kidnapping or elopement itself may cause conflicts and marriage to old men or without desire. Thus, marriage by exchange is now subjected to imprisonment and all exchange marriages since at least the last two years have been dissolved. The case of Abera Woltegi illustrates the point. He said,

> I married Berhane Gindaba giving my sister Gelane Woltegi to her brother. But police arrested me for two weeks, took my wife to her parents and brought my sister back. I brought her back after being released but arrested again for a week. We people accepted government's advice like submitting guns and sending girls to school but exchange marriage is our culture, a sign of respect between in-laws while marriage by stealing is a sign of disobedient to our people and their culture.

Asked about the situation Gelane (see plate 21), Abera's sister, strongly argued against going

back to her husband. She said, "It is not my wish to go back. I am 13 or 14 years old but was forced to marry an old person, a man at an age of my grandfather. I married simply to fulfill my brother's desire. Mine is ignored". Ato **Č`anne Alemu**, secretary of Zone higher court, explained problem of exchange marriage in the following words:

> Exchange marriage cases come up to our court. There is no accuser but sent by an administrative organ or police under the term "kidnapping" and found to be exchange marriage after court's examination. We don't have any article or code to treat such cases. Thus, we release them after arresting for two weeks or so and orienting them not to repeat. However, police can accuse one of them on the basis of a law, which forbids marriage of affinal relatives. It is also my opinion that exchange system goes against females' right since it forces one to do what she or he doesn't want to do. I know a man of 70 married to a girl of 18. What happens to the girl if that old man dies?

Stressing on exchange system's invitation of polygamy, early marriage, kidnapping, illiteracy, conflicts and marriage not based on self choice and love, w/o **Śelote Tigre**, in charge of Kamaśi Woreda Women's Affairs, and other officials argued against the practice. She condemned not only exchange marriage and mistreatment of female because of being not virgin but also all taboos and restrictions on females with respect to menstruation, delivery, food and work load, and scarification and use of local ointments such as **fala**, **gefqa** and **et`eqila**. **Śelote** also opposed to the use of an ornament called **čebiya**. Out of 37 marriages conducted in my study sites, 26 were effected by exchange before 1995 and 11 by means of elopement since the last three years. Eight of them have two wives each. There is no successful marriage conducted by exchange since the last five years. All successful ones were done through elopement.

Thus, it is possible that state's measures have induced some changes into economic and socio-cultural ways of life and are becoming the leading factors of weakening exchange marriage's foundation but other cultural elements weakened or disappeared mainly due to other factors.

7.2. Religious Influences

The Gumuz people have been exposed to many religious influences. Traditional belief seems to have been their dominant religion (see 4.2) but, through time, some have become Christian and others Muslim due to their location on the Ethio-Sudan border and exposure to their respective

religions. Various Christian sects have also got root in the area over time. Currently, there are five religious centers in Kamaši town: Orthodox Church dedicated to Saint Michael, Mekhane Iyesus, Full Gospel, Seventh Day Adventist and Muslim Mosque. All have graveyards around their churches except the latter. Out of 29 heads of house of households of **Burqa Met'i** and **Mender Mesereta**, 9 are Protestants, 4 traditional believers and 16 claimed to be Orthodox but also practice traditional beliefs. The younger ones are Protestants while the elders practice traditional beliefs and claim to be followers of Saint Michael Church. This indicates that Protestant religion in the area is younger than others.

It is said that Protestant evangelists started their operation in the Valley in the 1960s in response to the rumor of a "cargo cult". Wallmark (1981:99-100) points out that, in 1960, people killed all of their animals, , on the advise of **etmusa** who taught that Jesus would come and give big and many animals to those who remove their property and wait for him. It was at this point that evangelists appeared and told them that the rumor of a "cargo cult" was false. This event might have been the initial point of missionaries' influence.

Norwegian and Swedish missionaries taught Bible education since 1960s and produced many adherents among the community. Other Protestants of Seventh Day Adventist and Full Gospel Churches also appeared in Valley at later time. All these three Christian sects use the Bible as a source of truth and teach that belief in God alone would help to achieve eternity. It is in connection with this that they deny belief in **musa** and community's customs practiced in relation with him. Missions set their influence through their school and health services. Most of office workers of Kamaši Zone today are from these mission schools. Thus, with this Protestant background, they oppose traditional practices and reflect their opposition in formulating state policies. Girša Teso, who worked in Gimbi and Dongoro Adventist gardens for six years and still attending Adventist Church in Kamaš on every Saturday (see case 1), has not only introduced various vegetables and

fruits but also teaches against elements of traditional customs.

Almost all female followers of the Orthodox religion still practice taboos and restrictions with respect to food, menstruation period, delivery, scarification and decoration but very less number of Protestants do it comparatively. Any way, following the examples of Christians, many community members began to consume livestock products and oppose some cultural practices. Thus, acculturation through "modern" religion is one force behind changing society.

7.3. Interaction With Neighboring Groups

Form the outset, the Gumuz have been exposed to Oromo, Amhara, etc. due to their location between various ethnic groups. However, when compared to the long period of interaction, neighboring influence upon the Gumuz tends to be minimal. They used to retreat into the hot thickly forested lowlands, especially before abatement of slavery in the 1930s, to avoid contacts with highland Ethiopia and the Sudan. Better relations began long after the black people were granted protection against raids and with a gradual movement of the highlanders to the areas nearby their region and the establishment of bond relationship between some Gumuz and others, especially the Oromo. During the later periods, some Gumuz males went as far as the Sudan and highland Ethiopia and brought some cultural elements back and incorporated into their own.

There are at least nine ethnic groups, besides Gumuz, in the area but with insignificant influence except the Oromo. Each ethnic group speaks its language while the Gumuz speak at least two to three languages. The most common language is **Afaan Oromo**. Basically all ethnic groups follow their own traditions and have their own cultures. The main cultural diversity is between the Gumuz and other ethnic groups. Areas of this cultural diversity include farming, livestock production, marriage, food habits and taboos, dressing styles, funeral ceremonies, menstruation and delivery practices, beliefs and decorations. Since the Oromo are the next dominant group, the first being the

Gumuz forming not less than 75% of Zone's population, both in terms of number and language, likewise their influence upon the indigenous people.

Those who live in and around the Diddessa have taken over the Oromo songs, spirit possession cults, food etiquette, naming etc. Those who settled very near to the Oromo have been influenced more than the distant ones. The Gumuz know a great deal of Oromo language because of their regular use of **Afaan Oromo** in trading and some social occasions like religious and healing ceremonies in both lowland and highland areas. Even, the Gumuz have absorbed many Oromo words into their own language.

Cattle belonging to both communities are moved to highland during the dry months and to lowland during the rainy seasons and children are adopted through **d'ibenta** or **miču** relationships (see a plate 27). Another result of the long Oroma Gumuz patron-client relationship was renaming of the Gumuz clans such as Hebanja, Kedumeja, Danda, Dukunza, Dusenia, Debanza, etc., respectively after the Oromo clans such as Agalo, Kutala, Amuma, Gida, Gombo, Enemai, etc., though regained their original names recently. The Oromo in the area have similar culture to those of their ethnic group in the Oromia Region. They practice sedentary cultivation, use ox plough and practice similar socio-cultural activities.

The result of interaction between the two communities is that the Gumuz are becoming adapted to plough-based sedentary agriculture, highland food habits, dressing styles and marriage (bridewealth) system. Some 20 years ago Wallmark wrote, "The familiar Amhara-Oromo flat fermented bread [**injera**] [and] the making of butter [are] ...unknown" [among the Gumuz] (1981:111). Moreover, he argues that the "Nilotic" people in general were less open to the highland influence. Today, the situation is getting different. Being influenced the Gumuz have almost stopped eating of some wild animals not consumed by the Oromo, which seems to have started first on the vicinity of neighboring groups, expanded to remote areas and finally almost came to an end.

Wallmark writes:" The Bega in Leqemte and southern Gimbi Weredas do not eat monkeys, hippos, crocodiles, pythons, or feline animals, perhaps because the Oromo consider them unclean. In more remote areas they eat these animals, but nowhere do they eat yena, fox, dog, mule, donkey, big cats, or poisonous snakes"(1981:112).

My informants unanimously said that eating of these wild animals has already been given up. Whenever they speak of their adaptation to something or discarding of others like decoration by scarification or local ointments and eating of some wild games, the Gumuz compare themselves with the Oromo. Marriage of some Oromo women to Gumuz males through bridewealth itself is a result of Gumuz-Oromo interaction. Of course, Gumuz community don't allow their females to marry Oromo males in the sense that their identity will be lost since both ethnic groups are patriarchal societies. The case of T`eno Gobu (Gumuz male) and Garitu (Oromo female) is given below. **T`eno** says,

> Previously Oromo and Gumuz lived in different areas. Their food, clothing and language were different. They don't intermarry because of these barriers. Now these barriers are reduced. They eat foodstuffs of one another; dress similar clothes and communicate mainly in Oromo language but also in Gumuz to some extent. Their attitudes towards one another's socio-culture are getting good. That is why I married Garitu Girañ, who was brought up among the Debeśa clan. She is fluent in Gumuz language than in Oromo. She works like Gumuz women and acts like them in every manner. She prepares **keya** and **araqe** and sells to generate income. So, I loved and asked her; she too loved me and said okay. Her parents allowed me to marry her; my parents too didn't oppose the union. Now I have three children from her and seven from my Gumuz wife. Not only me; more than 15 Gumuz males have married to Oromo women in Kamali town alone. But I know only one Gumuz female married to Oromo male in Dimtu.

T`eno's description shows the existence of strong relations between the two communities. The Oromo are very much interested in drinking **keya**, Gumuz's best-liked local beer. Hence, interaction with neighboring groups, especially Oromo has contributed to some changes undergoing in theGumuz society.

Thus, state policies and acculturation are combined to induce some changes in Gumuz's economic and socio-cultural institutions. Nevertheless, the role of these exogenous forces should not be exaggerated since related things that are undergoing changes are recent occurrences and many

societal elements have proved their continuity. Most of the central customs remained alive with minor changes. Very few farmers have borrowed highland system of cultivation and livestock production though people in the vicinity of Oromia and Amhara have better agricultural activity.

Shifting cultivation, gathering wild resources, gold panning and fewer attitudes towards income generating activities have continued to survive. Other surviving elements include language, traditional beliefs, segregation during menstruation, delivery and circumcision; marriage by elopement, kidnapping and levirate; building of grave fences and/or huts; weeping for unmarried and dancing for an old person's death; preparation of funeral feasts; contribution of food, labor or money to bereaved family; some elements of dressings; restrictions on eating of egg, cock's meat and some parts of animals' meat; porridge and **keya** as staple foodstuffs; and avoidance of shaking mother-in-law and her utensils by daughter-in-law. I think it is safe to say that Gumuz's economic and socio-cultural practices have neither fully survived nor fully changed. However, the ongoing forces seem to be strong to facilitate, promote, and induce some changes in the near future.

Chapter Eight: Summary and Conclusion

The Gumuz of my research were subjected to highland raids and oppression and their initial survival strategy was to change their habitat from highland areas of Gojjam to the hottest lowland parts of the Diddessa Valley. The Valley, because of its inaccessible feature, became accommodation and defensive area for the Gumuz who chose a pattern of dispersal and movement to evade highland pressures and raids.

The subjects of my study are mixed religion people, less developed, disparately poor and occupied peripheral territories. Education, transport and other indicators of development remained poor. Lack of all-weather road, limitation of skilled manpower, unimproved agricultural system and implements and scattered pattern of settlements have negatively affected trade, food supply and rendering public and social services.

The area is endowed with a variety of natural resources. It has great agricultural potential and suitable climate for the production of tropical crops and adequate water surface with flat land for mechanized irrigation agriculture. It also has promising wildlife and mineral resources that could bring about economic development and modernization. However, economic development and modernization largely depend on how efficient the resources are used. Since the area has been one of the neglected and forgotten parts of the country, the natural resources are not efficiently utilized. Thus, the inhabitants of the area heavily depend for livelihood on what the natural environment provides. The economic and socio-cultural adaptations and employment of indigenous skills and knowledge are among strategies and coping mechanisms used in processing ecological materials to fulfil their needs and necessities.

It seems that hunting-gathering economy was a dominant occupation of the community during the first decades of their arrival in the Valley. Hunting as a source of economic and social values was first reduced to secondary occupation due to the depletion of wildlife and then became insignificant because of government's ban on its operation, especially after guns were confiscated in 1994. Nevertheless, hidden hunting of small game by bows, arrows and traps in remote areas still persisted but not as free as it was before. Gathering of wild foodstuffs, especially during the shortage

seasons, on the other hand, contiued to supplement agriculture.

The shifting economy is almost confined to hand to mouth level. Lack of draught animals, employment of unimproved agricultural system and implements, short period of cultivation and long period of fallow, dictation of cropping calendar by rain, and the like are among the reasons that have limited the scale of production. The people are hoe cultivators and shift farm field every five years or so. Human labor alone and agricultural implements they have can help to cultivate only small plots of land and are insufficient in weeding operation. Shifting to a new field requires much time, energy and implements. To make things more problematic, diseases and pests take part of crops from the day of its sowing until it is processed for food.

The Gumuz cases can be confirmed by perspectives of Moran, Stauder, Barrett and some views of Orlove on human adaptations to a variety of ecosystems and on reasons behind cultural persistence and change. As already said, the community employed various subsistence strategies.

It is in line with views of Moran and Stauder that shifting agriculture was adapted within the existing simple technology, abundant land, soil conditions and low population density. Their option of hunting-gathering economy is dictated by the availability of wild resources. Decrease in farm yields, fear of raids, and clan conflicts are reasons behind their movement. Shifting of plots is an alternative mechanism to maintain ecological balance since the people have no other means of controlling weed or increasing soil fertility. The system allows recovery of the soil through leaving and renewing farm fields within 3-6 years, depending on the types of soil. Clearing the forest by means of fire, short period of cultivation and long period of fallow, use of human labor and hoe or stick as cropping tool were the existing options of the community in the absence of draught animals or any other modern technology. Burning technique has an instrumental value of controlling and using the environment while fallow system helps to protect the soil from leaching and erosion, reduce expenditues for fertilizers and pesticides and creat new forest that provides a higher net yield and better pasture.

Domestic organization and moving together are important to mobilize labor for all variables of cultivation and protection of crops. The Gumuz individuals organize themselves into units of production, and cooperate in social life. Manual digging and reciprocal labor mobilization are interlinked production strategies while free sharing of labor, implements, food and cooperation in any other socio-economic affairs are used to reinforce the system.

For how long shifting system can, however, support the population is an important question. Currently land for cultivation and fallow seems to be enough but for how long it would last depends

on the future ecology of the local situation in the face of demographic rise due to natural increase of indigenous population and flow of other ethnic groups, especially Oromo, into the area. Population rise reduces agsricultural land per household and shortens fallow periods. It is with view of forecasting demographic rise, which may pose problem in the future, that the state began a program of "intervention" or "package" services in which plough-based agriculture and sedentary life are becoming adopted. However, it is still at its nascent stage: according to Zone agricultural department, only 589 (5.8%) of households in the whole Zone, to be helped by only 30 development agents for 25 development agencies, were included in the "extension program" during 1999-2000 farming season.

Focuses on the raising of goats, sheep, and chickens are related with ecological factors such as their greater resistance to lowland diseases and pests and they are easy to buy and breed. Unlike before, when the value of cattle and their by-products were almost unknown to the community, Gumuz's attitudes towards breeding and using of ox for plough, cows for milk and milk products, and hides and skins of all livestock for generating income are changing. This is especially true among those who live in or near towns, roads and administrative centers and on the border areas of other groups. High increase in population of cattle began since the last five years due to the improvement in veterinary services though still inadequate especially in remote rural areas.

The people applied various mechanisms to maintain some amount of animal husbandry in response to livestock diseases and pests and exhaustion of pasture. Cattle are moved to the neighboring regions during the rainy season to protect them against tsetse fly and other lowland diseases and also helped to feed on ever-green plants that are resistant to bush-fire and dry months. Other coping mechanisms are using of the existing pasture area commonly and burning of dry grass so that it would rejuvenate new grass after about 20 days. Although bush-fire can cause many damages, if applied under control, it can have some advantages such as helping grasses and bushes to rejuvenate, adding minerals into soil for their more growth, increasing its biomass during the rainy season, and destroying useless plants and biting pests. Traditional fishing, bee keeping, gold panning, woodwork, iron smithing and pottery are other sources of livelihood. But weaving and tanning are not yet been adapted. Cash or money transactions, which used to play a marginal role in their subsistence economy, began to take root in their economic and socio-cultural activities.

Other alternative options used for reinforcing their livelihood included selling of locally distilled drinks, firewood, charcoal, construction materials etc.; and production of local "salts", "ointments", "ornaments", "clothes", "mats", etc. out of local materials. House construction,

dressing styles and work times are adjusted according to the suitability of hot climate. These people observe or conduct various cultural practices to meet their supernatural or spiritual needs. Observance of food taboos, restrictions during menstruation and delivery, provision of feasts for the dead spirits, relation of every misfortune to cursing or **musa's** punishment and other elements of traditional belief are some of the customs maintained to meet the demands of "supernatural" forces.

Besides their own staple crops (sorghum and maize), food (porridge) and beer (**keya**), the Gumuz are becoming accustomed to other crops, vegetables and fruits, and to highland dishes (**injera**, different soups, local drinks), clothes, decorating items and cattle by-products, though this is still limited. Some changes are also taking place within their own societal practices because of state pressures, and neighboring and religious influences. Hunting has almost lost its ground; gathering is reduced; shifting agricultural system still continues to be the main occupation and the process of adapting sedentarized and plough-based cultivation has started. Their interest in medical treatment is also tending to change from traditional healing to modern treatment wherever it exists.

Socio-cultural changes or persistence are also manifested with respect to specific elements. Survival of some societal elements, as Barrett viewed, can be attributed to either ecological or emotional significance. In the absence of legal sanction, elements like spiritual, experience and customs are combined to provide guidelines and a sense of security. Segregation during the onset of menstruation, delivery and circumcision; food taboos, avoidance of mother-in-law by daughter-in-law in some cases, and funeral feasts are maintained, except by Protestants, in the fear of **musa**, who is also worshipped to bless or protect the community. Initiation ceremonies on the basis of first menstruation and circumcision mark the transition of girls and boys from childhood to adolescence and their readiness for marriage and more responsibilities. Hence, they play a role of building modes of behavior and socializing youths into norms and values of a society. Gifts to be made for girls and boys during the ceremonies also indicate minor economic value. Thus, their spiritual, social and economic significance seem to have contributed to their continuity. Though segregation during menstruation, circumcision and delivery are mainly spiritual in nature.

With respect to funeral system, burial of a corpse in a shroud alone in a circular grave has almost been replaced by the use of coffin and rectangular grave. Burial with properties, firing of gun, extreme large feast and deeds related with hunting or killing a person has almost ceased to exist. Christians have graveyards but others still conduct burial around their houses. The community's funeral system had/has economic and socio-cultural values in a sense that their use of shroud, memorial trees, fences, huts, bell-mouthed flasks and white cloths instead of coffin and tomb may be

dictated by less ability to afford them. Type of burial itself and related dances, songs, instruments and feasts reflect age, wealth and social statuses of a person. Feasts are conducted in a belief to appease dead spirit and give calm to members of bereaved family. However, segregation with respect to these occasions, taboos, funeral feasts, avoidance and other elements of belief system may not have economic contribution to the physical survival of these minority groups; even less to continuity in themselves but are performed mainly to meet supernatural needs.

The Gumuz community is polygamous and endogamous society. Various marriage systems co-existed: exchange, kidnapping, elopement, levirate and bridewealth. The latter four are generated from exchange marriage in a sense that they occur due to lack of sister or female relative for exchange and also keeping of widowed woman in a place of the one already exchanged in the case of levirate. Early or adopted marriage, though reduced currently, may result from repayment to marriage by kidnapping or elopement and from marrying to a small girl that would come in a form of compensation in death hostilities. Polygamy itself may be an outcome of exchange marriage in a sense that one who has many sisters, daughters or relative girls but not relative males can marry many females. Thus, each marriage system cannot be treated independently.

The bonds created by exchange marriage once played a role of amalgamating the initially dispersed groups into a higher section, which had a defensive value in the face of enemy. It also has economic value for a poor society like Gumuz where there is a difficulty of affording bridewealth. Currently its survival came under question due to state's pressure on its change for another system (see 7.1). State officials stress its harmful feature by mentioning its invitation for polygamy, kidnapping and early marriage which in turn induce conflicts. Correspondingly, all exchange marriages, at least in my study sites, since the last 3 or 4 years, have been dissolved by the local government bodies and the most successful ones were conducted by means of elopement, which is finally settled through paying some money or animal in the form of bridewealth. Community's elite group or young generation, who seem to have been influenced by highland bridewealth and always speak comparing their system with that of the Oromo, are in favor of marriage based on love and payment. Thus, exchange marriage seems to be likely replaced by any other system, obviously bridewealth if so, in the near future.

It seems that the system has completed its defensive and uniting roles on societal scale since there may be no outside threat on them and they have already been organized into zone, **woreda** and **kebele** levels. It is views of administration, Protestants and some local elites that its negative consequences on females, especially if polygamous, early and forceful marriages are considered, is

more sounding. Protestant evangelists use Biblical principles in their opposition of polygamy and forceful marriage and likewise are the indigenous elite women. Thus, the balance of its unfavorable effects called for the need of changing the system.

Body decoration by scarification and local ornaments and ointments was an alternative option to reflect beauty, identity, strength, heroism, age, betrothal, marriage and other social values for different categories of the population. The Gumuz utilized almost natural products and materials and their own knowledge and skills to prepare various local ointments and ornaments. Both decoration and clothing systems are dictated by the non-existence of any other option and ability to buy better ones. Nowadays, these are changing in favor of highland items due to influences that is coming through relatively better communication and transportation facilities.

In general, as dealt in chapter 6 and viewed by Barrett, traditional beliefs and related customs such as segregation during the onset of menstruation, circumcision and delivery; food taboos and funeral feasts survived mainly due to their emotional or spiritual significance while economic activities, food stuffs, and traditional clothes and medicines proved their continuity to some extent because of their ecological or economic importance to the society and non-existence of any better alternative option. Local materials were utilized not only for basic needs (food, shelter and cloth) but also for house utensils, implements, instruments, decorations, medicines, etc., and for generating income at absence of infrastructure, public services and the like. Thus, some societal elements survived to due to their ecological or emotional significance and others changed or changing in response to needs and necessities or discovery of alternative choices.

As explained in chapter 7, some changes took (are taking) place inherently due to shortages and attempt to meet needs and necessities while others were (are being) dictated by external forces. Nevertheless, these changes have been slow and minimal especially when compared with long periods of interaction with neighboring ethnic groups. The existing influence affected males more than females. Culturally males have more opportunity than females to go as far as highlands and form **d'ibenta** (bond relationship) with other ethnic groups. Since womenfolk have greater roles in the socialization process of the community, it seems that less influence upon them has lessened community's influence by others. That is, women's minimal interaction in ethnic relations brought little change in Gumuz's attitudes towards exchange marriage, dressing styles, menstruation, delivery, food habits and taboos and some elements of traditional beliefs though most of these issues concern females. Another hinderance to adapting relatively "advanced" cultures was geographical barrier. However, we have to keep in mind those relatively recent developments such as education,

influences of elite groups, administrative organs, Protestants and flow of other people like Oromo into the area began to break the natural barriers and become stirring factors of changes.

Another point worth mentioning here is that, though not radical, socio-economic differentiation is observed between the households with respect to access and control over production strategies such as labor resource, cash, draught animals, market areas, gold deposits, etc. and individual characteristic in diversifying economic activities, intensifying labor and risk-taking. Location of the households around administrative centers, economic sources, projects and on border area of other groups like Oromo and Amhara is an opportunity of making difference. Some cases of gender-differentiation are also recognized. Heavy workload, frequent pregnancies, early marriage, and taboos and restrictions have resulted in females' poor health, low follow-up in the literacy program and insufficient participation in the development process. The consequences are that women are on the lower ladder or strata of society with respect to health, educational, job and social opportunities and statuses.

To sum up, it may suffice to say that the study of Gumuz's adaptive and survival strategies have reflected the existence of relationships within groupings, individuals and between them and environmental settings. The study has also showed societal elements related with continuity, change and ecological patterns; availability or absence of options and preference of one to other and its effect on environment society and culture. Less development of sedentary life might have been resulted from lack of traction animals, availability of abundant land, less exposure to settled agriculturalists and easily relocating of necessities by hunting-gathering and other means of livehihood. However, shifting cultivation and other auxiliary economic activities such as animal husbandry, gold panning, fishing, bee keeping, gathering wild edible plants beverages and craft works are still the strategies and means of survival in the area. The community's communal life in terms of sharing labor, food and implements, now tending to change in favor of individual household consumption of meals with respect to food sharing, has been an element of survival strategy. This was how the community combined geographical, economic, social and cultural strategies and coping mechanisms to prove its physical continuity.

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Informants, Interviewees and Members of FGDs

No.	Name	Age	Sex	Ethnicity	education	Marital Status	Occup-ation	Religion
1	Ato Abera Wolteji	26	M	Gumuz	-	married	farmer	Protestant
2	W/o Agemse Jara	55	F	Gumuz	-	widowed	farmer	traditional
3	Ato Algeweraš Worqee	35	M	Gumuz	3rd	married	farmer	Orthodox
4	Ato Asfaw Wolteji	25	M	Gumuz	2nd	widower	farmer	Protestant
5	Ato Ayalew Wajira	18	M	Gumuz	-	married	farmer	Orthodox
6	Ato Babo Bila	45	M	Gumuz	-	married	farmer	Orthodox
7	W/o Beqelec Tefera	22	F	Gumuz	-	widowed	household lady	traditional
8	Ato Belina Wolteji	21	M	Gumuz	3rd	single	farmer	Protestant
9	Ato Benti Dafisa	22	M	Gumuz	-	married	farmer	Protestant
10	W/o Bisinge Abagof	70	F	Gumuz	-	married	household lady	traditional
11	W/o Bultu Nano	35	F	Gumuz	-	married	household lady	traditional
12	W/o Buzuneh Jireña	17	F	Gumuz	-	married	household lady	traditional
13	Ato C`ali Delena	25	M	Gumuz	-	married	farmer	Orthodox
14	Ato C'ali Gomoro	30	M	Gumuz	3rd	married	farmer	Orthodox
15	Ato Canne Alemu	27	M	Amhara	12+2	single	Secretary of Zone higher court	Orthodox
16	Ato C`irisa Worqee	50	M	Gumuz	-	married	farmer	Orthodox
17	Ato Dafisa T`iliqa	45	M	Gumuz	-	married	farmer	traditional
18	W/o Define Woyessa	18	F	Gumuz	-	married	household lady	traditional
19	Ato Delena Seeqa	75	M	Gumuz	-	married	farmer	Orthodox
20	Ato Dereje Sufa	41	M	Gumuz	-	married	farmer	Orthodox
21	Ato Duguma Dorsa	58	M	Gumuz	3rd	married	farmer	Orthodox
22	Ato Ejeta Gomoro	19	M	Gumuz	7th	married	farmer	Orthodox
23	W/o Ganfure Abune	36	F	Gumuz	-	married	household lady	traditional
24	W/o Garitu Graň	25	F	Oromo	-	married	household lady	Orthodox
25	W/o Gelane Woltegi	14	F	Gumuz	-	widowed	household lady	
26	Ato Gelaye Dineqa	40	M	Oromo	12+4	married	head of Kamaši Woreda Social Service & Economic dev't	Orthodox
27	Ato Geremew Feyisa	26	M	Oromo	12+6	married	head of Cultural team of the Zone	Orthodox
28	Ato Girša Teso	40	M	Gumuz	7th	married	farmer	Adventist
29	W/o Gobene Bendo	70	F	Gumuz	-	married	household lady	traditional
30	Ato Gutema Delena	22	M	Gumuz	4th	married	Police	Orthodox
31	Ato Gutema Wolteji	24	M	Gumuz	-	married	farmer	Protestant

32	Ato Hika Wolteji	28	M	Gumuz	5th	married	farmer	Protestant
33	W/o Kibitu Tolesa	30	F	Gumuz	-	married	household lady	traditional
34	Ato Kinde Tesome	23	M	Amhara	12+4	single	Zone agricultural dept. head	Orthodox
35	Ato Lemesa Bekere	29	M	Gumuz	9th	married	farmer	Orthodox
36	**W/o** Megale Beleo	55	F	Gumuz	-	married	household lady	traditional
37	w/o Melkitu Muleta	60	F	Gumuz	-	married	household lady	traditional
38	w/o Mesqele Godana	60	F	Gumuz	-	married	household lady	traditional
39	Ato Mejena Dorsa	45	M	Gumuz	-	married	farmer	traditional
4o	Ato Mulugeta Abuna	35	M	Gumuz	-	married	farmer	Orthodox
41	Ato Qeneni Delena	25	M	Gumuz	-	married	farmer	Orthodox
42	Ato Qwee Folla	35	M	Gumuz	-	married	farmer	Orthodox
43	W/o Šašitu Dinqa	40	F	Gumuz	-	married	farmer	traditional
44	Ato Šiferaw Gense	24	M	Gumuz	6th	married	guard	Orthodox
45	W/o Šumete Kemisa	54	F	Gumuz	-	married	household lady	traditional
46	W/o Selote Tigre	27	F	Gumuz	8th	married	representative of Kamaši Woreda women affairs	Protestant
47	Ato Tadesse Alemu	23	M	Gumuz	12+4	single	soil & water conservation expert	Protestant
48	Ato Tefera Amara	25	M	Gumuz	2nd	married	farmer	Protestant
49	Ato Tefera Gojjam	52	M	Gumuz	2nd	married	farmer	Protestant
50	Ato Teferi Woyessa	22	M	Gumuz	3rd	married	police	-
51	W/o Telile Dibisa	40	F	Gumuz	-	married	farmer	Orthodox
52	Ato T'eno Gobu	35	M	Gumuz	-	married	farmer	Orthodox
53	Ato Waqbušo Bekere	21	M	Gumuz	-	married	police	-
54	Ato Waqgari Babo	19	M	Gumuz	-	married	farmer	Orthodox
55	Ato Waqjira Abuna	40	M	Gumuz	-	married	farmer	Orthodox
56	Ato Wolteji Sasuga	80	M	Gumuz	-	married	farmer	traditional
57	Ato Woreda Wolteji	18	M	Gumuz	-	married	farmer	Protestant
58	Ato Yadesa Wolteji	23	M	Gumuz	1st	married	farmer	Protestant
59	Ato Yadeta Wolteji	20	M	Gumuz	7th	married	farmer	Protestant

DECLARATION

The thesis is my original work, has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that all sources of material used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Name **Abeya Iffa Worjie**

Signature

Date May, 2001

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Addis Ababa University
Addis Ababa