GENDER ROLES IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AMONG THE SIDAMA OF SOUTHWESTERN ETHIOPIA

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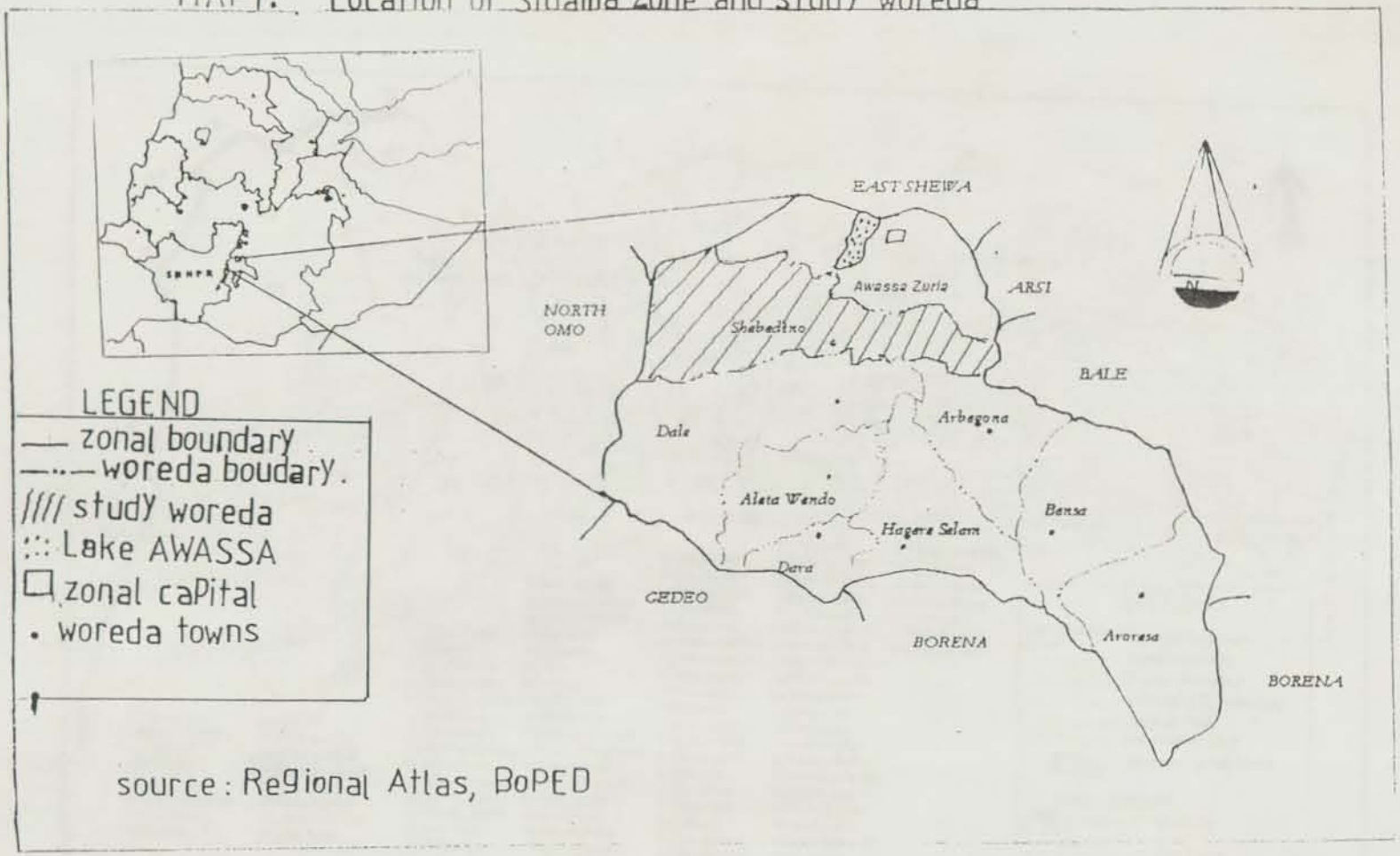

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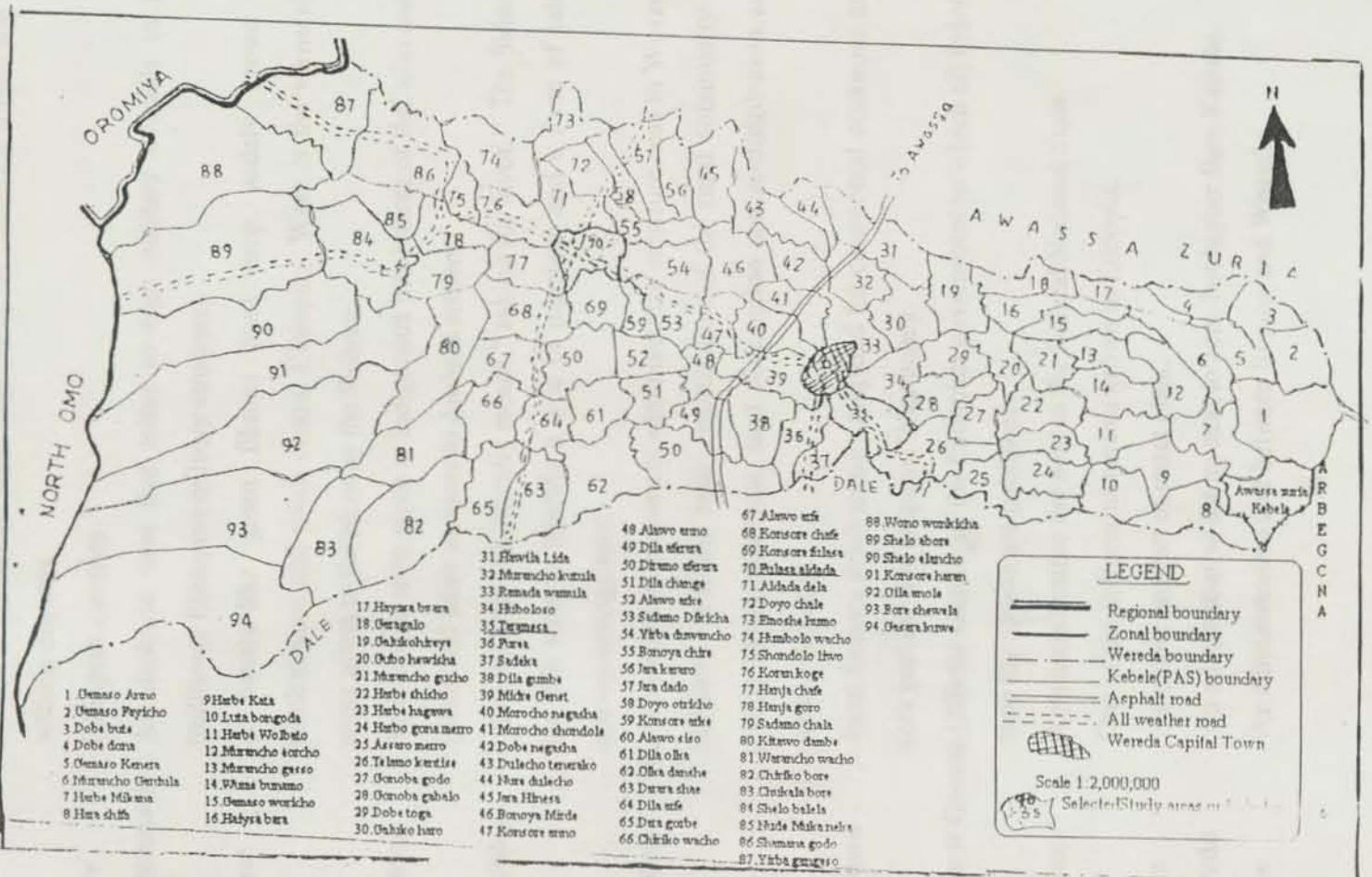

GLOSSARY

Balabbat An Amharic term that refers to local officials assigned by Amhara settlers. **Balabbats** were responsible for collecting tribute and for settling disputes.

Birr Ethiopian currency.

Dejazmach An Amharic term that refers to high military officials in the traditional Ethiopian military structure.

Enset A banana-like green fibrous food crop widely grown in southwestern and south central Ethiopia. **Wese** is the vernacular name given to the plant by the Sidama.

Gebbar An Amharic term given to indigenous inhabitants of fief who owed tribute and labor services to Amhara settlers.

Huchato A Sidama term that literally means " asking for favor.'' The Sidama use this term to identify a type of marriage and a form of labor sharing arrangement.

Kebele The lowest tier in the current administrative structure next to **Woreda** (district). It is the basic organization of the rural community in charge of tax-collection, land distribution and re-distribution and settling disputes.

Malawo A local Sidama drink usually prepared for ceremonial occasions and work parties. It is prepared from honey.

Negarit Gazeta Official Gazette of the Ethiopian government in which all federal state legislation are published.

Region An administrative tier next to the Federal National State.

Teff One of the indigenous cereals grown in Ethiopia.

Wasa An edible product of **enset** plant.

Woreda An administrative set up next to zone but higher than **Kebele**.

Zone An administrative unit between Region and **Woreda.**

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Abstract

The study finds out that hoe-cultivation has been and continues to be the dominant system of agriculture in Sidama. However, at present peasants in some parts of the Sidama have adopted plough cultivation. This study reveals that irrespective of the farming techniques used men play a pivotal role in both food and coffee production. Hoeing/ploughing, fertilizing, sowing, planting, weeding and harvesting are the major agricultural operations carried out by men. Women, on the other hand, are mainly involved in manuring and processing the Sidama's important staple, **enset**. Thus, the study argues that Boserup's (1970) generalized account of women's dominance in hoe system of agriculture does not hold true for the Sidama.

The study reveals that, in Sidama, the gender division of labor in agricultural production persists over a century's dramatic socio-economic and political transformation. The Sidama underwent changes, among others, in the customary tenure system, cropping patterns and agricultural technology. Despite these changes long- established gender roles remain unchanged. In addition, this thesis exhibits an identical gender-based division of labor in both coffee and food

producing areas on the one hand, and in hoe and plough cultivation areas on the other. Thus, the findings of this study suggest that the types of agricultural technology, land tenure system and cropping patterns do not adequately explain the pattern of gender roles in agricultural production.

Before land became a scarce resource polygyny was the dominant form of marriage in Sidama. At present monogamy is the major type of marriage. However, some Sidama men who have large and dispersed plots of land still practise polygyny. The persistence of polygyny can be attributed to the Sidama's heavy reliance on **enset** production in which women are indispensable mainly in manuring and processing it and Sidama men's strong desire for many children.

This thesis argues against the proposition that claims the existence of a relationship between bridewealth and women's dominance in agricultural production. Bridewealth is the only form of marriage payment in Sidama, but men are important actors in agricultural production. Bridegroom's parents transfer cash to the bride's parents not in exchange for women's agricultural labour. The study argues that bridewealth payment in the study area mainly entails the transfer of exclusive rights to a husband and his kinsmen over children.

Preface

This thesis attempts to describe the current pattern of gender roles in agricultural production among the Sidama of southwestern Ethiopia. It explores whether the historical changes in land tenure systems, agricultural technology and cropping patterns had any impact on the long established gender role in agricultural production. The study is also concerned with the association between form of marriage payment and type of marriage, on the one hand, and women's role in agricultural production, on the other.

The thesis is organized into seven chapters other than the summary and conclusion. The first chapter is an introduction, which embraces the statement of the problem, research site selection, objectives of the study, significance of the study, research methods, and limitations of the study. The literature review is presented in Chapter Two. Chapter Three provides background information on Sidama and the areas in which the fieldwork was conducted.

Chapter Four is concerned with the marriage practices and the form of marriage payments that exist among the Sidama. This chapter also discusses the practice of polygynous marriage both in its present and past forms. An attempt is also made to understand whether the prevalence of polygyny and bridewealth demonstrates women's dominance in agricultural production.

In chapter Five women's access to and control over resources like land, livestock and crops is discussed. The different sections of this chapter explore whether women's access to land improved with the historical transformation in the land tenure arrangement.

It also deals with the differential access different categories of women have to resources and the fruits of their labor.

Chapter Six discusses the culturally prescribed gender-based division of labor and the various work parties used among the Sidama and the role the two genders play in these work parties.

Chapter Seven describes the role women and men play in the production of different types of crop grown in the study areas. It also explores the variations in gender roles between the two specific sites where different types of crops are grown and different types of agricultural technology are employed. This chapter looks into whether the change in cropping pattern and agricultural technology brought about a corresponding change in the allocation of tasks between men and women. Following Chapter Seven, the Summary and Conclusions are presented.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the research problem, research site selection, objectives and significance of the study. Methods of the research and limitations of the study are also the concern of this chapter.

1.1 Statement of the problem

A number of studies have noted that women play a key role in African food production (Boserup, 1970, Goody, 1976; Bryson, 1981). In quantitative terms, their participation in food production is estimated as high as 60 percent and even 80 percent in some African countries (Zenebework, 1982).

Ethiopian women, though their degree of participation may vary from one culture to another, play important roles in the production of food crops. Major agricultural activities such as soil preparation, planting /sowing, weeding, manuring, harvesting as well as storage are carried out by women (Hanna, 1990; Almaz, 1991). Sidama women, as their counterparts in some parts of Ethiopia, are engaged in agricultural activities. Their domains include manuring, harvesting, storing and processing of the major staple crop, **enset**.

With regard to cross-cultural variations in gender roles, a number of researchers have attempted to provide various theoretical models. Boserup (1970) and Goody (1976), for instance, note that gender roles vary among societies depending upon the

agricultural technology they use in crop production. They also suggest that there is an association between gender roles and type of marriage and form of marriage payment.

Earlier writers, particularly functionalists tended to mistakenly suggest that patterns of gender roles in African agricultural production were rigid. However, it is now widely recognized that since gender-based division of labour is a social construct, it is invariably subject to change through time due to various social, economic and political factors. Examples of change factors are cash crop production, introduction of ploughing and the application of modern agricultural inputs, the abolition of customary land tenure system and the implementation of ill-prepared rural development programmes (Boserup, 1970; Mead, 1976; Tinker, 1976; Rogers, 1980; Caplan, 1981; Eviota, 1985)

Gender as an issue has recently become a concern of academics and practitioners in Ethiopia. However, as a review of gender-related literature indicates, in Ethiopia the changing aspect of gender roles in agricultural production and the relationship between gender roles in agricultural production and types of marriage and forms of marriage payment are some of the inadequately studied areas which need systematic investigation.

This study, therefore, seeks to understand whether there is any relationship, on the one hand, between systems of agricultural production and, on the other, gender roles, marriage patterns, and forms of marriage payment. In view of the existing debates, the study also investigates aspects of the effects of the introduction of plough agriculture, the abolition of customary land holding system and the introduction of coffee production on the long-standing pattern of gender roles in agricultural production among the Sidama. In Sidama, as elsewhere, there are different categories

of women. This study, therefore, tries to identify the varied roles women of different marital statuses play in agricultural production and the differential access they have to important resources.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The study has the following general and specific objectives:

a) General Objectives

The general objective of the study is to describe the varied roles that different categories of Sidama women play in agricultural production and to document the impact of cash-cropping, changes in agricultural technology and the land tenure system on the reallocation of tasks between men and women among the Sidama. Exploring the relationship between gender-based division of labour in agricultural production and the prevalence of polygyny and bridewealth, is the other general objective of this study.

b) Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are the following: -

1. To explore gender roles in productive activities such as crop and livestock production, horticultural production and other farm and off-farm activities.

2. To examine the nature, type, and extent of control and usufruct rights the different categories of Sidama women exercise over resources such as land, livestock, and the products of their labour. The study also investigates the rule of property inheritance that prevails in the Sidama society.

3.To investigate the difference in gender roles in agricultural production between hoe and plough agricultural areas and to assess whether or not the introduction of coffee and the change in land tenure systems brought about a reallocation of tasks between men and women.

4.To explore the role of women and men in the domestic sphere (food processing, cooking, child rearing, house and barn cleaning, etc.)

5.To assess the relationship between the Sidama farming system and the practise of polygyny and bridewealth payment.

1.3 **Significance of the study**

The findings of this study are expected to serve practical as well as academic purposes. It is apparent in Ethiopia that data pertaining to gender roles in agricultural production is scarce. The study, therefore, provides baseline data for development planners, policy makers and development agents. Moreover, the results of the study may help as a point of departure for other researchers who want to pursue further study in the area.

1.4 **Research site selection**

Shebedino woreda of the Sidama Zone was selected as the research area. The researcher's familiarity with the **woreda** is the first rationale for selecting it. As indicated before the study is intended to find out whether there is a difference in women's roles in agricultural production between areas of hoe and plough cultivation and to assess the impact of coffee production on gender roles. The existence of both coffee and food crops and the two different systems of agricultural production in the **woreda** provides justification for its selection as a research site.

In order to examine the impact of cash cropping and the introduction of ploughing on the long-standing gender roles in agricultural production in a comparative perspective, two **kebeles** characterized by slightly different features were selected: **T'aremiessa** and **Fulassa Aldada**. The two specific research sites were chosen on the grounds that both are accessible areas with varied cropping patterns and systems of agricultural production.

T'aremiessa is an area of predominantly hoe-based agriculture where coffee is the dominant crop. **Fulassa Aldada,** on the other hand, is an area characterized by plough cultivation where maize is the main crop. Thus the selection of the two sites enables us to have a comparative understanding of gender roles in the two different systems of agricultural production, namely hoe and plough, and in coffee and food producing areas.

1.5 **Research Methods**

The fieldwork was conducted from mid September to end of December 1999. Data for this study were collected through a combination of different techniques. The methods included household survey, direct personal observation, key informants interview, in-depth interview, and individual case studies. Since it was difficult to obtain data pertaining to historical changes from written records it was necessary to rely heavily on the accounts of elderly informants. With the assistance of **Kebele** chairpersons, schoolteachers and **Kebele** Development Agents (D.A) ten elderly informants, three women and seven men were selected from the two research sites, of whom four were key informants. Discussion with these elderly informants was held individually and on group basis, depending on the topic of discussion. The discussion was mainly focussed on Sidama history, changes in the Sidama economic life in general and in

gender roles in particular. Changes in the land tenure arrangements, the expansion of Menelik Empire towards the Sidamaland and the composition and distribution of lineages and clans were also discussed. In addition to elderly informants, twenty-six informants, nineteen women and seven men, were chosen from different age groups, varying marital statuses and economic background. These informants were chosen using purposive sampling method. Of the twenty-six informants fourteen, ten women and four men were drawn from **T'aremiessa Kebele,** while eight women and four men were taken from **Fulassa Kebele.**

The interviews, except a few, were conducted in **Kalu Sidamu**, the mother tongue of the Sidama people, with the assistance of two bilingual development agents (D.As), who worked in the two selected research sites.

A small household survey was conducted on eighty households of the two **kebeles**, fourty in each study area. Systematic random sampling method was employed to select these households. The sampling frame was taken from the list of **kebele** residents kept in the two-**kebele** offices. The aim of the survey was to obtain quantitative data on, among others, land-holding size, number of livestock, number of wives and use of hoe and plough.

Apart from the primary data collected from the field, secondary data were also used particularly to describe the research sites. Secondary data were obtained from written documents, CSA surveys and statistical bulletins, and **Woreda** Agricultural Office reports.

1.6 **Limitations of the study**

This study has two main limitations. First, though the Sidama are said to be a culturally homogeneous group, they occupy a vast land area with varied agro-climatic zones. The study covers only two **Weinadega** (mid-land) **Kebeles** with a total population of about 10,000 people. Due to financial and time constraints and above all for reasons of inaccessibility, it was not possible to cover **K'olla** (low-land) and **Dega** (high land) areas where people depend on different economic activities. The population in these areas have little contact with other cultural groups and as a result they seem to have preserved their traditional customs. This makes it difficult to claim that the finding of this study could explain the situation of all parts of Sidama. The other limitation is that the fieldwork was conducted from 15th of September to 25th of December 1999. According to the cropping calendar of the Sidama, these months are slack seasons in which the Sidama are not involved in agricultural activities. Therefore it was not possible to observe the activities undertaken in peak seasons, particularly during land preparation. Because of this problem the researcher was able only to observe very few activities like maize harvesting and storing and coffee picking and transporting both to the market and to the pulping stations. As a result most of the data is taken from informants' account gathered through in-depth interviews

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

As the other social sciences, anthropology had in the past either ignored research into gender roles or given the subject a biased treatment (O'kelly, 1980). Some social anthropologists have emphasized the misrepresentation and biased treatment of women in earlier anthropological works. For instance, Moore states that, "women have always been present in ethnographic accounts primarily because of the traditional anthropological concern with kinship and marriage. The main problem was not therefore one of empirical study, but rather one of representation" (Moore, 1988:1). The study of women's lives in general and gender focused inquires in particular began to come into light in the 1970's (Keesing, 1981).

As various recent studies have indicated, while gender-based division of labour is a universal phenomenon, the nature of the respective tasks allocated to men and women differ cross-culturally. Therefore, as Bossen (1989) suggested, "the fundamental concerns in analysing any economic system are the division of labour and the ways that the burden and fruits of labour are shared, negotiated and exchanged between the sexes inside and outside the household and also between members of the same sex" (as quoted in Melesse, 1995:5).

In line with this premise a number of social anthropologists and other social scientists have made various researches on gender roles, with particular reference to women's roles in agricultural production. Among these works, Boserup's was a landmark. In her 1970 publication, she put African women's enormous contribution to the agricultural economy back on the intellectual map (Guyer, 1995:26). Boserup's work

gender-based division of labour and it is thus valid to take Boserup's theory as a point of departure to study gender roles. Moore states that, "Boserup's book is an important starting point because it raises issues which have dominated discussion on women's status and economic roles in society, and which have subsequently inspired much of the empirical work conducted over the last decades "(1988:44)

The main thrust of Boserup's (1970) argument is that African societies are characterised by sparse population, shifting cultivation, traditional farming techniques and customary land holding systems in which women are the key actors in food production. Though her theory was based on empirical data from a wide range of countries, some researchers have challenged it. Guyer (1984), for instance, rejects Boserup's proposition that claims that female farming preceds male farming in African production system. She argues that the cultivation of Africa's oldest staples namely yams, millet and sorghum did not rely on female labour alone. Rather ritualised divisions of labour with a sequential mix of male and female tasks were the norm. Thus, 'female farming' did not precede male farming (cited in Bryceson, 1995:6). However, since the works of Guyer and other opponents of Boserup were largely based on a few cases, we cannot take them as conclusive. The literature review is organized into five sections. Let us dwell on these sections in turn.

2.1 **Hoe and Plough Dichotomy**

Boserup (1970) attempted to associate variations in gender roles in agriculture with different types of farming systems. She argued that in the shifting, hoe-based agriculture, women do the bulk of agricultural work and men do little farm activities, while in plough agriculture men do much of the agricultural work. Boserup further

agriculture predominates in Asia. Thus, "Africa is the region of female farming par excellence" (Boserup, 1970:16).

Jack Goody (1976) by analysing the data drawn from Murdock's (1967) **Ethnographic Atlas** arrived at the same conclusion as Boserup. For him, women's participation in agricultural production tends to be lower in societies where intensive farming system (ploughing) predominates, than in extensive (hoe-based) cultivation system. Goody, in his earlier work with Joan Buckley (1973) computed women's participation rate in areas of both intensive and extensive cultivation systems. According to his findings, the contribution of female labour in production fell from 80 percent in the extensive cultivation systems to 20 percent in intensive cultivation systems (as cited in Bryson, 1981:32)

Boserup's evolutionary model maintained that hoe-based, shifting cultivation is the lower stage of agricultural production, whereas plough cultivation is the more advanced system of agriculture. She also claimed that the shift from hoe-cultivation to ploughing presupposes a corresponding change in patterns of gender roles, i.e., from 'female farming' to 'male farming'. She wrote, "Female farming systems seem most often to disappear when farming systems with ploughing of permanent fields are introduced in lieu of shifting cultivation. In a typical case, this change is the result of increasing population density which makes it impossible to continue with a system necessitating long fallow periods when the land must be left uncultivated" (1970: 32). Mead (1976), in conformity with Boserup's thesis, maintains that in many societies the advent of animal-drawn plough agriculture has undermined women's traditional role in subsistence production.

Bryson (1981) claims that women play an important role in African food production system. She, however, rejects the assumption that the introduction of modern, intensive agricultural techniques would result in the displacement of women from agricultural production. Her argument, on the contrary, is that, "the difference between the importance of female labour in agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa as compared to the situation on a world-wide basis is maintained even with respect to the labour usage patterns of intensive agricultural systems. The reasons for this difference must be sought in factors other than technology, an important part of the answer is provided by the social structure" (1981:32). Bryson (1981) argues that marriage patterns, inheritance systems, forms of marriage payment and systems of land holding arrangements are some aspects of the social structure that influence and are influenced by gender roles.

In an article on rural women in Ethiopia, Dessalegn (1991) refutes Boserup's schema. He argues that in Wollo, where plough agriculture predominates, women's participation in agriculture was found to be high. In Wolayta, where hoe-based cultivation prevails, women's contribution to agricultural production was very low. In addition he contends that among the Begga and Gumuz of Metekel in Western Ethiopia, where hoe based farming is the most common practice, both sexes contribute equally to agricultural production.

In like manner, Dejene Aredo in a study of two villages in Hararghe and Gojam concludes that, "Boserup's thesis seems to be irrelevant to Ethiopian agriculture which has its own specific features compared to agriculture in sub-Saharan African and Asian countries" (1995:26). Likewise Pankhurst, in her study of women in Menz,

challenged Boserups' Schema in that, "despite being part of Africa, plough agriculture is practised, as in many parts of the rest of Ethiopia, and women are not the dominant force in crop cultivation. Much of Ethiopia, including Menz, thus seems to accord with the Asian rather than the African patterns" (1992:5). The question one has to pose here is whether Boserup's model is relevant to explain the situation in other parts of Ethiopia where hoe farming predominates, including Sidama.

2.2 Gender Division of Labour, Marriage Patterns, Marriage Payments and Inheritance System

The other important aspect of Boserup's thesis concerns the association between types of agriculture and patterns of marriage. In hoe-based agriculture where women do the bulk of agricultural works, she argued, polygyny is the dominant pattern of marriage. In plough agriculture areas where men do most of the field activities, monogamous marriage is the rule. Earlier anthropologists also wrote about the relationship between gender roles and marriage patterns:

> The division of labour by sex in a particular setting may well determine in considerable measure the preferred form of marriage. Where women make an insignificant contribution to the economic life, polyandry becomes a satisfactory adjustment, when the productive accomplishment of the two sexes is approximately equal monogamy may be economically advantageous. When women's economic contribution is large, and a man can produce enough in his sphere to satisfy the needs of several women, polygamy fits the circumstances (Murdock, 1960:37).

According to Boserup, in shifting cultivation areas where land is abundant additional wives are economic assets, while in plough agriculture where men are the main food providers, and land is typically a scarce factor of production, a second wife can be an economic burden rather than an asset.

Bryson (1981) took the argument one step further and suggested that in addition to the cultivation system the prevalence of polygyny in Sub-Saharan Africa is highly related to the system of land holding arrangement. In the traditional land holding pattern where land is abundant men tend to have additional wives, through whom they increase wealth and power. She summarised the situation as follows:

> The more wives a man has, the more land is allocated to cultivation, thus increasing wealth and power. This is true whether or not men 'own' the crops, which are produced on the land..... In addition even when women are considered to 'own' the crops, each wife generally is required to give a portion of the harvest to her husband for his own use. Obviously, the predominant role of women in agricultural production is essential to the attractions of polygamy in this regard. It would be of little use to the man to be allocated a larger acreage of land if his labour alone was to be used to exploit it, as he might not be physically capable of realising potential, and if he failed to farm it regularly, he could lose his usage rights to it" (1981:36).

Apart from the association between farming system and type of marriage, Boserup also tries to correlate farming systems to forms of marriage payment. For her, in regions where women do most of the agricultural work it is the bridegroom who must pay bridewealth but where women are less actively engaged in agriculture, marriage payments come usually from the girl's family as dowry (Boserup, 1970:49).

Jack Goody (1976) draws similar conclusions regarding the relationships between marriage systems, mode of marriage payment, type of agricultural production and gender roles. Unlike Boserup, however he links rule of inheritance to types of agricultural production. He argues that societies of intensive plough agriculture practise widely diverging rules of inheritance, where property goes to children of both [illegible] where parental property is given to a daughter on her marriage

(Goody, 1976:6). In African hoe system of agriculture, on the other hand, homogeneous inheritance, where household property goes to male children, and bride wealth payment are the rules (Goody, 1976:7).

2.3 Women's Access to Land and their Productive Roles.

Despite the symbolic association between women and land and the widespread cultural perception of earth as mother at best estimate women own only one percent of the world's land (Dankelman and Davidson, 1988; in Sachs, 1996: 45). It has been argued that one of the major forces that diminishs women's involvement in agricultural production is the abolition of customary land holding system. In Africa, as discussed before, women are believed to be the main food producers. However their roles in subsistence production have been altered with the radical change in their rights to land (Tinker, 1976; Lewis, 1984). In the earlier days, many African societies had their own customary land holding system in which women farmers had the right to own land (Bryson, 1981, Zenebework, 1982). Women's easy access to and control over land was for a long time ensured by the low population densities and the absence of demand for export crops (Boserup, 1970; Bryson; 1981; Caplan, 1981:Lewis, 1984).

Many scholars have argued that in Africa population densities were relatively low and agricultural land was not in short supply. Due to these two factors, individual ownership of land was not common while women had better access to land. However, that situation has changed over time. A number of factors account for the change of the former land tenure system that benefited both sexes. Among other things, these factors were partially related to the expansion of cash crop production, which created

a new demand for vast arable land, the application of new cultivation techniques and the increase in population densities (Boserup, 1970; Bryson, 1981; Caplan, 1981; Lewis, 1981). Colonial regimes and/or national governments in most parts of the world replaced traditional patterns of land use rights with privatisation or state ownership of land, or a combination of the two (Sachs, 1996: 47). With the abolition of traditional land holding systems, land registration system was introduced in most African societies. Such European style land reforms converted rural lands into private ownership and as a result women's access to land became problematic. In contrast to the old local tradition, the new land registration scheme dispossessed women of land by recognizing men as the new owners of this productive resource (Bryson, 1981; Lewis, 1981; Zenebework, 1982). In support of this assertion, Davison (1988) notes that the capitalist notions of male property ownership which was imposed on Africa, has brought about an intensification of men's control over land.

In Ethiopia, as elsewhere in Africa, the customary land holding system was undergoing a slow change that was accelerated by the land reform proclamation of the 1975. However, neither the nature of the earlier change nor the impacts of the reform on rural women were systematically investigated.

2.4 **Cash Cropping and Gender Roles**

As the economic organization of society changes, the sexual division of labour is also likely to change. The introduction and expansion of cash crop production and the incorporation of the local economy into the larger world market is one of the major change factors that profoundly affected the traditional gender based division of labour. In an earlier period when economic production and domestic consumption were not

separated, women and men's work did not show a wide range of variations. With the intervention of capital, however, domestic (reproductive) and economic (productive) spheres were increasingly separated and women became primarily responsible for reproductive work (Eviota, 1994:5).

African households, in the majority of cases, have undergone a major transformation from the long established self-sufficient production unit into peasant farming which produce new types of crop demanded in the world market (Zenebework 1982; Guyer, 1984; Henn, 1984; White, 1984; Davison, 1988). This major shift in the rural household economy from subsistence to the production of marketable crops had far reaching effects on the division of labour between the two sexes (Henn, 1984). With regard to the impact of cash cropping on gender roles, Guyer and White (1984) note that the introduction of cash crop production attracted men into commercial agriculture, and with the increased involvement of men in such productive sphere, women were relegated to domestic chores. Rogers (1980) also maintains that men's engagement in the production of cash crops is one of the major forces that eroded women's rights to land, which in turn adversely affected women's role in agriculture. In support of these arguments Nelson (1981) states that when cash crops were introduced they were grown and marketed by men, often to the detriment of women's food production (1981:5).

Several researchers assert that after the advent of cash cropping, the gender-based division of labour in African agriculture was changed into one based on a division between cash crops and subsistence crops. Men became engaged in cash cropping while women remained subsistence producers. However, Lewis (1984) argues against this dichotomy and maintains that the family economy in much of rural Africa

depends upon the exchange of labour between men and women. Though the nature of the work may vary, women do some of the work in cash crop farming, while men are charged with certain tasks in food production. She went on to argue that, "Although women may work widely in cash and export crops, they rarely control the profits derived from them. Thus the sex division of control of production corresponds more closely to the cash/subsistence distinction than does the sex division of labour" (1984:72).

2.5 Change and Continuity in Gender Division of Labour

Researchers have noted that in any society there exists a clear distinction between domestic and public spheres of activities in which men and women take part. In this distinctive role allocation, men are often held responsible for public activities while women are engaged in domestic spheres. According to Sandy (1974) the domestic domain includes activities performed within the realm of the localized family unit, whereas the public domain includes political and economic activities taking place or have impact beyond the localized family unit (1974:190). As Rosaldo (1974) has suggested gender roles in social, cultural and economic life of a society can be related to a universal structural opposition between domestic and public domains of activity. This universal dichotomy of activities is assumed to provide the necessary framework for an examination of male and female roles in any society (Rosaldo, 1974:24).

As mentioned above, the opposition between domestic and public domains is reflected in various aspects of life. One of the reflections is seen in the roles the two sexes play in economic life. Though female economic activities may vary from one society to another, the activities seem to be relatively less public than those of men; women tend

to work individually, or in small, loosely organized groups. And the products of female labour tend to be directed to the family and the home. In addition, in most societies, women's activities as opposed to men's are recognized as less important and less valued. Margaret Mead (1935) states that "Whatever the arrangements in regard to descent or ownership of property, and even if these formal outward arrangements are reflected in the temperamental relations between the sexes, the prestige values always attach to the activities of men" (as quoted in Rosaldo, 1974: 19).

In the domestic versus public debate the argument is that in societies where there is a sharp differentiation between domestic and public spheres women have less access to resources and their decision-making power is minimal. On the other hand, in societies where domestic and public spheres are less differentiated women have better access to resources.

It has been confirmed by several researchers that gender based division of labour is a social construct liable to change as societies change. Nonetheless, some writers argue that gender roles tend to be rigid or persistent over a period of time. Chafetz (1989), for example, proposes a theory that addresses the issue of how existing gender roles are perpetuated. She maintains that gender division of labour, in most cases, reinforces male's superiority and places high amount of resources in the hands of male members of a society. As long as the gender division of labour serves the interest of men, they employ different means and techniques to protect the system. Some of the important means that are used to sustain and legitimise the existing gender division of labour are gender ideology, gender stereotype and gender norms. As Chafetz (1989) explains it:

> Gender ideologies explain in terms of a broader principle (god, nature), why men and women are different and serve different rights, obligations, responsibilities and rewards. Gender stereotypes describe the ways in which women and men presumably differ, usually in ways that partially devalue presume feminine traits and serve to justify the gender division of labour. Gender norms specify behaviour expected of men and women thereby providing the basis for the stigmatisation of non-conformists. They specify behaviours congruent with the gender division of labour and superior male power (1989:137)

To sum up, this chapter attempts to offer some basic theoretical frameworks that have been forwarded by different writers in an attempt to explain gender roles in agricultural production. Scholars like Boserup (1970) and Goody (1976) proposed that in hoe-based cultivation system women play important roles in agricultural production, however with the introduction of coffee production, the change in the customary land holding system and the advent of plough cultivation women's roles tend to diminish. They also suggested that there exists an association between gender roles in agricultural production, forms of marriage payment and types of marriage.

Rosaldo (1974), on the other hand, argued that the universal dichotomy between domestic and public domains provides a framework to understand gender roles in society. She also noted that in societies where there is a clear differentiation between domestic and public domains women have less access to resources.

It is widely accepted that gender role is a social construct, which is liable to change. However, as Chafetz (1989) argued, since gender division of labour in a society favours men in terms of access to resources men employ different means and techniques to maintain the existing gender division of labour. Patriarchal ideology, gender stereotypes and gender norms are some of the strategies used to maintain the statuesque

CHAPTER THREE

Background to the Study Area

This chapter provides background information on the Sidama people and the areas in which the study was conducted. It is divided into six sections. The section that follows will offer basic facts and figures about the study area. The second section deals with the Sidama calendar and seasons. The origin of the Sidama, their clans and lineages will be discussed in the Third and Fourth Sections, respectively. Social grouping is the concern of Section Five. The last section discusses the economic basis of the society.

3.1 Location, population size and density

3.1.1 Sidama Zone

The study area is part of the Sidama zone of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR)*. The zone is geographically located in the Southwestern part of Ethiopia extending from latitude 5^0 45' to 6^0 45' and longitude 38^0 to 39^0 east (BoPED, 1998). It is bordered to the north and east by the Oromia Region, to the west by the North Omo Zone, and to the south by the Gedeo Zone (See map 1). Thus, the Oromo (Gujji & Arsii), the Wolaita and the Gedeo are the neighbouring groups of the Sidama.

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*This administrative region was established in 1993. It has a population of 12.1 million, covering an estimated area of 112, 343 square km. (CSA, 1999). It is administratively divided into nine zones and five special **woredas** inhabited by more than forty five indigenous ethnic groups which belong to the Omotic, Nilotic and Cushitic language groups.

Awassa, the capital town of both the SNNPR and the Sidama Zone, is situated in the extreme north of the zone adjacent to Lake Awassa, some 270 kilometres south of Addis Ababa.

The zone's population was estimated to be about 2,044,836, of which women constitute 49% (CSA, 1996). According to the abridged statistical report of the Central Statistics Authority, 93% of the population live in rural areas, with a total number of 408,852 households. The report also indicates that about 94% of the rural residents are of Sidama descent, while the remaining 6% are Amhara, Oromo, Wolayta, Siltie and others. This official figure clearly shows that the rural part of the zone is almost exclusively inhabited by culturally homogenous Sidama group.

The zone covers an area of about 6862 square kilometres. This small land area coupled with its high population size makes the zone an area of high population density with about 325.5 people per square kilometre. In the SNNPR it is the second most densely populated area next to Gedeo zone (about 457.5 people per square km.)

3.1.2 **Shebedino Woreda**

According to the 1991 regional administrative set-up, the Sidama zone is divided into nine **woredas** (districts). The research was conducted in **Shebedino Woreda** where the two specific research sites are located. The **Woreda's** main centre is **Leku** (**Lako**), which is situated some 27kms south of **Awassa** (the Regional and Zonal capital). The population of the **Woreda** was estimated to be about 420,976 of which 97% live in the rural areas (CSA, 1996). Women make up 50% of the **Woreda** population.

Shebedino Woreda has a total land area of about 1094 square km, accounting for approximately 16% of the total land area of the Sidama zone. It is thus, an area of high population density with about 385 people per square kilometre.

The **Woreda** is organized into ninety-four peasant associations, with a total of 87537 households. According to data obtained from the **Woreda** Agricultural Office, **Shebedino** is classified into three agro-ecological zones: highland **(dega),** lowland (**k'olla**) and mid-land (**weinadega**). Its altitude varies from 1,350 to 2,900 meters above sea level. The mid altitude (**weinadega**) zone covers 92.5% of the total land area of the woreda, whilst 3% and 4% of the land areas are **k'olla** and **dega**, respectively.

3.1.3 **Research Sites**

As discussed in Chapter One, two research sites were selected on the basis of pre-set criteria. These are **T'aremiessa** and **Fulassa Aldada** (see map 2 for the location). The two research sites are described here below.

3.1.3. 1 **T'aremiessa**

T'aremiessa is one of the ninety-four rural **kebeles** of **Shebedino Woreda**. The village's population is estimated at 5,301, of which women account for 49% (CSA, 1996). It has 1,222 households scattered over an area of 1,355 hectares. This **kebele** is a cluster of seven small hamlets, i.e., **Burk'a, Sintaro, Sedine, Lilame, Elawata, T'aremiessa and Burema**. The **Yanase** clan constitutes the majority of population in all these small hamlets.

The agro - ecology of the village is predominantly mid-land, **weinadega**. The major crops grown in the village are maize, **enset, teff** and coffee. Haricot beans, sugarcane and horticultural crops (though of little importance) are also grown by the village farmers. The largest portion of the village cropland is taken up, in their order of importance, by coffee and **enset**. Coffee, eucalyptus tree and sugar cane are the major plants grown for the market, while enset is the main staple crop.

Being a major coffee growing area, there are four coffee pulping and hulling stations in the village. Two stations are privately owned, while the other two are the property of a service cooperative.

Ox ploughing is not alien to **T'aremiessa** farmers. However, due to the shortage of pasture as well as cultivable land only a few individual farmers use draft power for traction. In short it is an area where hoe based agriculture predominates. To sum up, the following features characterize the village: high population density, hoe-based agriculture, shortage of agricultural land and cash cropping.

3.1.3.2. **Fulassa Aldada**

This rural **kebele** lies in the northweastern part of **Shebedino Woreda** (see map 2). The total population of the village, as estimated by the Central Statistics Authority, is 4800. Of these, women constitute 50%. As with **T'aremiessa,** most of the villagers are of **Yanase** clan who claim to be the descendants of **Bushee. Fulassa** is made up of six distinct settlement sites, composed of 989 households. The settlement sites are named after some lineage of the **Yanase** clan: **Shondolo, Gonowa, Bonoya, Sadamo, konsore** and **Hanja**. According to the information obtained from the villagers, the

name of each of these settlement sites corresponds to the name of a lineage group that predominantly inhabits the area.

The major crops grown by the village farmers include maize, haricot beans, **enset**, coffee and **teff**. Unlike **T'aremiessa** food crops take up a large proportion of the cropland in **Fulassa.** Maize is the main crop grown in the area and the villagers use it both for family consumption and for the market.

The villagers who inhabit the **k'olla** area keep cattle and small stock (sheep and goats). As in **T'aremiessa,** farmers in **Fulassa** raise cattle for milk and above all to manure the **enset** plant, which is found in almost all homesteads. Animal products like milk and butter are used with maize porridge (**huffisa**) and **enset** (**wasa**) as their staple diet.

In contrast to **T'aremiessa**, a large number of Farmers in **Fulassa** use ox drawn ploughs for land preparation. As the data from the Agricultural Office indicates, almost 85% of the farmers use animal power for traction. Thus, ox ploughing is the dominant system of agricultural production in the village. In contrast to **T'aremiessa** village, plough agriculture, food cropping and comparatively large agricultural land holding size mainly characterize Fulassa.

3. 2 **Seasons and Calendar**

The **Sidama** divide the year into two main seasons: dry (**Arro**) and wet (**Hawado**). As in many other parts of Ethiopia, in Sidama there are two major crop seasons: **meher** and **belg** (these are Amharic terms which have no Sidama equivalents). The former, being the main crop season (long-rains), occurs between late June (**Aela**) and early October (**Birra**). The main crops grown in the **meher** season are **teff**, barley,

wheat, horse beans and field pea. The rain in **Belg** (Short-rains) crop season falls from early March (**Battessa**) to May (**Oncolesa**). During this short-rains season, the farmers cultivate crops like maize and haricot beans. The two main perennial crops, **enset** and coffee benefit from the two rainy seasons.

The Sidama have a calendar system, which is quite different from the widely used Ethiopian calendar. According to their calendar the year is divided into twelve lunar months. These are, in their order of sequence: **Battessa**, **Dottessa, Oncolesa, Aela, Maja, Wechawaje, Wechawaro, Birra, Bochasa, Sadasa, Arfasa** and **Amaje.** Unlike the national calendar the Sidama calendar does not have leap years. Most of the time, the commencement of the New Year (**Battessa**) is marked by the beginning of the short rains season, **belg**.

In addition to their unique calendar the Sidama have four distinct days in a week namely, **dela, k'awado, diko** and **k'awalanko**. Nonetheless, after the incorporation of the Sidama into the Ethiopian State the people have largely abandoned their long-established system and resorted to the use of the national calendar.

Table No 1 Names of the Sidama months and Ethiopian and Gregorian Equivalents.

Serial No.	Sidama Months	Ethiopian Equivalen	Gregorian Equivalents
1	Battessa	Megabit	March
2	Dottessa	Miazia	April
3	Oncolesa	Genbot	May
4	Aela	Sene	June
5	Maja	Hamle	July
6	Wechawaje	Nehase	August
7	Wechawaro	Meskerem	September
8	Birra	Tikemt	October
9	Bochasa	Hidar	November
10	Sadasa	Thasas	December
11	Arfasa	Tir	January
12	Amaje	Yekatit	February

Source: Interview with Lelisso Leko and yonka Sakela, October 1999

3.3. The Origin of Sidama

A review of the literature on the Sidama shows that various writers have assigned different names to the people and their area. Hamer (1987), Stanley (1967), Braukämper (1977) and Cerulli (1956) are among the best known researchers that used different terms to refer to the people and their territory. Hamer, who produced a number of articles and books on the Sidama people and their culture, erroneously called the people Sadama while assigning the term Sidamo-land to the territory inhabited by them. Cerulli, who was also one of the great authorities on Sidama culture, gave the name Sidamo both to the people and their land area. He also assigned this same name to a large group of Cushitic speaking peoples of southwestern Ethiopia: the **Hadiya, Kembata, Tambaro, Alaba** and **Derassa** (Gedeo). Stanley and Braukämper, in contrast to Hamer and Cerulli, have given the name **Sidama** to the people collectively as a group, while referring to the individual member of the group as **Sidancho**. The use of different names to refer to the same society may partially be attributed to the writers' difficulty in comprehending informants' pronunciation or to their understanding of the peoples' own identification. Whatever the source of the confusion may be, it should be clear that the people under study refer to themselves by the term **Sidama** (Sing. **Sidancho**). The term **Sidama**, thus, in the present context, refers to the people while the term Sidama zone denotes the area in which they presently live. The Sidama belong to the East Cushitic language group of Ethiopia (Stanley, 1966).

Different writers have different views with regard to the origin of the Sidama group. According to Stanley (1967) the Sidama are part of the second Hamitic immigrants

inhabited the area known as **Bali** (Bale), southeastern part of the present day Ethiopia before they occupied their present territory. Braukamper (1977), opposed to Stanley, has attempted to trace the origin of the Sidama from two different directions. According to his account **Bushee,** one of the apical ancestors, came from **Bale** via Dawa River to occupy the present land of Sidama. The other common ancestor **Maldea**, who is believed to have a genealogical tie with the **Harari** used to live in **Harar** and finally left his original place and settled in the present Sidama territory.

Hamer (1987), unlike the other writers, claimed a northern and south central origin of the Sidama's primordial ancestors. According to him, **Bushee** who has a genealogical link with the **Amhara** of Ankober left his original place and migrated to the present Sidamaland through Dawa River**. Maldea's** ancestors, for some time in the past, lived in Gurage but later moved to River Dawa and then came to their final destination.

As with the other little studied peoples of Ethiopia, the Sidama have no written historical records. Many writers, as a result, have attempted to reconstruct the peoples' history from clan mythologies and genealogies based on oral traditions. According to the common oral traditions of the elderly people, the Sidama are said to have come from an area near River Dawa, south of present day Sidama territory. The three elderly informants, Tuliso Salfa, Yonka Sakela and Lelisso Leko, agree that River Dawa is the original place of their ancestors. Their common ancestors, as the informants indicated, left their original place and moved into their present land in search of favourable environment and vast fertile land to cultivate crops and raise livestock. In addition, one elder suggested that the present Sidama land was originally

occupied by a group of people called **Offa,** with whom the Sidama had a fierce fight to take over the land. The **Offa** lost the fight and were driven away. Reasearchers have attempted to document this story, but there is no consensus on the identity of the **Offa**. For instance, Hamer (1987) argued that they were the original inhabitants of the Sidama land who had their own identity but for various reasons have now become extinct. Cerulli on the other hand claimed that the **Offa** are part of the **Hadiya** group who ruled Sidama for some time in the past.

According to one of the elders, the **Offa** are the Sidama who ruled their own people and now live in some parts of the Sidama territory. Other informants invalidated that view as unfounded and groundless.

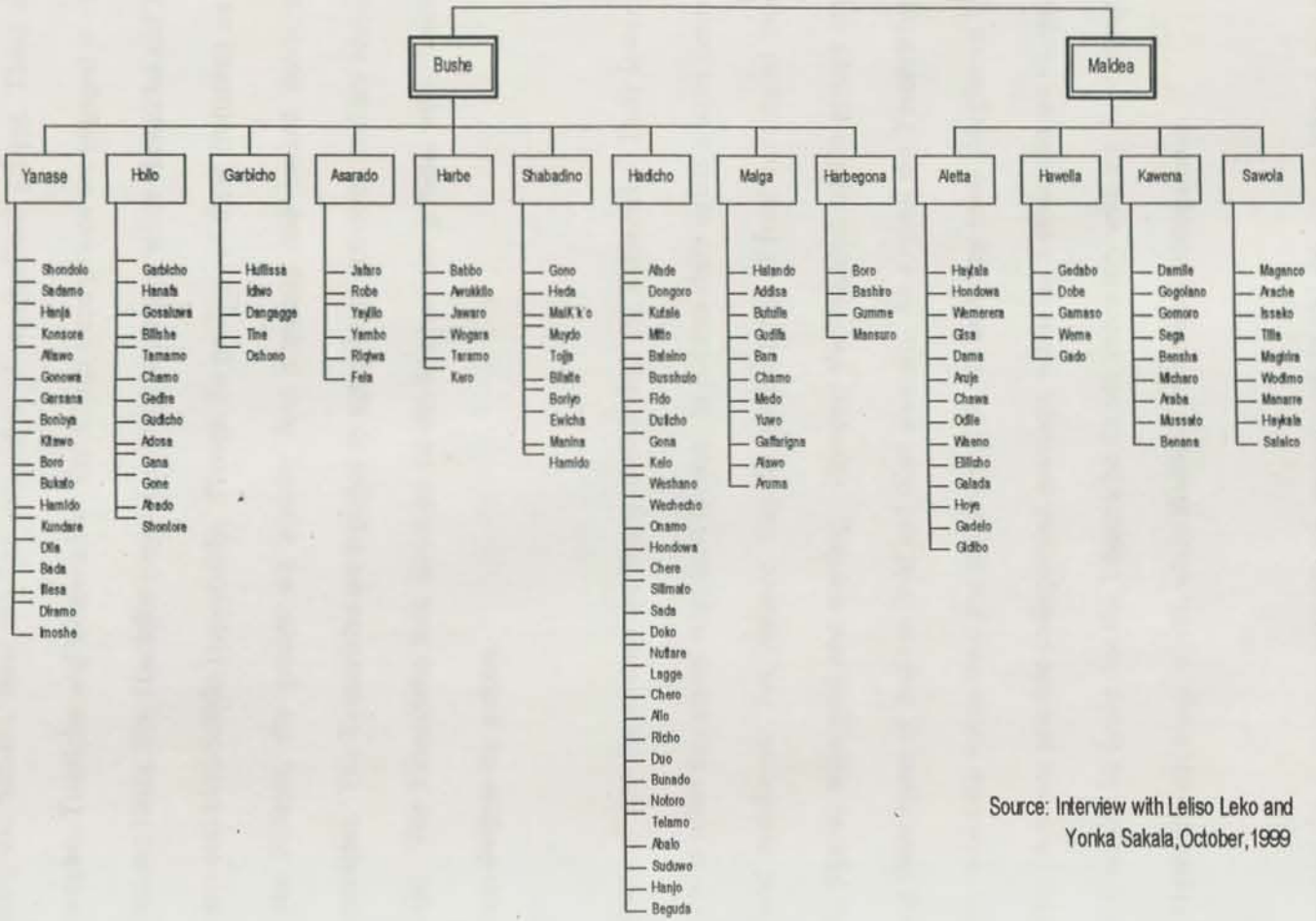
3.4 **Moieties, Clans and Lineages**

For the purpose of this thesis, the term clan is defined as a large grouping of people or individuals who trace their descent from a remote, unknown common ancestor (Oke, 1984). Lineage, on the other hand, is a kin group who reckon their descent from a close, known ancestor in the prevailing line of descent (Murdock, 1960).

The Sidama clans (**gosa)** are organized into two broad categories. Murdock (1960) and Oke (1984) state that, the two major categories from which the various clans of a society emerge are called **moieties**. Thus, the Sidama are composed of two moieties: **Bushee** and **Maldea.** The former is composed of nine clans while the latter is divided into four. The different Sidama clans, in most instances, are localized in their definite territorial divisions. The clans are **Alleta, Hawela, Kawena** and **Sawola** who claim to be the direct descendants of **Maldea.** The **Hollo, Garbicho, Asarado, Harbe,**

Harbegona, Malga, Shabadino, Yanase and **Hadicho** claim to be descended from **Bushee**. **Bushees** are more numerous than **Maldeas**. These clans are further subdivided into several lineages (**gare**). My key informants have identified 104 lineages of **Bushee** descent and 37 lineages of **Maldea** descent (see the following clan structure for details).

Figure 1. Sidama moieties, clans and lineage Structure



Source: Interview with Leliso Leko and Yonka Sakala, October, 1999

3.5 **Social Groupings**

Among the Sidama, there are four categories of occupational groups. These are **Hadicho, Hawacho, Tunticha** and **Yemericho**. The former three groups are engaged in craft activities of various kinds. The **Hadicho** group is engaged in pottery, while **Hawacho** and **Tunticha** are tanners and blacksmiths respectively. Though the products of these craftsmen are widely used by the Sidama, the groups are socially less respected and looked down upon by the **Yemericho**. The **Yemericho** are engaged in agricultural activities, and are socially respected groups. The **Yemericho** look down on all the three-artisan groups, while black smiths and tanners despise the potters.

In terms of size the artisans are less numerous than the **Yemericho**. Their lower status in the society is often associated with food taboos. In Sidama there exists a strict conventional rule of food avoidance. For instance, they do not eat types of food considered impure such as pork, hippos, wild goat and warthog. However the despised artisan groups are accused of eating these types of unclean food and dead animals. As a result the **Yemericho** do not give wives to or take wives from the artisans and do not consume meat slaughtered by the artisan groups. Artisans practice endogamous marriage, while the **Yemericho** are exogamous group. Here it should be noted that the **Yemericho** do not intermarry with the three groups, **Tunticha** and **Hawacho** exchange wives, while **Hadicho** are entirely endogamous.

In the past the dichotomy between the agriculturalists and the artisan groups was so strict that they did not enter each other's houses and did not eat together. However as elderly informants pointed out, due to the advent of Protestant religion, the expansion of schooling

and the 1974 revolution, the distinction has become less sharp. Some **Yermerichos** have recently begun to intermarry with the other less respected groups. However, the majority of the Sidama still follow the old tradition.

With regard to the geographical distribution of the occupational groups, elderly informants explained that **Yemericho, Tunticha** and **Hawacho** are intermingled and dispersed throughout the Sidama, while **Hadicho** inhabit a definite area now constituting **Dara Woreda** (district). This does not, however, mean that they do not live in other parts of the zone. There is an old legend among the **Yemericho** that explains how the **Hade** descendants (**Hadicho**) have settled in the present day **Dara woreda.** As an elder told the story:

> Long ago there was a man whose name was Dublo. He was one of the descendants of **Bushee** who belonged to the respected social group (**Yemericho**). Once upon a time all his brothers were killed in one of the sporadic clashes with neighbouring groups. According to the Sidama tradition a man inherits his deceased brother's wife. On the basis of this tradition **Dublo** asked his brothers' wives for marriage upon the death of their husbands. Unfortunately all the widows refused him. He became angry. Then **Hade** (the forefather of the **Hadicho** group) came close to him and whispered, ''Let me give you an advice, ... Call all the people, women and men, for a meeting. Upon their arrival beat me up in the midst of the crowd. When you beat me I will beg for your forgiveness and call you **Moticha**, (literally means 'master")." Dublo accepted Hade's advice and did what he was told to do. Then the widows who refused him began to question themselves. ''How on earth we refused this honoured Moticha" and then reconsidered his request and became his wives. Dublo, who had a title deed to land, in return gave **Hade** a vast area of land as a gift. The land is presently located between the **Aletta** of Sidama and Derass*a*" (Interview with Lelisso Lek'o, October 1999).

According to the oral tradition, the agriculturists, tanners and blacksmiths are said to be the descendants of the same ancestors, while potters are of different origin. I asked my informants how and why the former three groups have distinct social statuses while they are the descendants of the same forefather. Two elders offered the answer and said that:

> One day **Yemericho,** while chatting with **Tunticha** and **Hawacho** near a river, requested the latter two groups to prepare a local drink known as **malawo** (made of water and honey), using water from the river. The two down trodden groups, in turn, brought a pot of honey and put it into the running water. Since the water took the honey away, they couldn't make **malawo. Yemericho,** who was a brave man, took his turn, dug a small pit and filled it with handfuls of water, pour a pot of honey in it and made the best **malawo.** The artisans then admired the **Yemericho** for his skill and accused themselves of spoiling the Sidama's precious local drink. This finally led to status differentiation.

The other explanation given with regard to status differentiation is that, as mentioned above, the **Yemerichos** blame the artisans of eating culturally prohibited food.

3.6 The Economic Basis of the Society

In the recent past the main occupation of the Sidama was agro-pastoralism. They used to cultivate both seed and root crops and keep large herds of cattle. In short, they were cattle herders and swidden cultivators at the same time. They practised shifting cultivation and produced their oldest crops, ***enset*** and sorghum using a long wooden digging stick locally known as **wenincho** and wooden hoe, termed as **onkolo**. Cattle, sheep and goats were the major livestock on which they heavily depended for their survival. Milk together with **enset** and sorghum provided the main diet for the agro-pastoral Sidama. However, due to scarcity of both arable and grazing land they no longer rely on large-scale livestock production and shifting cultivation. They abandoned shifting cultivation and at the same time reduced their stocks to a level that the environment could carry. The gradual shift from agro-pastoralism to permanent cultivation is partially attributed to the increasing decline in crop and grazing lands. The increase in human population that increased demand for settled cultivation using improved iron-tools also accounted for the changes in the Sidama mode of subsistence.

The principal agro-ecological divisions of the Sidama are **dega**, or the temperate plateau (high lands), **weinadega** or the intermediate zone and **k'olla** or the low lands. The **weinadega** agro-ecology takes the largest portion, with approximately 54% of the territory, while **dega** and **k'olla** covers 16% and 30% respectively. The observed differences in altitude have resulted in considerable variations in climate and vegetation. This is manifested in the fact that the Sidama farmers cultivate a varied package of cereals, pulses and root crops, both perennial and annual. The most important crops grown by the Sidama, in their order of importance, are **enset**, maize, **teff**, barley and wheat. In addition, pulses like haricot beans, horse beans and field peas are also grown to supplement the farmers' staple diet. **Enset**, being the most important crop on which the farmers heavily depend for their food, is cultivated by a large number of **dega** and **weinadega** farmers. The **k'olla** farmers, on the other hand, heavily depend on maize and cattle herding for their survival.

The Sidama are not an isolated group involved solely in subsistence production, rather they are well integrated into the Ethiopian market economy as well as the larger world market economy. In this respect, coffee production plays a pivotal role. Farmers mainly in the **weinadega** Zone produce a large amount of coffee for both local and foreign markets. For instance, in 1998 the Sidama smallholder farmers cultivated 72,020 hectares and produced 267,036 quintals of coffee. Of these, 10422 tones were sent to the central market (BoPED, 1998)

Apart from crop production, animal husbandry is an important element in the economy of rural Sidama. Though the lowlanders attach high importance to cattle production, both **dega** and **weina dega** dwellers also rear different types of domestic animal.

CHAPTER FOUR

Social Organization

This chapter discusses some aspects of Sidama's social organization. The first section of the chapter deals with the Sidama's marriage practice. Section two is concerned with marriage payments, while the last section focuses on polygynous marriage.

4.1 **Marriage**

In Sidama, marriage is a means through which the basic units of production, consumption and distribution are established. For Keesing, marriage is the process through which domestic groups are formed, descent groups are interlinked and the biological and social reproduction of society is achieved (Keesing, 1981:251).

Among the Sidama, pre-marital sexual relations are strictly prohibited, and women are forbidden from bearing children out of wedlock. This traditional prohibitory rule is lifted only when a marriage is contracted. In addition, the Sidama assign the term "**goshatu**" (which literally means sexual intercourse) to the wedding ceremony. Thus the prohibition of both pre-marital sexual relations and bearing children before marriage together with the term **goshatu** imply that marriage in Sidama entails a transfer of rights over woman's sexuality and fertility.

4.1.1 **Marriage Types**

Marriages among the Sidama can be grouped into four major types. These are **huchato**, **adawana**, **adulsha** and **dii' ro**. The former two are the long established practices while the

latter two have recently been introduced into the Sidama culture. These distinct forms of marriage are described below.

4.1.1.1 **Huchato**

This is the most traditional form of marriage, which is, in most instances, arranged by the groom's (**eda**) and the bride's (**edaycho**) parents. In such marriage, as the appropriate partner is identified the boy's father together with village elders (**chemesa**) will go to the place of the girl's father. Upon their arrival the would-be wife's father accepts and invites the guests. After a small chat he will ask them about the reason for their visit. For the question the elders will reply, "we came to seek your daughter's hand for marriage." It is a norm that on the very first day of the visit the girl's father will not accept the request. Rather the wife taker will be told to come back on another day. In the meantime the wife givers will check on the suitability of the prospectve husband. His suitability is checked on the basis of common criteria. His **gare** (lineage), **sirchise** (genealogical tie), wealth, conduct, and status group are some of the criteria to be taken into account.

After having checked on the groom's suitability, the girl's father will offer a clue to the messengers on their next visit, "**ade ofol folshire**". This literally means, "have a seat and take some rest." Then the visitors will respond, " let it be a real rest" and leave the bride's parents homestead. At this stage the bride's father response is usually taken as his willingness to give his daughter in marriage.

Once the girl's parent's approval is obtained, discussion will continue in order to determine the amount of **minne** (bridewealth). After the discussion is concluded a date for the marriage

ceremony is fixed. The wedding day is often set in consultation with **ayantus** (specialists who are able to identify the appropriate days for making sacrifices and for organizing social and ritual ceremonies). In Sidama an elaborate marriage ceremony is held only in the house of the would-be husband's parents.

Upon the payment of the bridewealth, the bride will make the necessary preparation for the upcoming union. The first measure to be taken, in this respect, is the bride's circumcision. This is done, most often, in the groom's parent's house. Before the circumcision, the mother of the prospective groom calls in a **gursummete** (a woman who left her first husband and married another) for help. Her main responsibility is to keep the eyes of the girl blindfolded until the circumcision is performed.

The circumcision often brings a girl a complete exemption from any kind of household chores and other activities for two or more months. During this period of seclusion she will be fed on special food such as **Burusame** (**enset** flour mixed with butter) meat and milk. This is meant to make her more beautiful, strong and healthy. Following the girl's circumcision the wedding ceremony is held.

The day after the marriage ceremony, the groom's mother prepares and serves special food and drinks to the couple who eats **wasa** and drink milk together. Eating and drinking together symbolizes the complete union of the couple. This is the only day in their lifetime in which the couple eats together from the same plate. After this they eat alone. A husband often eats first and a wife eats after she serves her husband and children.

4.1.1.2 **Adawana**

This form of marriage is arranged solely by the girl's free choice. It is the most traditional marriage but has now become less important in Sidama marriage practices. **Adawana** marriage is associated with a stick locally termed **senu sik'e**, literally means, "girls' stick".

A girl who reaches marriage age may seek a suitable would be husband. She first tries to identify the right partner. Once she identified the suitable candidate, she will try to get his consent by persuasion. If the boy shows reluctance to accept her, she will pick a long thin stick "**senu sike**" and go to the place where the boy's mother live. After making sure that the mother is in the house, she will drop the stick into the kraal or in the house and stand in the doorway. Then the boy's mother will ask her, "why did you come here?" The girl will respond promptly,"I came for adawana". The boy's mother then will accept her as an invited guest. Food and drinks will be served. The boy will later be told about the incident. He has no way to evade the marriage. In the Sidama tradition the boy cannot reject the **adawana** girl. If he rejects, it is believed, the girl will curse him and he may lose his wealth or face other problems as a consequence.

The marriage ceremony of adawana is not as elaborate as in the other types of marriage. Her husband, relatives, friends and society at large show less respect to a woman who marries by adawana. The term " **sik'o tuge aeno**" is given to the girl, which literally means, "she dropped a stick to beg for a husband". This term signifies her social disrespect and dishonor and may finally cause her social marginalization.

In such a marriage, the husband does not transfer a bridewealth (**minne**) to the bridal group. Only a token amount is given to the girl's parents. According to my interviewees and key informants, unmarried old girls who have married younger sisters are more prone to **adawana** marriage.

4.1.1.3 Adulsha (elopement)

Adulsha is a form of marriage that has recently been introduced among the Sidama. However, it has now become a more frequent marriage practice. Nowadays many young members of the society resort to this type of marriage arrangement.

A young man who is attracted to a girl will try to get her approval to marriage via persuasion. He may send his friends, brothers or other relatives. In some instances, the suitor approaches her through her own brothers or friends to obtain approval. After a long process the girl will tell in person or send a message to the wife seeker that she needs some time to think over the proposal. If she accepts, the would-be couple will fix a date and elope to the boy's parent's house.

As soon as the girl's parents realize her elopement, they will make a relentless effort to know with whom she has eloped. Usually the eloped girl gives a clue with regard to her whereabouts. As a clue she writes (personally or assisted by others) and leaves a short note with small gifts called **mine worro**. **Mine worro** is another form of marriage gift, which constitutes various items such as a gun, some birr, dress, umbrella, etc, depending upon the wealth of the boy with whom the girl eloped. With regard to this marriage gift, it is the girl who has an exclusive right to determine the type and amount of gift to be distributed to her parents and kinsmen.

As in other forms of marriage arrangement the eloped girl is circumcised. After the circumcision the boy will ask his father to send emissaries to the bride's parents. The negotiation may take some time. In the process the negotiators decide on the size of the

bridewealth. It should be noted that since the girl's parents lose their daughter they would usually have little negotiating power. As a result they often accept whatever amount decided by the groom's parents messengers.

4.1.1.4 **Dii'ro (abduction)**

This form of marriage did not exist in the traditional marriage practice of the Sidama. As mentioned earlier, it has been introduced very recently. Sidama elders are unhappy about marriage contracted via **diiro**, for it creates a disagreement, even sometimes a fight between the kinsmen of bride and groom.

Dii'ro takes place when a wife seeker fails to gain marriage approval either from the girl or her parents. A grown up boy who proposed marriage to a girl but rejected may decide to take her by force. Once he arrives at a decision he will prepare himself to take his would be spouse forcefully. He discusses with friends, brothers and other male young agnates on the matter. Then the would-be husband and his accomplices will arrange appropriate time to kidnap her. Most of the time **dii'ro** occurs while the girl goes to school, to fetch water, to a market place, to attend a church program, or to attend other ceremonies. When the abductors succeed to find her, the suitor first grabs her and then his group members help him to coerce her to go to the abductor parent's place. If she resists the kidnappers may beat her. In some instances the assault may inflict serious physical injury. After the abduction a watch dog will be assigned to force her to stay at the homestead of the boy's parents. It is however claimed that, once a girl loses her virginity, she will stop resistance to be the abductor's wife. At the same time her parents do not expect or accept her return as according to the Sidama tradition

loss of virginity out of wedlock may result in social marginalisation and at the same time is a disgrace to the girl's parents.

After taking a good deal of time to obtain cash for the bridewealth payment the groom's parents will assign and send a strong adult man to the girls' natal family to announce where their daughter is found. Immediately after the announcement the emissary will run back to his respective village. In case he is caught in the mission, the girl's agnates will beat him up and force him to do women's household chores such as cleaning a house or a cattle kraal, disposing animal manure, etc. That is why the boy's parent's look for a strong and fast runner as messenger.

Then after the boy's father will send elderly messengers to initiate negotiations. The marriage negotiations may take a long time if the girl's parents demand a heavy bridewealth payment. Usually marriage preceded by **dii'ro** results in a sizable payment. Elders who negotiate the bridewealth payment also levy fines and penalties on the abductor's parents.

3.2 **Bridewealth**

In many societies marriage is mediated by a set of intermediate transactions. Anthropologists have identified three types of marriage payment: dowry, bridewealth and bride service. In those African societies where a patrilineal system of descent predominates, bridewealth is assumed to be the major form of marriage payment where valuables are transferred from the kin of the groom to the kin of the bride (Moore, 1988:70).

As the case in many other patrilineal societies, bridewealth is the only form of marriage transaction in Sidama. This type of property transfer at marriage is locally termed **minne.**

However, unlike other patrilineal societies livestock does not have a place in the Sidama's marriage transaction. Cash is currently the major item transferred to the bride's parents. The amount of **minne** transferred to the girl's parents is not clearly defined. It varies from village to village and from individual to individual. As available data indicate, at present, the amount of cash paid at marriage ranges from birr 900 to 1300.

Sidama elders are not happy with the current amount of bridewealth. As my elderly informants indicated, the size of the payment has shown an alarming increase compared to the old days. They pointed out that in the earlier days sheepskins, **gereccu lande** (a large dress made of skin) **gonfa** (a large, colourful and skilfully made cotton cloth) were enough to take a wife. Informants also recalled that a poor man could receive a wife through bride service, in which the wife seeker gives labour services to the girl's parents. This was called **ballo.** But this type of marriage transaction is no longer practised.

The increase in the amount of bridewealth payment and the involvement of cash as an important element of the payment is partially related to the incorporation of the rural household economy into the larger market economy, via the introduction of coffee production. The following table gives a general picture about the increase in marriage payment over time.

Table No 2 Change in the amount of bridewealth payment over time.

Name of Informant	The amount paid at his/her marriage	Estimated year
Demboba Dembara	Birr 2	50 years or so ago
Medina Nameto	Birr 30	35 years ago
Beyene Berassa	Birr 50	25 years ago
Bekallo Berassa	Birr 100	30 years ago
Seripato Otisso	Birr 300	10 years ago
Diramo Gidamo	Birr 800	6 years ago
Aberash Gatiso	Birr 900	3 years ago
Taemura Werana	Birr 1000	2 years ago
Teferra Tafesse	Birr 1000	3 years ago
Buruk Yota	Birr 1200	2 years ago

Source: compiled from field notes

Compared to the former days, a dramatic increase in the amount of marriage payment is observed. As one elderly informant put it: " since the introduction of coffee, cash is no longer a problem. During my father's time it was not only difficult, but also impossible to raise a small amount of money let alone a large sum. My father paid only six birr to his wife's father. He told me that he had to work almost a year for an **Amhara** landlord to get this small amount of money. Now the payment is going up and has reached the point that some poor wife seekers can't afford the bridewealth" (Interview, October 10, 1999).

To sum-up, the introduction of cash crop and the use of money as a medium of marriage payment have increased the size of marriage payment in Sidama. This association between the introduction of a market economy and the increase in the amount of **minne** seems to

correspond to Hakansson's (1988) thesis that the introduction of cash crop production makes bridewealth more commercial.

4.2.1 Functions of minne

It is generally agreed that there are cross-cultural variations in the function of marriage payments. In some societies it has a social or an economic function while in others it has a political function.

David Parkin (1980), (in Moore, 1988:70), in his discussion of marriage payments in Kenya, divided bridewealth into two types depending upon the function they serve. These are uxorial payment, which entails the transfer of rights over women's sexuality and labour services, and the genetricial payment, which involves the transfer of rights over children.

Minne among the Sidama makes a girl's marriage socially acceptable and more importantly establishes the legitimacy of children born out of the union. As some informants suggested, **minne** is taken as a payment for the women's services and for exclusive rights over children to the husband and his kinsmen. However, the most important function of **minne** highlighted by most informants is the transfer of exclusive rights to the husband and his kinsmen over children. Thus, we can say that according to Parkin's classification, the dominant type of marriage payment in Sidama is genetricial rather than uxorial.

The most important cultural practice that exhibits the genetricial implication of bridewealth payment is that if a woman breaks up her union (regardless of the initiator of the divorce) without bearing a child to her husband, she will be liable to pay back the bridewealth paid at

her marriage. There are two options for the repayment of the bridewealth. If a woman who terminates her first marriage remarries, her second husband is held responsible for the repayment. On the other hand, if she stays in her natal family's village, her parents are liable to pay back. Unless the former husband receives back the money he paid for **minne** he can force the woman to come back to his home. The following two cases illustrate how bridewealth payment and women's fertility are intertwined.

Case No.1

Bekalo Berassa

Bakalo Berassa, 52, belongs to **waeno** lineage. His first wife **(semo)** died long ago. During the interview he was living with his second wife. He paid bridewealth to the parents of his first wife but not to his second wife. I asked him, " Why didn't you pay bridewealth to your second wife?" He replied, in our tradition we pay bridewealth to the unmarried virgin **(semo)** only. My second wife was a divorcee **(gursummete)** who had borne a child to her first husband **(muttara).** If she did not have a child (regardless of the sex) with her former husband I would have had to pay or return the bridewealth to her husband. That is why I took **Harma Hatiya** (his second wife) without paying **minne** (Interview, October 17, 1999)

Case No. 2

Argitu Adamo

Argitu is a young woman who has abandoned her first husband **(muttara).** She belongs to **garsana** lineage and is about 30 years old. She has nine children, six sons and three daughters from her second husband. During the interview, she was asked whether her parents received marriage payment from her present husband. Her response was, " since he is not my **muttara** he didn't pay directly to my parents. But he paid back **birr** 300 to my ex-husband, who paid this amount of **minne** to my parents. In our culture, if a woman divorces her first husband without bearing him a child and remarries, the new husband has the obligation to pay back the **minne** to her former husband. (Interview, October 6, 1999).

Parkin's (1980) classification of bridewealth explains one aspect of the marriage payment; it however, conceals another implication of the payment. According to the Sidama tradition all women are not equally eligible to receive **minne** at marriage. There are two commonly

known categories of wives in Sidama. The first category is referred to as **semo** while the other is locally termed **gursummete.** The former is a virgin wife and the latter is a remarried (non-virgin) wife. Wife takers do not pay bridewealth to **gursummetes'** parents, but they are obliged to pay to **semos'** parents. Thus, it seems sound to argue that **minne** can also be understood as a payment for woman's virginity. **Minne,** in general, entails the transfer of both fertility and virginity.

Who benefits from the marriage payment?

Women in Sidama do not have a say in bridewealth negotiations and do not benefit from the payment. It is only the girl's father who derives direct economic benefit from the payment. Neither the girl nor her mother are entitled to a share of the **minne.**

Minne among the Sidama is taken as a means of compensating wife givers for the loss of their daughter. However, despite the fact that mothers lose the labor service of their daughters, they have no access to the cash obtained through **minne.** Several explanations are provided for this contradictory phenomenon. Bunare Shashemo from **Hanja** lineage, a mother of eight children offered the following opinion,"It is a long established tradition. Everywhere in every aspect of life my husband represents this house. He is responsible for everything except domestic matters. Therefore, he received a total of **birr** 1700 from the marriage of our two daughters, and used a portion of it to cover some important expenses and put some portion aside for the future marriage payment of our two grown up sons." (Interview, November 1999). Informants provide a variety of opinions and reasons to explain why men take bridewealth. Nonetheless, a plausible answer may be obtained by looking into the patrilineal social system and patriarchal ideology, which tend to favour male members of the society.

Like land, livestock, labor and agricultural products, cash is an important resource for the Sidama. Major resources are in the hands of men and as a result women have limited rights over them. It is only men who are involved in the transaction of cash in bridewealth. A father who raises the cash for his son's marriage is in turn entitled to take the cash received from his daughter's marriage. Widowed women who become heads of household are exceptions to the general rule that excludes women from sharing in the bridewealth. Unlike other categories of women, widows pay bridewealth for their sons' marriage and receive it at their daughters' marriage.

As discussed earlier, a new type of marriage, **Adulsha**, was recently introduced in Sidama. **Adulsha** marriage takes place with the consent of the girl. With it a new form of property transfer called **mine worro** was also introduced. The items that constitue **mine worro** are varied. The items include cloths, umbrella, cash, guns etc. Unlike bridewealth, the amount of **mine worro** is negotiated between the groom and the bride and transferred to the bride's parents. It is the girl who distributes the **mine worro** to her parents. In this type of transfer a bride's mother has better access to the property transferred.

4.3 **Polygynous Marriage**

In the old days most of the Sidama were polygynists. According to informants, in the earlier days when land was plentiful, men tended to have several wives. However, Sidama society has undergone various socioeconomic changes and consequently monogamy gained predominance. Nevertheless, some elderly members of the society still enter into polygynous marriages. It is also a common practice in some parts of the Sidama, where land is abundant and among individual members who are rich enough, to maintain more than one household.

Data obtained from the household survey indicated that polygynous marriage still persists in the two research sites. However, it was found out that people in **Fulassa Aldada** are more polygamous than in **T'aremiessa**. The survey result depicts that out of the 40 respondents in **Fulassa** 20% were polygynists while in **T'aremiessa** 12.5% were polygynists. Many factors may account for the prevalence of polygynous marriage. However, informants pointed out that Sidama men tend to acquire additional wives, due to the demand for additional women's labor and the desire for numerous children. An old man who has thirteen children said, " **di hudiisawo'e, ooso dihogomo",** which literally means, " I am not hungry or I am not short of children" when was asked why he is not a polygynist." This response indicates that men, among other things, indulge in plural marriages either to have many children or to obtain women's labor services to feed household members. Let us now further explain the two overriding factors of polygynous marriage.

a) **The demand for women's labor**

In Sidama, as in many other rural agrarian societies, women's labor is of paramount importance both to maintain a household and to its economy. Sidama women play indispensible roles in food processing and in the daily maintenance of households. They are also involved in some agricultural activities. It is useful thus to highlight the importance of women's labor in view of their productive as well as reproductive roles.

Productive Roles

When male informants were asked about women's involvement in agricultural activities their prompt response was brief, "no they don't participate in agricultural work". However, in reality it has been found out that the majority of Sidama women do the bulk of work in the

production and processing of the single most important food crop, **enset.** Due to the role women play in **enset** production, men who own many parcels of **enset** plot tend to take more than one wife so that they can have the additional labor required to make **enset** plant more productive. This aspect will be discussed in detail in chapter six. In addition to this, Sidama farmers usually organize festive work-groups to undertake different agricultural operations. The success or failure of such labor mobilization is determined by women's ability to prepare a large amount of food and drinks. Thus, a man who has a large acreage of cropland wants to acquire additional women's labor via the acquisition of additional wife/wives in order to be able to organize festive work groups. This finding goes in line with Hamer's (1987) claim that those Sidama men who have sufficient land tend to acquire additional wife in order to have access to additional women's labor. In sum the Sidama want to acquire additional wife/wives for the following two basic economic reasons:

1. Women's indispensable roles in processing **enset** and preparing food and drinks required to feed household members and organize work parties that are important to undertake different agricultural activities.
2. Women's exclusive role in manuring and harvesting the **enset** plant. Animal manure is extremely important to provide a household with sufficient amounts of food. Thus, a man who plants many **enset** seedlings in different plots wants to have additional wives, in order to obtain a good yield of **enset** crop.

Reproductive roles

In Sidama, women are involved in domestic activities such as child bearing, nurturing of infants, caring for and upbringing children and the daily maintenance of the household. These

tasks are indispensable to social reproduction. As a result, a household where there is only one wife while grown up daughters are not present may face difficulties at times of wife's delivery or in her absence. Thus in order to bridge such domestic labor gap some men bring in an additional wife. It is a norm for co-wives to exchange domestic labor among themselves as need arises. Some Sidama polygynists say, **"mitee galtee, mitee elite",** meaning, "one wife is one eye" to emphasize the necessity of an additional wife for the effective functioning of households. The following example may illustrate how the need for additional women's labour leads some individuals into polygynous marriage.

Case No.3

Biruk Yota

Biruk is a prosperous (by Sidama peasants' standard) young man. He belongs to **Waeno** lineage. He has recently become one of the few young **polygynists**. He married his first wife six years ago. He is now in his early 30's. His wife bore him three children, two sons and a daughter. He built a big iron-roofed house on the land given by his father upon his marriage. He raises crops like coffee, **enset,** maize and different varieties of trees. Three years ago **Biruk** obtained a large sum of money from the sale of coffee, maize and, above all, from the sale of half processed wood used for construction purposes. He spent the cash derived from the sale of these items to purchase one and a half hectare of land located in another village. The large proportion of the purchased land was planted with coffee, **enset** and maize. He built a hut on his new land so that he can manage and protect the crops grown. Until he brought his second wife, his unmarried younger brothers lived intermittently in his new hut to serve as a watchdog to Biruk's property and crops. However, his father, Yota, later began to express dissatisfaction about Biruk's management of the newly acquired property. He complained, " Biruk, the **enset** plant you abandoned on the new land became unproductive, because of lack of proper management and follow-up, the coffee was also exposed to stealing, and it was also impossible to organize a work group which is important for maize production." Then he persistently urged his son to bring in an additional wife. At first Biruk was unhappy about his father's advice and said, " Since my first wife and I are Protestant I strongly resisted my father's idea, but he didn't stop insisting on my having another wife. He later sent his elder brother to persuade me of the importance of obtaining an additional wife. I resisted for some time. However, before it was too late, I realized that I should have another wife in order to use my new land and crops properly and to ease the work burden on my first wife, who was responsible for manuring the **enset** plant grown in the two different parcels of land. Finally I married a second wife,

paying 1200 **birr** for bridewealth. The two wives have their own separate houses and plots of land. (Interview, November 1999).

b) The desire for children

The Sidama attach high value to children and want to have as many children as possible. Those men who cannot satisfy their needs for children tend to look for additional fecund woman. Sidama men prefer male children to female children. Hence, apart from the need for additional children, some men also acquire additional wives to increase the number of their male children. Among the Sidama the desire for many children may be explained by the following motives: (1) to ensure parents' old age security; (2) to perpetuate and multiply one's lineage through the birth of male children and (3) to have natural heirs of household property upon the death of a father. The following two cases of polygynists exhibit how some Sidama may acquire additional wives mainly to have children:

Case No. 4

T'aemura Werana

T'aemura Werana is a young man who belongs to **waeno** lineage of **Aletta** clan. He is in his early 30's. He obtained land through different sources. The land on which he currently lives was bought from one of the demobilized soldiers. The seller upon his return back to his village received a plot of land from the peasant association. But later **T'aemura** bought it at birr 2000. The size of the plot is one **timad** (1/4 hectare). The other agricultural land was received from his father upon his first marriage **(iqqa).** He has two wives, who live in separate houses but within the same premise. The senior wife occupies the bigger house while the junior resides in the smaller hut. His two wives bore him two children, a son and a daughter. The senior wife gave him a female child while the junior bore him a male child.

He paid no **minne** to the senior wife's parents for she was a **gursummete** (a remarried)**,** whereas his junior wife's parents received **birr** 900 in marriage payment. In our discussion I posed a question, " I learnt that you have two wives, why did you marry two?" He first hesitated and stared at my interpreter then replied, " In our tradition rich men are prone to polygamous marriage. They take upto four or five wives. I am not rich enough to have two wives. I acquired an additional wife in order to have as many male children as I wished. I have no surviving brothers since they all died. For this reason, I want to have many male

children. My first wife gave me only a daughter. I waited for five years, but to no avail. Therefore, I brought in here my second wife. She bore me a son as I wanted." (Interview, October 1999).

Case No.5

Negussee Nehura

Negusee Nehura is a young man, in his mid 30's. He belongs to **hanja** lineage of the **yanase** clan. He took his first wife from the same clan but from different lineage. She belongs to **gonowa** lineage. He lived with her for almost twelve years, but she bore him neither a son nor a daughter. Since the two are Catholic it was difficult to dissolve the marriage. Finally he decided to marry another wife, violating the Catholic marriage rule and regulation. As he aired his problem " I waited for **Weifu** (his first wife) for a long time to bear me children, but she didn't. My younger brothers and friends who married long after my marriage have many children. I was in desperation. My brothers and other close kinsmen urged me to either divorce her or to acquire another wife. Then finally I decided and married **Nigest Aergamo** from the **gergeda (guji Oromo)** five years ago. I now have two children from my second marriage, a son and a daughter, I am now happy (Interview November 1999).

As these two cases indicate, the Sidama use the institution of polygyny as a strategy for obtaining several children. Hence, we can say that the Sidama case fits best into the distinction Goody (1976) made between Eurasian and African 'heir producing device." In an attempt to describe the different means used by Eurasians and Africans to have many children, Goody states that:

> In Eurasia, it is largely, but not exclusively, an heir-producing device. In this way it resembles other solutions to the problem of the absence of lineal heir. For example, barren (or insufficiently fertile) women may continue to be accepted as wives, while the absence of an heir is solved by bringing outsiders into a filial role (e.g. by adoption). Or barren wives may be divorced in favour of a more fertile one (giving rise to serial monogamy). Or such women may be supplemented by taking additional concubines (in polycoity) or wives (in polygyny). The first three solutions are largely Eurasian, the fourth, polygyny, largely African (1976:42).

Among the Sidama, as long as a man has large plots of land and is able to maintain more than

marriage in the two study areas. Though some people still practice polygynous marriage monogamy is preferred. It is worth nothing, however, that some male informants still appreciate the importance of polygynous marriage, even though the scarcity of land constrains them from practicing it.

To summarize, in Sidama there are four distinct forms of marriage: **Huchato**, **Dii'ro**, **Adulsha** and **Adawana**. The former three forms of marriage involve cash transaction from the groom or his parents to the bride's parents. This transaction is locally termed **minne**. After the introduction of coffee production, **minne** has become a costly affair. At present a wife seeker may pay up to **birr** 1300 to a wife's parents. Bridewealth in Sidama is a genetricial payment, which entails the transfer of rights over children to a husband.

Currently, both monogamous and polygynous marriages are practiced among the Sidama. However, as compared to the former days, monogamy has recently become the dominant type of marriage. Scarcity of land is one of the major factors that account for the decline of polygynous marriage. At present most men lack sufficient land to obtain additional wife even though they could manage the bridewealth. Nonetheless, those men who have widely separated parcels of land or large holdings tend to have additional wives. In a majority of cases, men acquire more than one wife in order to obtain women's labor and to have as many children as they desire.

CHAPTER FIVE

Women's Access to and Control over Resources

The main issues this chapter sets out to explore are (1) the change in the land tenure systems of the Sidama (2) women's access to and control over land and other resources and, (3) the Sidama's rule of inheritance. The first section discusses the history of the Sidama land tenure systems and explores women's rights over land under the different tenures. The second section deals with women's access to other resources like livestock and crops. The last section provides a brief account of the Sidama's rule of inheritance.

5.1 Land Tenure Systems and Women's Access to Land.

Land is one of the principal assets of the Sidama peasants. Over the last century, the Sidama have undergone historical changes in their land ownership system. The different land holding arrangements the Sidama have so far encountered can be categorized into three types: customary (clan- based), feudal and public (state) tenures. Let us now offer a brief description of the different systems and women's ownership and usufruct rights of land under the varied systems.

5.1.1 Customary land tenure.

Customary tenures usually refer to systems where some social authorities or local political entity exercise administrative rights over land (Lawry, 1988:5,as cited in Simbolon, 1997). In the remote past, in Sidama, population density was low and excess land was available both for grazing and crop production. In this situation, private ownership of land was uncommon and clan groups owned land communally. According to Hamer, "The only recognized title in

land was held by the clan historically associated with a given parcel, with all household heads having rights of use that could be transmitted from one generation to another " (1987:39).

Prior to the incorporation of the Sidama into the Menelik's Empire** the vast land of the Sidama was held by its thirteen clan groups. These clan groups were corporate in that they controlled property, including land, and were represented by assemblies of elders (Hamer, 1987:31). In the Sidama traditional land holding system the right to use arable land within a particular area was based on clan membership and the family male heads made decisions on land allocation. Hence, the traditional form of the Sidama land tenure system can best be described as clan based in which land was apportioned among families of the clan.

Under the customary tenure, among others, rule of descent and residence pattern at marriage played important roles in determining inheritance and land use rights. It should be noted that Sidama was and is still a strongly male dominated patrilineal society in which descent is reckoned through the father's line. Besides, the common pattern of residence upon marriage was and continues to be patrilocal. As a result male members of the patriline held rights over land, while women were denied entitlment to this important resource.

** Emperor Menelik (1889-1911) was the **Shewan** Amhara king who aspired for a unified Ethiopia. He finally succeeded to incorporate the Sidama and many other ethnic groups into Ethiopian Empire dominated by northerners in the last quarter of the 19th century. Before Menelik's conquest the Sidama were under the rule of different clan chiefs called **mote.**

An important aspect of customary (clan-based) tenure is the principle of first occupancy and its overriding special rights granted to the first settlers in a particular area (Adeyoju, 1976:29,in Simbolon, 1997). In Sidama, the original holder of arable land in the customary tenure system transferred land to male children or close kinsmen through marriage and through inheritance. Unlike arable land, however, collectively held grazing and forest lands were not transferred from one generation to another through inheritance or otherwise.

Unlike their male counterparts, women did not have land rights either through marriage or through inheritance in the Sidama customary pattern of land holding. Women's deprivation of title to land is partially attributed to women's ambiguous position, to use Simbolon's (1997) phrase. In Sidama, women's membership in the kinship group differs according to their marital statuses. Before marriage women are part of their fathers' group, whereas after marriage they no longer belong to it. This anomalous social identity of women seems to have weakened their rights to hold land. In general under the customary land tenure system the Sidama peasants had free access to land, but women were not entitled to land.

Several writers have argued that in Africa where customary land holding system predominates, women have better access to agricultural land, and as a result they play a pivotal role in the production of food crops. However, the findings of this study go against this contention. In the traditional land holding system Sidama women had limited access to land and they were not the main actors in agricultural production.

5.1.2 **Feudal tenure**

The land tenure system of Ethiopia under the old feudal regime can be grouped into four major types: communal **(rist),** church, state and private tenures (Dessalgn, 1984:17). In communal land, individuals (both men and women) can obtain land from the first occupant through kinship relations. Under this system the individual holders had only use rights over their holdings. The holders cannot transfer land to others by sale, mortgage or gift, except by lease (Dessalgn, 1984:17). The church land, known as **Semon** land, was state owned but given to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, which had only usufruct rights.

The most common form of state tenure, particularly at the initial stage of Menelik's conquest, was termed **Maderia**. In this system land was apportioned to individuals who were loyal to the state on temporary basis. Like **rist** and the church land, the holders of **Maderia** land had only use rights over the land. Private holdings, on the other hand, were lands taken away from the original peasant holders and given to the state officials on individual basis. Unlike the above-mentioned tenures, in private tenures the landholders had both ownership and usufruct rights over the land. In Sidama, **Maderia** and private tenures were the most dominant forms of land holding after the Menelik conquest. The discussion to follow explores how the Sidama's land holding system was transformed into the feudal form.

The southern and southwestern parts of Ethiopia were incorporated into the Ethiopian Empire towards the end of the nineteenth century, notably between 1875 and 1898 (Pankhurst, 1966). The Sidama, in particular, were brought under Emperor Menelik in 1893 (Hamer, 1976). After the occupation of the Sidama land by the Menelik's soldiers, new forms of land tenure were introduced and forcefully imposed upon the original inhabitants. According to

informants, the first clan chief (**Mote**) who had peacefully submitted to the Northern conquerors led by **Dejazmach** Besha Aboye was Balicha Welabo of the **Yenase** clan. Native **motes,** like Balicha who submitted peacefully to the northern conquerors retained their previous position and became **balabbats**. These local **balabbats** were responsible for collecting tribute and for settling disputes. More importantly, they played intermediary roles between the Sidama people and the new settlers.

Since the **Yanase** clan was the first to accept the newly established Northern administration, the two research sites where this clan predominates were among the areas in which the new form of land holding arrangement had first come into effect. During the early years of Menelik's expansion, the Northern administrators confiscated "unoccupied land" and distributed it to garrisons on a temporary basis. This was called **maderia** land. Many elderly informants were of the opinion that these " unoccupied lands", in actual fact, were collectively held grazing and forestlands. They also indicated that in the early stage of the land confiscation process indigenous cultivators were not evicted from their holdings. The information obtained from elderly informants goes in line with what Markakis (1974) wrote: " ...there was no mass displacement of cultivators nor any sudden appearance of a landless class. The primary economic effect was a depression in the level of living for the peasants" (as quoted in Donham, 1984: 52).

Though the Northern occupation of the Sidama land did not result in peasant eviction, all elderly informants agreed on the point that the Sidama, women and men alike, had hard times under the rule of the Northern governors. The severity of this problem varied from one area to another. The suffering of the native people was mainly rooted in the system of **Maderia**

land holding. This land holding pattern gave the landholders the right to expropriate goods and labour services from the original inhabitants called **gebbar**. Each **gebbar** was required to provide agricultural products like grain, butter, honey, sheep and goats to his master as well as labor tribute by farming, herding cattle, building and repairing houses, fencing and cutting firewood. These were the services expected from Sidama men. Sidama women (**gebbars'** wives) on the other hand, were obliged to work for the settlers' wives. They rendered labor services such as grinding and pounding grain, fetching water, cooking, cleaning a house and cattle kraal, washing clothes, etc. Both Sidama men and women were made to work everyday of the week except Sundays. They devoted Sundays and nights to work on their plots and household activities. In short, this meant that much of the time and labor of Sidama men and women were spent in enriching their masters' households and economy.

Besides the temporary **maderia** land, other forms of land tenure were also introduced into Sidama.These were **gult** (lifetime tenure), **rist gult** (permanent tenure) and private tenure. Unlike the former two, the latter was the dominant and important tenure towards the end of the feudal regime when land became a scarce resource as a consequence of population growth and the introduction of coffee production. With the introduction of coffee, each of the Northern settlers employed different strategies to maximize his holdings:

> Through the use of political power, land holding rights were converted from temporary to permanent form; inaccurate measurement enlarged private land holdings; fraud, intimidation, and force were employed to deprive the southern **gabbars** of their ill –defined rights: and frequently, outright seizure converted sizeable areas of land into the private property of powerful officials (Markakis 1974; as quoted in Donham, 1985:54).

As noted earlier, the new settlers expropriated mainly "unused" and "abandoned" land of the indigenous people and hence the clan arable land occupied by indigenous cultivators was largely left unaffected. This is to say that the traditional land holding system and the alien feudal type were in operation side by side in most parts of the Sidama area. However after the Italian occupation of 1936, the exploitative **gebbar** system was abolished, while **rist, semon** and private tenures remained intact up until the nationalization of rural land.

What should be emphasized here is that though the introduction of new land tenure systems have brought about various changes in the life of the Sidama, they did not improve women's access to land. In the feudal tenures, as with the customary system, the Sidama women had limited access to land.

To sum up, the incorporation of the Sidama into the Ethiopian Empire was followed by the introduction of various new forms of land holding arrangements. The major forms were **maderia** and private tenure. These new forms, however, did not abolish the customary land holding system of the local inhabitants. This is to say that the two different and mutually exclusive systems existed side by side for more than a century. The problems brought about by the new system were varied and complex. However, for the purpose of this paper, we will confine ourselves only to the major ones. These were shortage of grazing land and shortage of agricultural labor. Let us discuss these issues and their implications for women's workload.

1) Shortage of grazing land

As stated before, the new settlers took over the so-called unused and abandoned land, which were in actual fact the pastureland used for the large herds of cattle, sheep, goats etc. Hence

the expropriation of vast areas of land resulted in severe shortage of grazing land. This in turn forced the Sidama to reduce the size of herds on which they partially depended for their survival. With the decline of pastureland, farmers began to keep a small number of cattle (mainly cows), sheep and goats at home, using tethering and cut and carry systems of livestock feeding. This shift from herding to keeping animals in the homesteads brought about changes in gender roles. Men's old exclusive tasks like caring for stocks, preparing feed and feeding animals were partly shifted to women.

2) Labor shortage

The Northern settlers did not only expropriate the land of the indigenous people, but they also exploited men's and women's labour. As discussed before, Sidama men were the new settlers' agricultural laborers while women were their housemaids. The alienation of the Sidama men from their own labour had far reaching implications. Since men devoted much of their labor time to stock the granary of their masters, they had no time to work on their household farms. As a result agricultural labor became a scarce factor of production. Due to this undesirable situation the Sidama began to rely entirely on **enset** production for their livelihood. As **enset** is women's main crop, they became the sole food providers of their households. Sidama's virtual reliance on this food crop increased women's workload considerably.

5.1.3 The Land Reform

In Sidama, as explained earlier, women have never held land rights. On the contrary, this principal factor of production has long remained in the hands of patrilineage. A number of researchers whom Simbolon (1997) calls legal positivists contend that men's domination over land can be altered through land reform programs. Likewise, there was a firm belief that

the1975 Ethiopian land reform proclamation would improve women's property right over land. In what follows, the Ethiopian land reform program and its outcome in relation to women's access to land shall be discussed.

In 1975, Ethiopia witnessed a radical transformation in its land tenure system. The change in the Ethiopian agrarian system was a result of widespread popular struggle. In the 1975 Proclamation rural land was nationalized and as a consequence tenancy and land lordism were abolished (Dessalegn, 1984).

Land reform programs may have different forms of land tenure depending upon the country in which they operate. Jacobs (1996), for instance, has identified four varieties: (1) individual ownership (2) land titles distributed individually but held by the state (3) cooperative tenure where land is held on behalf of all members by a cooperative entity (4) collective farms where land is held by the state and no private ownership exists. Of all these, the Ethiopian land reform falls under the second category in which land is held by the state and individual holders do not have ownership right over the land they cultivate.

According to Articles Four and Five of the Proclamation, private ownership of land and the transfer of holdings by sale, lease, mortgage etc and the use of hired labor are prohibited (**Negarit Gazeta**, Proclamation No. 31, 1975). Article Forty of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia also states that, ''...Land is a common property of the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia and shall not be subject to sale or other means of exchange" (**Negarit Gazeta**, Proclamation No.1, 1995). These provisions indicate that land in Ethiopia is state owned and individual holders do not have ownership rights over this

principal economic asset. However, as far as the Sidama are concerned, peasants do not acknowledge that land is owned by an external body called state. As a result, most of the peasants do not abide by the prohibitory provisions of the law. For example, land selling has become more common and peasants have now begun to use hired labor to undertake some agricultural activities, particularly in coffee picking.

Since the 1975 land reform program, land in Sidama is obtained through different means. These are through inheritance upon the death of one's father, through marriage gift **(iqqa)** and through membership in peasant association. In the two research areas, where land has now become a scarce resource and the peasant associations are in short supply of land to be parceled out to individual applicants, young peasants have begun to rely almost exclusively on inheritance and marriage gifts **(iqqa)**. Despite the fact that land is now owned by the state, the traditional patrilineal rules of descent still determines rights over land that benefit only one section of the society, namely men. However, in the interviews conducted it was found out that there are some exceptions to this general pattern. Let us offer an example that demonstrates how some men obtain land through their wives, out of their patrilineage.

Case No 6

Beyene Berassa

Beyene is a married man who belongs to **gonowa** lineage. He is about 50. His wife, Marta Kayamo, belongs to **allawo** lineage. Beyene took her in marriage some 30 years ago. Before the marriage he lived with his paternal uncle in **Burk'a** village where Martha's parents were living. Upon their marriage Beyene did not receive marriage gift from his poor uncle on which he could start his new married life. For this reason he took his wife to his deceased father's village called, **Chenge.** In this village Beyene took a small plot of land and a heifer from his poor mother. These properties were originally held by his deceased father. The two lived in this hot and drought prone area only for three years. Life in **Chenge** was very difficult, especially for his wife. She could not stand the hot weather and suffered from malaria repeatedly. In addition, they were not able to grow enough food due to the erratic rainfall pattern and low soil fertility coupled with small land size. These problems urged them to move back to Martha's natal village.

> When they returned back Martha's father gave them large plots of coffee and enset land. Though this land was obtained from his wife's father, it is under full control of Beyene. After the land reform Beyene obtained additional land from the peasant association and bought one and a quarter hectares of land. Now they live a comfortable life in **Burk'a.** (Interview with Beyene and Martha, December 1999)

Available data indicate that as in the customary and feudal tenures, women in the study areas are not eligible for land allotment under the new land legislation. This is a question that deserves to be discussed and explained in more detail.

In theory, women in Ethiopia are entitled to land. The land reform legislation has provided men and women equal rights of access to land. According to Proclamation No 31, 1975 (Article 4), "without differentiation of the sexes, any person who is willing to personally cultivate land shall be allotted rural land sufficient for his maintenance and that of his family." This provision clearly shows that both women and men have equal rights to hold land, or there is no discrimination against women's land rights. However, despite the provision of the law, women in Sidama have never gained rights to hold land. The Sidama have failed to adhere to the state land law, among others, for technical and sociocultural reasons. The technicality of the reform has to do with the implementation of the legislation, while the socio cultural problems stemmed from the long-standing kinship systems and pattern of residence. Let us first look at the technical problem.

Under the 1975 land reform program, land was distributed to households rather than to individuals. This distribution system had its own problem. The problem was that in Sidama, as in many other parts of Ethiopia, men are defined as heads of household and in effect land allotment was made, in most instances, in the names of men. As a result rural women were denied to hold land on their own right.

According to the law, women heads of household such as widows or divorcees can be registered as members of peasant associations and thereby are allowed to hold land. But in Sidama they rarely have such rights due to the well-established patriarchal ideology and the socio-cultural systems, which impede the de facto implementation of the law.

As in the customary land holding system, in the land reform program traditional norms persist to influence land allocation among the Sidama. Land has been and is still considered the sole property of male members of Sidama and is transferred from generation to generation on the basis of rule of decent through male. Women were not allowed to hold land either in their natal family or in their husband's village. This is an accepted rule both by men and women members of the society as control of men over land is a long established tradition to which the society at large still adheres. The 1975 land reform program did not break this traditional custom, which favors only the male members of society. As experiences show during the time of land redistribution, the peasant association that was in charge of land allocation did not provide land either to women in male heads of households or to women household heads. This is so because, as Dube Dukamo, a peasant association chair person said:

> In the Sidama tradition women have never held land rights. In the first place they are not farmers. They may gain a limited access to use land only through their husbands. Even in the event of their husbands' death they can keep and use their husbands land in trust until their sons reach marriageable age. For this reason, women have never obtained land on their own right through the peasant association. It is not even a normal thing for women to apply or appeal for land right" (Interview, November 1999).

In general, it was found out that the 1975 Land Reform Proclamation did not protect Sidama women's rights over land. Although the law in its letter is not discriminatory it proved partial

in application. In short, to use Jacobs (1996) expression, land reform in Sidama has only resulted in a change in control over the land from a more distant patriarch (village elders and landlords) to a closer patriarch, i.e. husband

5.2 **Women's access to other resources.**

In addition to land, livestock and agricultural products are of paramount importance to the life of the Sidama.

5.2.1 **Access to livestock and their products**

As mentioned earlier, the Sidama keep cattle, sheep, goats, pack animals and chickens. However, due to severe shortage of grazing land and animal feed, the average holdings of individual farmers have become extremely small.

The Sidama obtain livestock through different means, chief among which are marriage gift **(iqqa),** purchase and inheritance. As these major modes of acquiring livestock favor men only, women are deprived of any ownership right to livestock. It is thus only men who have complete control over livestock. Women do not have ownership rights to either cattle or small stock. The only domestic animal over which a woman has some control is chicken.

However, women are able to own and dispose of livestock products like milk, egg, and butter. Nonetheless, it is important to note that women are able to sell these items if and only if they satisfy family needs. Though women, in most instances, are excluded from ownership and use rights to livestock, widows who escape prearranged levirate marriages can have better access to livestock. However, under normal circumstances women can not have full control over livestock.

5.2.2 **Access to the fruits of labor**

As in other resources, gender is the major determinant of differential access to and control over cash and food crops. Sidama men and women have different crops over which they have full control and/or use rights. Women in Sidama are totally excluded from the ownership of some valued crops that generate substantial income. They have control only over crops produced entirely for household consumption and with little market value.

The only crops over which the Sidama women have complete control are **enset** and cabbage. These backyard crops are produced primarily for family consumption. However, women occasionally sell these crops to obtain cash. It should be emphasized that though these crops are considered women's crops, the use of these crops is under the indirect scrutiny of husbands. Husbands always check on whether their wives meet the food needs of the household members. Thus unless women satisfy the household needs, they can't exercise their rights to sell these crops and use the money. On the other hand, women do not have either ownership or use rights to crops like **teff**, maize, coffee, haricot bean, etc. These crops are taken as crops over which only men have full control and right to dispose of.

Coffee is one of the valued crops, which the Sidama produce entirely for the market. Men have exclusive ownership right to this crop and independently decide on the disposal of the crop and on how to spend the money derived from the sale of the crop. In some households, where coffee is planted relatively on large plots of land, husbands set aside a few coffee trees for their wives so that the latter can use them both for household consumption and for sale. In addition, women may get involved in petty coffee pilfering either to obtain cash from the sale or to meet household requirement. This act of pilfering is locally termed **murancho**. It is an

informal but a well-established mechanism through which women ease their access to use coffee for household consumption and for sale. Unlike their male counterparts, women use the small amount of money they obtain from the sale of coffee mainly to restock their households with consumable goods like edible oil, onion, salt, pepper etc that are necessary to provide family members with the daily meals.

Women by virtue of being the main food providers of the family control portions of the crops assigned to family consumption. But men as heads of household have full control over the surplus produce. They often store the surplus in granary and keep it until the price goes up. Women are strictly prohibited from taking crops stored in the granary. As an old woman stresses, " **Bedella gotera hehuya hosura mine chate**", which literally means, " maize stored in a granary is akin to a man in prison."

In general, differential access to and control over resources between the two sexes seems to be a direct reflection of the culturally prescribed gender division of labor. As will be discussed in the following chapter, men do the bulk of agricultural work, particularly in the production of cereal crops and coffee over which they have complete control. In contrast to men, women are engaged mainly in the production of **enset** and cabbage to which they have exclusive rights. Likewise, as long as milking cows is an exclusive activity of women, they continue to enjoy full rights to dispose of butter and milk.

From the interviews conducted, it transpired that some men do take women's limited access to and control over productive resources as a mere consequence of their marginalization in major agricultural works. In response to the question I posed, " Why women are denied access to

resources? ", they said, " what do they do with the productive resources. It is only we who are held responsible for agricultural activities." Whereas women simply say that, " due to the long accepted tradition of the Sidama only men own major resources of the society".

5.2.3 **Access to resources in relation to women's marital statuses**

Marriage among the Sidama is the basic means by which men own land and other resources and women obtain access, though limited, to use land and control the fruits of their labor. In the Sidama tradition it has been and still is the norm that upon the marriage of a son the father allocates a parcel of land so that the new couple will be able to establish their independent household. This provision/gift at marriage is neither a version of dowry nor of bridewealth. The Sidama have assigned the term **iqqa** to such transfer of land to the son at marriage.

Likewise, women gain limited access to use land and other agricultural resources only after marriage and through their husbands. The Sidama often use an old saying, " **meyatte iqqi ayiddaansie mine noo**" to emphasise that women gain access to resources only in their husbands' village. Husbands usually assign a small parcel of land to wives to grow backyard crops like cabbage and **enset**. However, it should be noted that the husbands could take back the land and reassign it to other "male" crops whenever the need arises. As regards access to resources the situation of divorcees is worse than that of married women and widows.

5.2.3.1 **Divorce and divorced women's rights over resources.**

In Sidama, divorce is not uncommon. According to the 1965 survey the divorce rate was reported to be 43 percent (1987:75). Either a husband or a wife can initiate the dissolution of marriage. In most instances, however, husbands take the initiative. This is because many

women are scared of divorce, as they are likely to become destitute and lose custody of their children.

There are many factors that work against the stability of marriage in Sidama. Of these, woman's infertility or low procreative capacity is a major factor. As discussed before, marriage among the Sidama entails the transfer of women's procreative power to a husband and his agnatic lineage. It is important to note that marriage in Sidama becomes binding only after the birth of the first child. Thus, if a woman does not exercise her procreative power and bears her husband no child or only a few children, the marriage, sooner or later, may be terminated. In addition, a woman who bears numerous daughters but no male child is also susceptible to abandonment by her husband. This implies that in Sidama, as mentioned earlier, husbands prefer male to female children. This special preference for a son over a daughter may be attributed to the Sidama's exogamous marriage practice, patrilocal pattern of residence and male's exclusive inheritance right to parent's property. In the discussion held with key informants, it was found out that since daughters marry out of their natal village and then belong to their husband's agnatic lineage, the Sidama prefer to have more male children than female.

Apart from barrenness or male child preference, a man may abandon his wife for reasons of extra-marital sexual affair, poor household management, inefficiency in entertaining guests, frequent coffee theft, etc. On the other hand, a woman may run away from her husband for reasons of ill treatment, frequent nagging and assaulting, the husband's failure to clothe her or to provide money for consumable goods (salt, kerosene, edible oil, etc).

Sidama women cannot lay any claim to either movable or immovable property upon the termination of her marriage. It is a norm that a woman leaves her home only with her **barko** (a married woman's head rest made of wood) and other small personal belongings such as clothes, **worime** and **sisicho** (**enset** processing tools)

In Sidama high value is attached to virginity. As a result, **semo** (a never married virgin wife) is more respected and has some advantages over a divorced or a remarried wife **(gursummete).** A **semo** who runs away from her first husband **(muttara)** has a right to return back to him whenever she decides to do so. The husband **(muttara)** accepts her return without any hesitation. He may take her as an additional wife/wives or in place of his other wife. The following case illustrates the impact of **semo** and **muttara's** relationship on marriage stability and how **semos** have better access to their husbands' resources than **gursummete**s.

Case No.7
Burtukan Aredo

Burtukan Aredo is a **gursummete**. She is in her late 20s and belongs to a **galada** lineage. During the interview she was living with her third husband. Her first marriage was dissolved by the death of her **muttara**, while her second marriage ended up in divorce. Eight years or so ago she eloped with her first husband **muttara**. Before she eloped, her deceased husband gave her small marriage gifts called **mine worro.** The gifts were a coat, two **gabis** (a large home made cotton cloth), an umbrella and **k'olo** (a traditional Sidama cloth) She put the items in her parent's house with a written short note before she left for her husband's homestead. The items were distributed according to her decision: a coat and **gabi** to her father **(anna),** an umbrella and **K'olo** to her mother **(amma), gabi** to her paternal uncle **(Wasile).** After a year of married life she lost her husband by natural death. Then after her husbands' death his kinsmen hated her as if she had killed him. Since she didn't bear her late husband a child his father and brothers urged her to leave their place and then she returned to her natal village. She married again two years later after the death of her first husband. She bore her second husband two children, a son and a daughter. But after four years her marriage once again came to an end. As she explained "one day a woman came to our house. My husband accepted her as a welcome guest. Then some time later he declared that she is his **semo.** Again after a month or so he called me and said, "Since I am a follower of protestant church, I cannot keep you two as my wives and you know that it is my obligation to accept my **semo** and keep her as my

> wife." And insisted that I leave for my parents' place. I did as he wished. Once I left my husband's home without any property I became destitute. I took a lactating female child with me and left a male child to him. But later I learnt that the child who I left with him has died" (Interview with Burtukan, October 1999).

Even though divorce is common in Sidama, it is uncommon to find a single man or a single woman household, except in the case of some widows. This means that divorce is often followed by remarriage. This holds true for both men and women. The apparent rush by divorcees into remarriage has to do with two factors. The first is the complementarity of men and women's role in the rural households. The second relates to lack of access to resources by divorced women.

Regarding the first factor, it should be noted that in Sidama the household is the basic unit of production and consumption in which tasks are primarily allocated on the basis of gender (as will be discussed in the next chapter). In such rural household a man cannot fulfill the basic necessities of life without the labor of woman. This is because harvesting and processing **enset** to feed the household members is the exclusive responsibility of women. And a man also unilaterally cannot organize any festive work group either to carry out agricultural activities or to build a house without women's involvement in the preparation of food and drinks. Likewise, a woman cannot survive without the support and protection of a man who is the agricultural laborer of the rural household.

Apart from the gender division of labor, other important economic factors motivate woman to remarry. This is so because a divorced woman does not have any access to or control over

resources either in her natal family or in her ex-husband's village. She thus looks for another husband through whom she can have at least limited use rights to resources.

As discussed earlier, married women have better access to resources than divorcees. In the earlier days, due to the commonality of levirate marriage it was uncommon to find widow headed households. After the decline of the practice, however, widows have emerged as a new category of heads of household. Widows apparently hold better position than married women and divorcees with regard to access to land and other resources. Let us now turn to see how the decline of levirate marriage enabled widows to have better access to resources.

5.2.3.2 **Levirate marriage and widows.**

Levirate marriage is a cultural rule prescribing that a widow marries by preference the brother of her deceased husband (Murdock; 1960:29). In this marriage pattern, upon the death of a husband rights over the widow's sexuality and children are transfered to the deceased husband's brother or a close kinsman. In the former days, levirate marriage was a widely accepted form of marriage throughout Sidama. The Sidama practiced it for three basic reasons: to take care of the children of the deceased brother, to preserve widow's rights to remain in her deceased husband's village and to have access to use land, livestock and crops, and more importantly to protect the family property, particularly the farm land, from another husband's control.

In some areas where this pattern is still the norm, widows have limited right to own and use household resources. There are, however, some exceptions to this general rule. Elderly women who reach menopause and particularly who have grown up male children are not

forced into levirate marriage. They enjoy relative freedom to use their husbands' resources independently. Even though, they do not have full control over their husbands property (since they cannot inherit their husband's property) they can live on the land under the protection and support of their sons. The case of the following elderly woman reflects how elderly widows have better access to resources:

Case No. 8

Demboba Dembara

Demboba Dembara is an old widow. She belongs to **Wogara** lineage. Her age is about 70. Her husband died after all her children had married. Her late husband was rich and had two wives. Demboba was the junior wife. She has four children, three sons and a daughter. All are married.
She lives close to her children's residence. Even her daughter, violating the normal patrilocal pattern of residence, lives in the same village with her husband and children. Since all her sons took enough land from their father upon marriage they did not claim their father's property upon his death. As a result she enjoys use rights to land, livestock and crops. She now lives in an iron roofed two-room house with her brother's son. She grows crops like coffee, enset and maize on her plot. Her brother's son performs the agricultural tasks while her daughters- in - law assist her in **enset** processing. She also can count on the help of her three male children at times of peak agricultural period, particularly for organizing work parties. In response to a question, " how did you escape levirate marriage?" She said, "Yes in our tradition widows are inherited by their deceased husbands' brothers or close kinsmen. But since I was aged for marriage when my husband died, his kinsmen did not force me to enter in such a marriage. In addition, my sons were grown-up and mature enough to support themselves and their mother and above all to take care of their fathers' property." Though Demboba, after her husband's death assumed some additional responsibilities that formerly rested on her husband, she is now able to use family resources, including land without any restrictions. However, since her sons are the natural heirs of their fathers' property, she does not have full control over the resources. For instance, she cannot sell or transfer the property to others (Interview October 1999).

Unlike old women with grown up male children, young widows who have no children or only female children are expected to marry their deceased husbands' brothers in order to live in

their late husbands' village and use resources. If they refuse to marry their husbands' brothers, they are forced to go back to their natal family, leaving all the household property. A widow with young male children may or may not enter into levirate marriage depending on her interest. Even if she rejects the marriage she has the right to use her deceased husband's property (land, livestock, crops) on the ground that she keeps the family property for her sons until they reach maturity.

According to my informants, the practice of wife inheritance in Sidamaland has now become less important. In interviews with some widows it was found out that due to the introduction of new religions (Protestantism and Catholicism) the earlier social norms that pushed them into levirate marriage are no longer in force. Elderly informants also suggested that this marriage pattern is still a norm in some parts of Sidama highlands where the long established cultural practices are still preserved. This is partially attributed to the fact that highlanders have less contact with other cultural groups and foreign cultural elements.

Available evidence also shows that the decline in the importance of levirate marriage improves some widows' rights over resources and their decision making power. After their husbands' death some widows gain easy access to family resources, which were formerly under the control of their deceased husbands and make decisions independently with regard to household affairs and agricultural activities. Some of the important decisions they can make include: the types and amount of crop to be cultivated, on which plot to cultivate, the sale or purchase of livestock and grains, the sale or purchase of coffee, the amount of money to be spent on purchasing agricultural inputs (ox, seeds, farm implements, fertilizer etc.), organization of work parties and hiring wage laborers, building new houses, etc. Husbands

take all these decisions, in male-headed households. To demonstrate how widows enjoy relative and temporary freedom in the use of resources and how do they exercise decision-making power, it may be important to see the case of Lato Hatiya.

Case No.9

Lato Hatiya

Lato Hatiya is a widow who belongs to **waeno** lineage. She is about 40 years of age. She has eight children, three sons and five daughters. From her first marriage she had two daughters, while she bore six children for her second husband. Her former husband is still alive and her two elder daughters are with him. Her second husband died four years ago. But since Hatiya herself and her deceased husband's brothers are Protestant they did not show any interest in the leviratic marriage arrangement. As a result, she became head of the household. Her husband left her two cows and a goat, and a parcel of land on which she grows coffee, maize and **enset**. To augment the family income, she is currently engaged in petty trading. She sells **Kocho (Wasa)** in a bi-weekly **Lako** market. After the death of her husband she built an iron –roofed house. The cash for house construction was obtained from the sale of coffee and kocho while the necessary labor was drawn from the church members. Hatiya has gained freedom of mobility from market to market after her husbands' death. However she is tired of the heavy responsibility she is carrying alone. Hatiya is therefore keen to see her children reach marriageable age to take care of the family property. But she has no intention to remarry. Because remarriage means her separation from her children and the loss of the wealth she has so far controlled. (Interview, November 1999).

5.3 **Inheritance right**

The Sidama rule of inheritance is patrilineal in which heirs validate their claims by tracing ties to the deceased person through the male line. This does not, however, adequately explain the complex nature of the Sidama's inheritance rule.

Due to the dominant patrilocal residence, rule of exogamous marriage and patrilineal descent, women are not eligible to inherit either their husbands' or their fathers' property. As in most patrilineal societies, daughters possess no rights of inheritance over the family property, and

sons are the only heirs. Therefore, there exists a clear differentiation in inheritance rights between the sexes.

In the Sidama tradition siblings are co-heirs of family estate. All male children, regardless of their birth order or seniority, have rights to inherit family property. Thus, the Sidama's system of inheritance is neither primogeniture (inheritance rule in which only eldest sons are heirs of family property) nor ultimogeniture (a rule in which family property is transmitted only to youngest son).

Although, all male children are eligible for inheritance, the eldest and youngest sons obtain slightly more property than their other siblings. The former takes more property due to the principle of seniority, while the latter receives additional property, as he is held responsible for the care and support of the parents in their later life.

If a man dies without a surviving son, the property will go to the deceased man's brother or his close male agnates. On the other hand, if a man dies before his sons reach marriageable age, his elder brother will hold and keep the land in trust until the sons establish their own households. This is a norm only when the widow accepts leviratic marriage. However, when a widow rejects the marriage the widow herself keeps her son's property in trust.

The Sidama's rule of inheritance exhibits another complication. According to the Sidama's long established tradition, if a woman divorces and remarries another man, the first child she bears from the second husband is labelled as **sivila betto**, "illegitimate child." However, if the first birth is preceded by miscarriage or abortion the child will be taken as legitimate. This

situation has an implication for inheritance rights. **Sivilla betto** is not eligible to inherit the property of his mother's second husband, even if the latter is the child's genetic father. However, he has the right to claim property right upon the death of his mother's former husband.

To sum up the discussion of this chapter, men in Sidama control important resources such as land, livestock and crops that could generate substantial income. As demonstrated in the above cases, however, widows have recently begun to enjoy better access to resources. The introduction of Protestant and Catholic religions in Sidama has played an important role in this regard. Converts, due to the churches' regulations, have now abandoned inheriting their brothers' wives. As a result, many widows have now become heads of households and thereby enjoy better access to resources than divorcees and married women. It should be noted that a widow may enjoy rights of access to and control over resources only when she has a male child or children from her deceased husband. However, she may lose these rights after her children become mature enough to take over the resources since only male children are the natural heirs of household properties.

CHAPTER SIX

Gender Division of Labour and Labour Sharing Arrangement

The economy of rural Ethiopia can be described as subsistence in which agricultural production is carried out mainly by unpaid household labour. Nevertheless, during peak periods, rural societies tend to rely on different forms of labour organization. In such rural households tasks are largely allocated by gender. The thrust of this chapter is, therefore, to discuss the culturally prescribed division of labour between the two sexes and to describe indigenous labour sharing arrangements used among the Sidama.

6.1 Gender Division of Labour

In the growing literature on women's role the concept of gender is used to describe the socially defined allocation of tasks between women and men. Several researchers have shown that the division of labour between the sexes is socially determined rather than biologically prescribed. This is explained by the cross-cultural variations in gender roles and by their susceptibility to change. Ellis argues along this line that " ...it is misleading to refer to the division of labour between women and men as the 'sexual division of labour' with its overtones of causation by the biological differences between the sexes. An alternative is to refer to the gender division of labour" (1988: 172).

With regard to the culturally prescribed gender based division of labour it has generally been assumed that men are involved in productive activities and women are responsible for domestic works. Due to this categorical generalisation and other factors, the role of women in productive activities is usually unrecognised. Many researchers agree on the point that in a

number of countries women's contribution to the rural subsistence economy does not appear on official income accounts. This under valuation of women's contribution to the economy is underlain by ideological and conceptual biases (Beneria, 1981:10). The former is linked with the methodological problems of national census that often take male household heads as primary source of data. The data obtained from male respondents, for reasons of male bias, tend to underestimate women's important roles in the economy. Conceptual bias, on the other hand, is rooted in the conventional definitions of concepts like economic activity, labour force, gainful employment, active labour that are used to standardise census data. As Beneria puts it, " ...within conventional definitions of labour force women's participation in economic activities tends to be greatly under estimated, particularly in economic life" (1981:24).

In Ethiopia, as in other countries characterised by non-market economy, women contribute to the daily maintenance of the household and to the subsistence sector. However, both the national census and the official income accounts tend to ignore their contributions (Dejene, 1995). The section to follow discusses the manner in which the Sidama allocate tasks to women and men and explores women's contribution to the fulfilment of the basic necessities of life.

6.1.1 **Women's Activities**

In Sidama, due to the dominant patriarchal ideology, women's work is undervalued and men's activities are highly valued. As a result the society tends to create a dichotomy between women and men's tasks. For instance, when elderly male informants were asked about the gender division of labour in the society they tried to draw a clear boundary of tasks between the sexes. For them, women are confined to household chores while men are farm labourers

and cattle tenders. This dichotomy glosses over the Sidama women's involvement in both productive and reproductive activities. It is useful, thus, to expose aspects of their roles in these two spheres of activities.

6.1.1.1 **Reproductive Roles**

Ellis (1988) divides the concept of reproduction into three different categories: biological, generational and daily reproduction. Biological reproduction includes such tasks as child bearing and the early nurturing of infants.

The second concept denotes the care, up bringing, socialization and education of children. The third refers to the daily maintenance of the household that encompasses daily routines; i.e cooking, collecting firewood, fetching water, grinding and pounding grain, cleaning the house and the cattle kraal, washing cloths and the like. House building and repairing is also grouped under this broad category.

In Sidama the activities that fall under reproductive category are predominantly assigned to women. All women in male-headed households are engaged in child bearing and nurturing of infants. Though occasionally assisted by men, generational reproduction is also women's main domain. The daily maintenance of household is also the main prerogative of women and takes much of their time and labour. Unlike many rural societies, in Sidama women are not engaged in firewood collection. Rather men are responsible for the supply of firewood. In almost all households, men plant eucalyptus trees near their homesteads both for construction and fuel purposes. As a result men do not go long distances to fell trees. Once men fell a tree

and cut it into pieces of logs, chopping will be women's responsibility, occasionally assisted by female and male children.

6.1.1.2 **Productive roles**

Even though there are different spheres of productive activities in which women are involved we confine our discussion to such activities as food processing, agricultural production and marketing.

Food processing among the Sidama is one of the main domains of women. They grind and pound maize and sometimes take it to the mill house. More importantly, they process **enset** to feed their household members. Many women informants and interviewees indicated that **enset** processing is the most laborious and cumbersome task. **Enset** has several advantages over other food crops, of which its ability to provide a long term, sustainable food supply with minimum farm inputs are major (Brandt, etal; 1997). Despite the importance of **enset** in the life of the Sidama, however, it imposes a heavy workload on women. The process of **enset** takes much of the Sidama women's time and energy. The routine tasks performed in extracting an edible product from **enset** are discussed below.

a. **Pit digging**

The first step in the process of **enset** is pit digging. Women dig a small pit in the ground in the midst of the **enset** trees. The flexible, soft part of the **enset** bark is placed in the pit and broad **enset** leaves are put on the bark. The purpose of the bark and the leaves is to prevent the liquid part from leaking into the ground and to keep the processed **enset** clean.

b. **Cutting and up rooting**

The next step is to remove older and dry **enset** leaf sheath. Then layers of the pseudo stem are removed from the main plant and cut into smaller sizes in order to make it ready for scraping. Then the enset plant will be uprooted to get the corm out of the ground. Uprooting is usually done by women with occasional assistance from men.

c. **Decorticating** *(ongeni)*

Decorticating is the most arduous and backbreaking task in **enset** processing. This process helps separate the edible part of the pseudo stem from the fibre. A woman first puts a wooden plank, locally termed **meeta**, in an incline position against an **enset** tree (as shown in plate No.4). Then she sits on the ground stretching her right leg straight up to press the tip of the pseudo stem on the plank. The scraping of the stem down towards the pit will follow this. A locally made bamboo scraper (in some areas it has now been replaced by metal scraper), called **sisicho** is used to decorticate **enset.** The place where the pseudo stem is scraped is usually covered with **enset** leaves and men are not allowed to be there.

d. **Pulverising** *(desa)*

After the scraping is done the corm will be dug out and taken to where a woman decorticates the stem. The traditional hand tool used for corm pulverising is a scapula (animal bone), which the Sidama call **K'eho.** Through pulverisation the corm is chopped into pieces that have to be mixed with the scraped stem afterwards.

e. **Burying and fermenting**

After the completion of scraping and grating, the mixture of the pulverized corm and decorticated stem is buried in a pit covered with broad and fresh **enset** leaves. Then a starter **(gemama)** is put on the mixed product to initiate fermentation. The mixture is left in the pit for a period ranging from months to several years. Wealthy households usually keep several

pits of the processed product for a considerable period of time. This helps to improve the quality of the food and to increase their food security.

f. **Squeezing** (*K'isho*)

The fermented mixture is taken out of the pit and a woman wraps it with **enset** fibre. Then she presses the wrapped mixture with her knees, putting it on a traditional tool known as **kincho** (It is a small, cone shaped and pointed wooden material). **K'isho** is done to reduce the liquid part of the product.

g. **Chopping**

After the unwanted liquid part is removed, the remaining semi-dry part is chopped on a long-broad wooden plate locally termed **Badiro**. The purpose of this process is to minimize the fibrous part of the plant.

h. **Sifting** (*tummeni*)

The final process is sifting the mixed **enset** product using homemade sieve (**memo**). Sifting is used to separate the edible **wasa** from the fibres. This is the final phase of converting the raw material into edible product.

The main edible products of **enset** are **Wasa**, **Bulla** and **Amicho**. The former, being the main source of the Sidama diet, is the mixed product of fermented pseudostem and the grated corm, while the latter is the highly valued but less plentiful white product, which is obtained from the juicy part of the scraped stem. **Amicho**, unlike the former two, is not a processed product. The Sidama eat boiled **Amicho**, like potatoes while they use **wasa** and **bulla** to prepare different types of local dishes: **Burusame** (**wasa** flour mixed with butter), **Shirko** (**bulla** porridge), **buluko** (**bulla** gruel), **omolcho** (pancake), **Torosho** (bread).

Most of the foods made of **wasa** are mixed with haricot beans and cabbage and supplemented by butter and milk. Unlike their Gedeo neighbours, the Sidama slaughter animals and consume meat mainly for ceremonial occasions. If a **Sidancho** consumes meat more frequently he will be labelled as '**malasincho**', 'scavenger' and equated with the less respected **Hawacho** (tanners) group. Hamer (1987) had a cultural materialist view in explaining the Sidama's low meat consumption habit. He argued that to slaughter any of the limited number of animals possessed by individual **Sidancho** would undermine the whole system of food production (1987:18). This may partially explain the reality of some parts of the Sidama where **enset** is the dominant crop, but is not adequate to explain the **K'olla** Sidama where **enset** is not grown.

As the Sidama rely heavily on **enset** for their livelihood, we can regard women as the main food providers. All women, irrespective of their age, wealth, marital status etc., are engaged in the onerous task of processing **enset.** Although most of them depend entirely on their labour and/or the labour of grown-up daughters, some women occasionally use extra-household labour. In this respect the most common practice is the use of inter household labour pool system, composed of friends or neighbours. Apart from labour exchange system, women in well-to-do households recruit the labour of poor women to whom they pay either in cash or in kind, which the Sidama call **tone**.

Besides their role in food processing, Sidama women are also involved in agricultural production. Though they are culturally prohibited from some agricultural tasks and constrained by their domestic responsibilities; they play an important role in some activities. Agricultural tasks like manuring, harvesting, storing and managing homestead crops like

enset and cabbage are the exclusive domain of women. They cultivate these backyard crops mainly for home consumption, though they sometimes sell '**Wasa**', '**Bulla**' and cabbage to restock consumables like, salt, edible oil and kerosene. As regards the production of field crops like maize**, teff**, and haricot beans women occasionally participate in husking, transporting and storing the harvest, together with adult men and children.

Women in Sidama are culturally prohibited from such agricultural activities as ploughing, hoeing, sowing, and weeding. They are also not allowed to use farm implements like plows, hoes (**saffe**, **tik'e**, **shodira**) and sickle, as men are not allowed to use women's hand tools like **sisicho** (**enset** scraper)**, K'heo, meeta, kincho** etc. Milking cows and goats are the main domain of women, only occasionally assisted by men. Adult women never herd cattle. It is a task mainly allocated to children, preferably to male children. Women feed small stock (sheep and goats) and look after milking cows and goats.

In sum, Sidama women are involved in a variety of activities ranging from arduous domestic chores to the production of food crops. Since women are not a homogenous category, their degree of involvement both in household and agricultural activities vary according to wealth, the size and composition of households, the phase of the developmental cycle of the households, and marital status. For instance, a woman in wealthy households often hires labour to process **enset** and to clean barns, whereas women in poor households carry out all these activities, with the possible assistance of grown-up children. Women's work burden is relatively heavy in large households with many small children but likely to be light in small households where grown up daughters are present.

The workload of women may vary among households depending upon the stage of the developmental cycle of a household. Fortes (1969) divided the developmental cycle of a household into three phases: expansion, dispersion and replacement. According to him, the expansion phase lasts from the consummation of marriage until the completion of their family of procreation. The second phase begins with the marriage of the oldest child and continues until all children are married. Where the custom by which the youngest child remains to take over the family estate is found, this commonly marks the beginning of the replacement phase (1969:4).

In Sidama, the developmental cycle of a household begins when a man takes a wife and establishes his own independent household with the assistance of his parents and ends with the death of the couple that originally established the household. The phases of developmental cycle have implications for women's workload. Woman's workload appears to be heavy at the expansion phase of the cycle and tends to decrease towards the beginning of the dispersion phase while it declines at the final replacement phase. This is because at the initial phase of the cycle all children are economically, affectively and jurally dependent on parents (Fortes, 1969:4) and women receive little assistance from their children.

Women's degree of participation in both reproductive and productive activities also varies according to their marital statuses. Women in male-headed households have less workload than those in femaleheaded households. Although women household heads do not engage in some of men's exclusive agricultural operations such as ploughing and hoeing, they hold additional responsibilities relating to agriculture that a married woman might share with her husband or leave entirely to him. As discussed earlier, divorcees do not share property with

their ex-husbands and as a consequence they usually remain dependent on their natal families until they are able to remarry. For this reason divorced women do not establish their own independent households. In contrast to divorcees, after the decline of levirate marriage, many widows have become household heads and have started to shoulder additional responsibilities. The following case is a typical example of widows' double responsibility as compared to women with their husbands.

Case No.10

Medina Nameto

Medina Nameto is a widow who belongs to **konsore** lineage of the **yanase** clan. She is in her late 40s. Her husband was from the **hanja** lineage of the same **yanase** clan. He died seven years ago. She bore him eight children, a son and seven daughters. Her two daughters married out while her married son lives close to her residence. Medina's late husband left her almost one and a half hectares of land on which she grows a variety of crops. The main crops she cultivates include **enset,** maize and haricot bean. She also raises cash crops like coffee, **chat**, pepper, **teff** and sugar cane. Medina's eldest son took a certain part of his father's land at his marriage. After the death of her husband Medina gained access to the household resources and benefits, though the title deed is in the name of her son, since he is regarded as the rightful heir.

As opposed to women in male-headed households, she has become involved in such agricultural activities as transporting and husking maize, planting and replanting **enset**. Like male heads of household, she organizes festive work groups known as **huchato** to undertake heavy and labour demanding tasks like ploughing, fertilizing, sowing, weeding, harvesting, etc. After her husband's death she organized three **huchatos** in which a group of five to eight men were involved. They, in addition to labour support, brought a pair of oxen and hand tools for land preparation. In return, she prepared and served foods and drinks like maize porridge (**hufisa**), **wasa**, boiled corn, coffee and **malawo** (a local drink made of water and honey) to the field hands. With regard to her workload she said, "I am now extremely busy. I have become responsible both for household and field domains. I receive little assistance from my daughters. They are students and involved in petty trading in their spare time. At times of peak agricultural labour demand I suffer a lot due to my double responsibility. As head of household I should organize and follow-up agricultural work groups and as woman I have to bear routine household responsibilities (Interview November, 1999).

6.1.2 **Men's Activities**

According to the culturally prescribed division of work, men are engaged in the production of both food and cash crops. The main domains of men include ploughing, hoeing, sowing/planting, fertilizing and weeding. Men, receiving little assistance from female and male children, also perform activities like harvesting, threshing, transporting and storing cereal crops.

With regard to livestock production, men are held responsible for herding, usually assisted by male children. They also feed cattle. As women usually look after milking cows and goats, men give special care to oxen. This is perhaps linked with women's indispensible role in providing food for the household, on the one hand, and men's exclusive task of ploughing, using ox-drawn plows, on the other.

House building and repairing is the exclusive domain of men. As this task is heavy and labour demanding, Sidama men use different strategies to obtain additional labour, from neighbours, kinsmen and friends in which women play a role in preparing and providing food and drinks for work parties.

Though a time allocation study is beyond the purpose and scope of this thesis, from the interviews and observations it was found out that women work longer hours than men. The other important point that we have to make here is that despite the fact that men are the agricultural labourers their work is seasonal and they employ different strategies to ease their workload. The main strategies are the use of voluntary based collective labour and hired labour. The former is the long-standing labour pool system while the latter has recently been

introduced. Collective labour is often used for almost all agricultural tasks except coffee harvesting; hired labour is used for picking coffee berries.

To summarize this section, domestic activities are women's un-substitutable role. Men are engaged mainly in farming activities. Since much of their time and labour are taken up by reproductive activities and due to some cultural prohibition women are not involved in major agricultural activities. They are confined to cultivating backyard crops and assisting men in some agricultural tasks and providing food and drinks for collective labour. The following tables summarize the current division of tasks between the two genders among the Sidama

Table No 3 Tasks allocated to adult men.

Plant Production	Activities	
	Animal Husbandry	Domestic
Cereal Crops[1]		
Ploughing	Herding large & small stock [4]	Supplying fuel wood
Hoeing		
Sowing	Feeding oxen ✓	Constructing and Repairing houses.
Weeding		
Fertilizing (Chemical)		
Constructing granary		
Harvesting [2]		
Transporting [2]		
Storing [2]		
Threshing		
Coffee Production		
Planting		
Weeding		
Harvesting [3]		
Marketing		
Enset Production		
Land preparation (hoeing)		
Propagation of **enset**		
Planting and transplanting		

Source: compiled from field notes

1.Labour for the production of cereal crops is often obtained through the organization of work-groups.
2.Assisted by women and grown-up children.
3.Through hired labour.
4.Occasionally assisted by male children.

Table No 4 Tasks allocated to adult women

Activities		
Plant Production	**Animal Husbandry**	**Domestic Activities**
Cereal Crops		
Prepare and serve meals for the work groups.	Milking cows and goats	Food preparation
Assist men in harvesting, Transporting, and Storing crop.	Feeding cows, goats and Sheep	Taking care of children
Backyard Crops	Feeding calves	Fetching water
Manuring **enset** plot with dung and other dry waste.	Selling milk and butter	Grindingand pounding grain
Plant cabbage in home stead plot.		House cleaning
Manuring cabbage plot.		Cleaning barns
Harvesting and Processing **enset**		Washing cloths
Watering vegetable crops.		Other household chores
Storing processed **enset**		
Coffee Production		
Coffee picking		

Source: compiled from field notes

6.1.3 **Marketing Activities**

In Sidama, both men and women go to market to buy and sell food and non-food items. In the study areas there are two main bi-weekly market centres. Women in **T'aremiessa kebele** walk to **Lako** market to sell and buy different items, covering an average distance of about five kilometres. Whereas women in **Fulassa kebele** travel a distance of about seven kilometres to exchange their products in a market centre called **Yirba.**

Among the Sidama, marketing is not an economic sphere where men alone predominate. Village trade is in the hands of both Sidama men and women. Though both sexes are engaged in trading activities, there is a striking difference between the products sold and bought by women and men. As was observed, women's main marketing items are small in amount, less valued and are linked to their roles as major domestic food providers. For instance, in the two study areas selling and buying **wasa**, **bulla**, milk, butter and cabbage are left entirely to women. With regards to cabbage selling, the highlanders are some of the few exceptions. Highlanders (**alicho**), as opposed to **Kolla** and **Weinadega** dwellers cultivate comparatively large plots of land to grow cabbage and both men and women are engaged in the production process. It was found out that both men and women highlanders sell cabbage. These highlanders come to **Lako** market from relatively longer distances. Men usually use horses or donkeys to transport the cabbage to the market while women carry it on their back.

In addition to selling the above mentioned food items, Sidama women frequently visit the market place to buy salt, kerosene, edible oil, pepper, onion and other consumables to replenish their household stock. This may partially indicate their control of household income and decision for consumption.

Home craft products of **Hadicho** women (marginalized potters) are sold by the producers and bought by women of different status groups. On the other hand, farming tools (plows and hoes) are brought to the market by **Tunticha** men and are bought by male farmers. Women sell eggs and poultry, while men sell and buy large stocks like ox, cow, bull, heifer and small stock like sheep and goats. Men are also engaged in selling and buying the principal means of production, land. Grain and coffee are owned and sold, in most instances, by male members of the society. However, women occasionally take small amounts of grain and coffee to the market to obtain cash to buy essential goods for the welfare of the household. Women may sometimes become involved in petty pilfering to obtain a small amount of maize and coffee for sale either from the household granary or from family farms.

It is worth noting that women usually spend the cash derived from the sale of different items to meet household requirements not provided by their husbands, whereas men spend their money on children's schooling, house building, clothing, paying bridewealth, buying livestock, and buying grains like maize, **teff** and wheat. In **T'aremiessa**, where coffee is the main cash crop, men sell large amounts of coffee berries and spend the cash on luxury consumption, including drinking beer. They buy radios, radio cassettes, torches, shoes and cloths and other manufactured goods at higher prices in November and December and sell them back at extremely lower prices when they become broke.

The above mentioned division of activities in marketing clearly shows that men are involved in exchanging valued and important resources while women are heavily engaged in the trading of less valued items and derive very little benefit from the sale. This gender specific task assignment in marketing is a reflection of both the existing gender division of labour in

productive and reproductive spheres discussed earlier and men's and women's rights over properties, described in Chapter Five.

6.2. **Labor Sharing Arrangement**

In many rural societies of Ethiopia indigenous labor sharing arrangements are commonly used to obtain extra-household labor. Such group labor is often organized to carry out both economic and non-economic activities.

Regardless of the different functions the work-groups may perform, Anthropologists group them into two broad categories. These are reciprocal work group and festive work-group (Donham, 1985). The former is a long- lasting one, composed of households that work on each other's crop fields on a reciprocal, labor exchange, basis. The latter, on the other hand, is an ad hoc group, consisting of neighbours, friends or kinsmen who pool their labor at the request of a host. In the case of festivity, labor is obtained through transactions involving mainly food, drinks, and the use of tools.

In rural Ethiopia there exist a number of work-groups on which the people rely to perform labor demanding agricultural activities and other non-economic undertakings. For instance, among the Tsamako (Melese, 1995), the Ari (Gebre, 1995), and the Maale (Donham, 1985) of Southwestern Ethiopia the use of collective labor has a long tradition. Likewise, in Sidama there are three widely used indigenous work groups: **de, huchato** and **sera**. The third one is further sub-divided into **chenancho** and **olla.** These work groups differ from each other in their size, function, and degree of reciprocity, organizational structure, and the like. Let us begin with the oldest form of labour organization.

6.2.1. **De**

For some time in the past **de** was the most common and important form of labor organization. It is a small work group to which membership is based on proximity, friendship, neighbourliness and kinship. More often than not members of this group are adult men living close to each other.

De is used for such labor demanding agricultural activities as ploughing, hoeing (digging), weeding, sowing/planting and harvesting. It is a reciprocal work group in which members pool their labor and farming tools to work on each other's fields in rotation. Its members usually work for two or three days on each member's crop fields, only when there is a peak agricultural labor demand.

As one informant pointed out, Sidama peasants seek inter-household labour support via **de** to work on crops such as maize, barley and **teff**. Peasants who grow crops like **enset** and coffee do not need to organize **de.** They rely on household labor to plant and replant **enset** clones and seedlings, though some wealthy members of the society organize festive work group: **huchato.** On the other hand, many peasants use the labor of male household members to plant coffee seedlings, while relying on hired labour for harvesting.

The activities organized by **de** are directed and coordinated by the leadership of two democratically elected leaders, locally termed **Muricha.** They are held responsible to appoint a date for each member's turn and notify all members of the group. They are empowered to

penalize those members who fail to keep the appointed time or date. As agricultural activities are men's prerogatives, membership to **de** is restricted to male heads of household.

6.2.2. **Huchato**

The other important voluntary-based labour organization is called **huchato.** At present, it has become the most common form of work group upon which the Sidama depend heavily. Like a **de,** it is a small work party. However, unlike a **de**, it doesn't have a fixed number of members. The nature and extent of the activities to be undertaken and the host's ability to provide food and drinks determine its size. Its function is partly similar to that of a **de**. In a majority of cases, it is organized for the purpose of obtaining extra-household labour required to perform such agricultural work as ploughing, hoeing, sowing, fertilizing, weeding, harvesting and transporting the harvest. In the earlier days, as informants indicated, **huchato** was used mainly to plant **enset** seedlings. There was a strong belief in Sidama that since **enset** is a highly valued crop it should be planted through festive work-party. This festivity during which a bull is slaughtered was taken as a guarantee for a good harvest. However, for various reasons, it has undergone a shift in its purpose and now become operational in a wide range of agricultural activities.

Huchato is a loosely organized work group, which lacks formal structure, leadership and binding rules and regulations. Unlike a **de**, it is a festive work-group in which the organizer prepares food and drinks. In **huchato** group labour is mobilized in the following way: A host who is in need of additional labour asks his close kinsmen, friends and neighbours for their support. Upon his request they pool their labour and farm tools on the appointed day. In return the host serves food and drinks to those who come for help. According to the existing

culturally prescribed gender-based division of labor, women and men are assigned different tasks. Women prepare food and drinks while men are involved in agricultural operations. If a host wants the help of several individuals, a wife will also seek her friends and neighbours support to decorticate, pulverize and cook **wasa** to be served to those who make themselves available. Although women are not involved in major agricultural activities, they occasionally participate in some tasks like maize husking, transporting and storing the harvest. The following case illustrates how **huchato** is organised.

Case No11

Manaye Berassa

Manaye Berassa is in his late 20's. He is married to an Amhara woman. He belongs to **waeno** lineage of the **yanase** clan. During my fieldwork, on October 10,1999 he organized **huchato.** He called upon the labor support of four neighbours and a brother to work on a plot of half **timad** (about 0.13 hectare). They came with their iron hoes, locally termed **saffe**, and **t'ike**. Group members hoed and sowed **teff,** which lasted for two consecutive days. Manaye's wife, with the assistance of her friends, prepared food and drinks and took them to the field, which is close to the homestead. The feast was not very elaborate. The participants of the work group were:

Table No 5 list of participants in festive work group

Serial No.	Name	Relationship to the organizer	Estimated age
1.	Manaye Berassa	Host	28
2.	Batisso Berassa	Brother (**Roddo**)	30
3.	Adela Adamu	Close friend	29
4.	Menesho Adamu	" "	25
5.	Alegachu Balguda	Neighbor	20
6.	Shuna Adamu	Neighbor	27

(Observation and Interview with Manaye, October 1999)

Huchato, at its inception, was used to perform mainly agricultural tasks, but with the decline of other forms of labour organization it has become also important for the purpose of building

houses. Though this festive work group seems to be open to all members of the community, only those who can afford to provide food and drinks are able to organize **huchato**. Poor members of the society often rely on their own household labour. There are, however, some exceptions to this general pattern. Those who can neither organize **huchato** nor rely on household labour have recently begun to resort to another option. The main option is to solicit the provision of free labor from close kinsmen or neighbors. Nowadays, the importance of kinship ties and neighbourliness has declined and church affiliation either to Catholic or Protestant church has begun to take up their place. The following case demonstrates the new role of **huchato** as a means of obtaining labor for hut building and the Protestant Churches recent involvement in labor sharing arrangements:

Case No 12

Ledamu Gimu

Ledamu Gimu is in his late 70's. He belongs to **allawo** lineage. Danchile Hiriso is his wife. She is about 60 years old. She bore him five children, one son and four daughters. The son lives with them while they have married all their daughters off. He is a member of **kale heywot** (words of life) church. The church organized **huchato** to replace Ledamo's old and almost demolished **fengo** hut by a new one. The work group was organized on October 29,1999, while I was interviewing **Lato Hatiya,** his close neighbour. Twenty-five men and ten women participated in the work-party. Most of them were young men. The old men, including the host, sat under the shed of a tree and gave advice to young and adult men who were chopping woods, digging pits and making a round-shaped wall. The work took them almost eight working days. The first two days were devoted to erecting the wall. The next three days were spent on roof making. In the last three days the roof was fixed upon the wall. Work group members provided all the building materials. Ledamo's wife is too old to prepare food and drinks. For this reason, her neighbors brought different kinds of food and drinks to the work site every day until the work was accomplished. Some of the food served were: **bedela T'orosho** (maize-pancake), boiled corn, boiled haricot beans, **wasa** flour mixed with boiled haricot bean, **burusame** (**wasa** with butter) and drinks like coffee and milk were also served. (Interview with Ledamu, November, 1999)

6.2.3. **Sera**

Sera is the largest work-group which, in some respects, differs from the above-discussed two work groups. It differs from **de** in its function, size and degree of reciprocity. However it is almost similar to **de** in terms of organizational structure and form of leadership. As opposed to **huchato, Sera** is large in size with a well-established organizational structure. It is a voluntary-based indigenous institution formed to undertake two different activities. Its main objectives are, (1) to mobilize extra-household labour needed to build houses and, (2) to bury the dead member or his relatives and assist the family of the deceased person in handling the ritualistic practices associated with death and mourning. On the basis of these two distinct functions of **sera** the Sidama group it into two categories, namely, **chenancho** and **olla**. The functions and organization of the two labor sharing arrangements are described below.

6.2 3.1 **Chenancho**

Chenancho, like **huchato,** is a festive work group. It is often organized to obtain extra household labor required to build a host's hut. In Sidama, there are three distinct types of thatched roof houses. These are **Sheka, Sidancho** and **Fengo**. The former is the biggest and skilfully built house, which is common in the highland Sidama where bamboo is abundant. **Sheka** and **Sidancho** are the traditional types of Sidama hut, which demand a good deal of skill and the labor of a large group of people. In contrast, **fengo** demands less skill and the labor of a small group of people. It has recently been introduced into the area. In the study areas, **fengo** and **sidancho** are the common types, while **sheka** is almost non-existent.

The Sidama have long used **chenancho** as the best way of mobilizing group labor to build the above mentioned time and labor demanding houses. As **chenancho** is a festivity, a man who wants to obtain labor support must provide food and drinks. The number of days required for the completion of a house may range from eight to thirty days depending upon the size, house

type and the number of people drawn for the construction work. The size, the type of the house and the number of people drawn in turn, depends upon the wealth of the host, and his wife's ability to prepare large amounts of food and drinks. What makes this labor organization a costly affair is that a host is required to slaughter a bull or other animal upon the completion of the house.

Since house building is an exclusive domain of male members of the society, **chenancho** is organized for and by male heads of household. In the olden days, members of the group supplied construction materials. However, this tradition has now been changed and supplying construction materials has become the responsibility of the host.

It should be emphasized that though house construction is men's domain, it is practically impossible to organize **chenancho** without women's involvement. A host's wife in her attempt to make such work-group a success often calls her friends, neighbors and close relatives for labor support desperately needed to decorticate and pulverize **enset**. Beyond the labor support some close friends and neighbors may bring prepared food and drinks. It is, therefore, safe to conclude that women are the main stays of the labor exchange arrangements that involve festivity.

As **chenancho** is organized for the mutual benefit of its members, it has a democratic structure. As with the **de**, **chenancho** has two **murichas** who are elected on the basis of age, good conduct and commitment to the common goal. If a host wants to get his house built, he should first contact and ask one of the leaders. The leaders upon application will fix a date in

consultation with **ayantus** (specialists who are able to identify good days preferred for house construction) and then inform all members to come and work on the appointed day.

6.2. 3.2 **Olla**

Olla is another important labour sharing arrangement. It is an amalgam of a group of three or more **chenanchos.** The number of **chenanchos** organized into **olla** varies from one village to another. Its organizational structure is a bit different from that of **chenancho** and **de**. It works under the leadership of three or four **murichas** who are assigned different tasks. Each **chenancho** has proportional representation in **olla**'s executive body.

Olla, like **chenancho**, mobilizes collective labour needed to build a house on the request of a host. However, the Sidama, in most cases, prefer **chenancho** to **olla.** This is explained by the fact that since the latter is composed of a large group of people, it is difficult to prepare and serve food and drinks to all its members who take part in the construction work. As a result it is only rich members of the community that occasionally use **olla** to obtain extra-household labor. In general, the function of **olla** as a labor mobilization strategy to build a house is insignificant. An elderly informant contended that it is more like a funeral association, **Idir**.

As many other burial associations, **olla** involves passing on of information regarding the death of a member or his relatives. Members are expected to go to the burial site, accompany the dead body and support families of the deceased in their bereavement. During the fieldwork there were four **ollas** in **T'aremiessa kebele,** while three **ollas** were established in **Fulassa.**

In **olla**, men and women have culturally prescribed specific tasks. Men carry the corpse, dig the grave and bury the dead. Women, in contrast, prepare food and drinks to be served to those members who attend the funeral and the mourning ceremonies.

Although women have important roles to play in the sustenance of **olla,** membership is strictly gender-specific. It is only male heads of household who are eligible to be members. However, in rare instances, widows may be accepted as members.

In general, work-groups were and still are important means for obtaining extra-household labor to perform both economic and non- economic activities. However, in some parts of the Sidama area their importance has declined. For instance, in some densely populated **weinadega** areas, including the research sites, labor-sharing arrangements like **de** and **chenancho** have become less important. Of the different work groups, **huchato** and **olla** remain important in the life of rural Sidama. Informants identified some major factors that undermined the importance of these traditional institutions. These factors are summarized in the following two salient points.

1. **The shortage of cultivable land**: in the recent past, when the Sidama grew field crops like sorghum and barley, there was a high demand of agricultural labor. This was because at that time the people practiced a system of shifting cultivation in which felling trees, bush clearing, removing grass cover and toiling the soil with rudimentary hand tools were major agricultural tasks that required extra household labor. However, due to the increase in population density and land shortage, the Sidama have effected a radical change to permanent cultivation. This transformation from shifting to permanent cultivation has in turn reduced the demand for extra-household agricultural labor.

2. **The introduction of a cash economy**. Those Sidama who obtain cash from the sale of cash crops such as coffee, chat, and eucalyptus tree prefer hired labor to **chenancho**. Some of the respondents indicated that after the advent of coffee, Sidama farmers began to use hired labor mainly for the purpose building houses. To cite one example let us take the experience of **Beyene Berrassa**, who belongs to **gonowa** lineage. He stated:

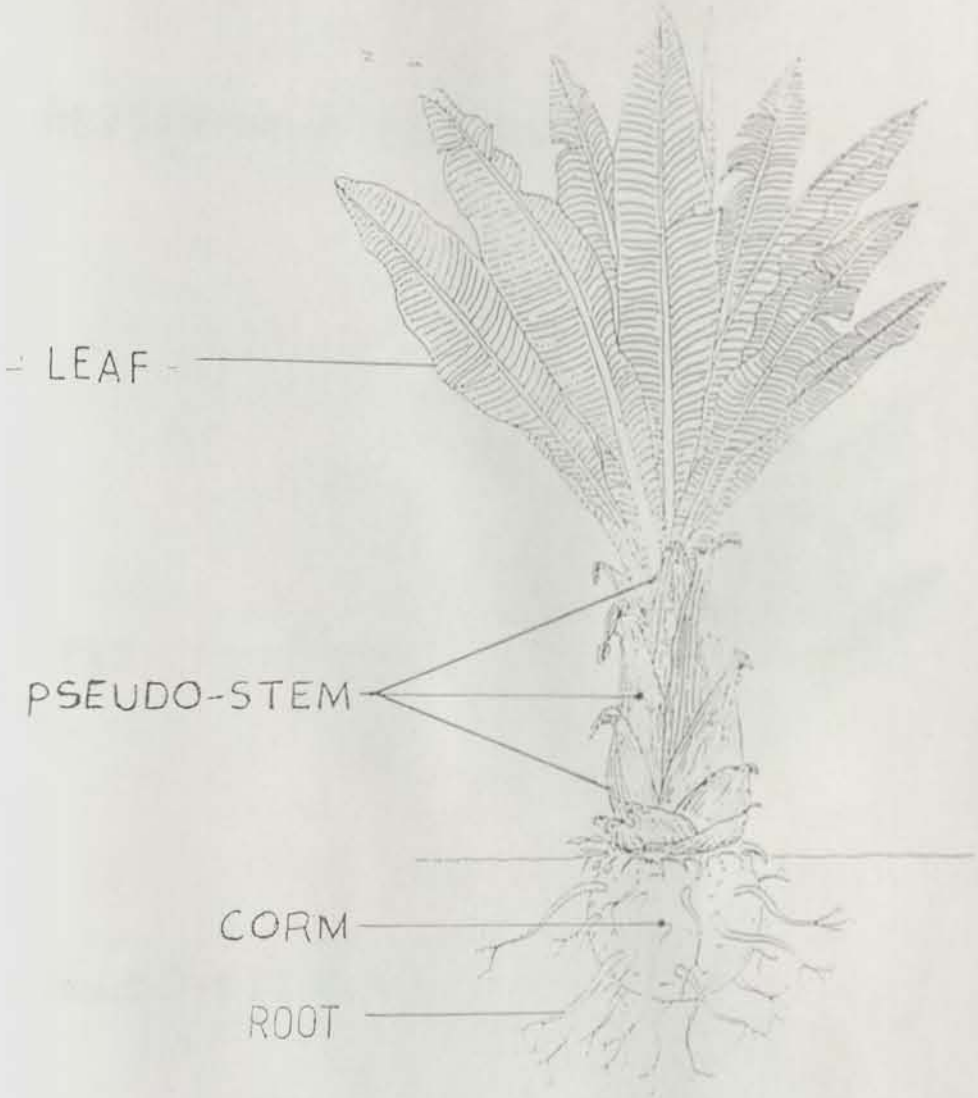
> The hut in which I currently live was built ten years ago. I remember the time when the hut was built. It coincided with the birth of my fourth child. I used **chenancho** to obtain extra household labor required to build my **Fengo.** The work took us almost a month. Every day my wife prepared food and drinks to be served to thirty male participants. Though she was assisted by her relatives, friends and neighbors, the task was very laborious and incurred too much expense. Upon the completion of the construction work a bull was killed and meat was served with **qaribo** (a non-alcohol, home brewed local drink usually made by Protestants).
> Since then only three **chenanchos** were organized in my village. From my observation I learnt that my co-villagers have begun to resort to hired labour. **Chenancho** is no longer their preference. Labor for house building is not a costly affair. It costs from 100 to 200 **birr** depending upon the size and type of the hut. (Interview, October 6, 1999).

This case illustrates how the advent of a cash economy and the availability of cheap semi-skilled labour have affected the long established labour sharing arrangements among the Sidama. It also shows that **chenancho** is a costly affair compared to hired labour.

To sum up, traditional labor exchange arrangements formerly had a very important role in the life of rural Sidama. However, for a variety of reasons, some of these arrangements have become less functional, particularly in **weinadega** areas where coffee is a major crop and land is scarce. **De** and **chenancho** were replaced by **huchato,** hired labour and unpaid household labour. Membership in **huchato** changed from kinsmen, neighbours, and friends to church affilation.

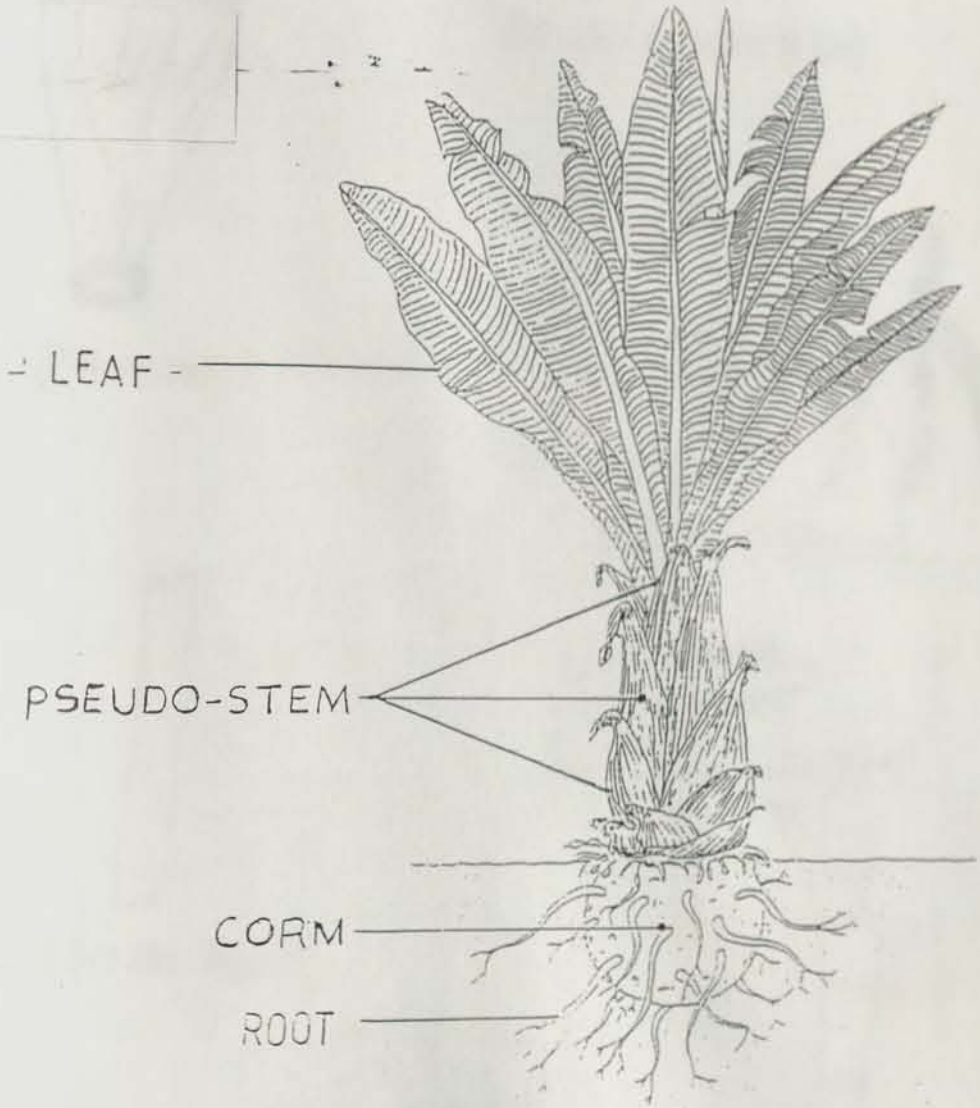
As mentioned earlier agricultural activities and house building are men's main prerogatives and as a consequence membership in the work groups is restricted to male household heads. Despite this fact, women are important actors in organizing work groups. This is to say that they have indispensable roles to play in the realization of the activities planned by work groups. The use of group labor, above all, depends on the organizer's ability to prepare as much **wasa** as possible and, since the preparation of **wasa** is women's exclusive domain, their labor is irreplaceable to make labor organization possible.

FIGURE 2. Diagram of "Enset" Plant



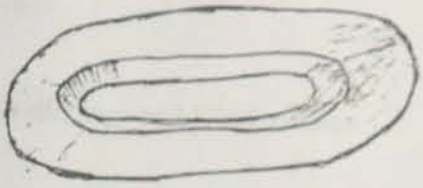
Adopted from Mehtzun, et.al 1994

-FIGURE 2. Diagram of "Enset" Plant



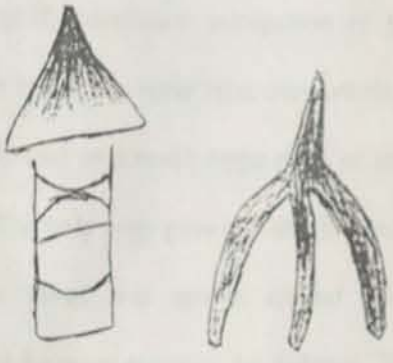
Adopted from Mehtzun, et.al 1994

FIGURE 3. ENSET PROCESSING TOOLS

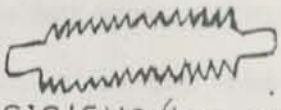


BADIRO (wooden plate)

K'EHO (Pulverizer)

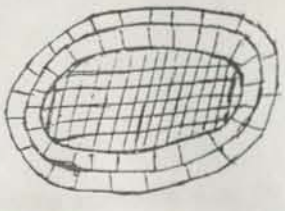


KINCHO (squeezer)



SISICHO (iron scraper)

MEETA (wooden plank)



MEMO (sieve)

WERIME (knife)

CHAPTER SEVEN

Cropping Pattern, Agricultural Technology and Gender Roles

Information obtained from elderly informants indicated that the Sidama have undergone important changes in their production systems over the last century. As briefly described in the background section, agro-pastoralism was for long the dominant occupation of the Sidama. They kept large herds of cattle, sheep and goats and at the same time were involved in swidden cultivation. A century ago land was abundant and as a result large areas of land were allotted for both grazing and shifting cultivation. The only crop grown in the Sidama's swidden cultivation was sorghum (**Bashanqa**) while **enset** was grown around every homestead. These two crops are regarded as the oldest indigenous crops of the Sidama. The Sidama used to grow sorghum on open fields surrounded by forests. They cultivated these open fields on a shifting basis. Since at that time there was no scarcity of land, they grew sorghum on the same fields for two or three consecutive years after which the lands were left fallow for a long period of time. Every three or so years new land was brought under cultivation. To prepare new land for cultivation, they fell trees, cut/slash long grasses and put fire (locally termed as **dolo**) on shrubs and bushes. The high fertility of the soil, coupled with low population density, enabled the Sidama to practice that extensive system of agricultural production.

In the earlier days the Sidama economy was, by and large, characterized by the following features: low agricultural density, free access to land, hoe-based shifting cultivation, production for household consumption, non-existence of labor market and low integration into the larger market economy. Within the traditional economy, there were separate roles for men

and women. Men were the main actors both in pastoral production and in the production of sorghum, while women had important contributions to the production of **enset**. In pastoral production, tasks like putting up cattle kraal, herding large and small stock, were men's prerogatives. Likewise, sorghum production was men's exclusive domain. Major agricultural activities like land clearance (felling trees, clearing and burning bushes), digging/hoeing, sowing, weeding, bird scaring (assisted by male children), harvesting, transporting, threshing and storage were done by men. However, in the latter four agricultural activities men received some assistance from women. Men were also responsible for planting, transplanting and weeding **enset** plant, while the subsequent tasks like manuring, harvesting and storing were left for women.

It is evident that due to internal as well as external factors the traditional mode of subsistence of the Sidama has undergone transformation. The overriding factors that necessitated the adoption of new mode of subsistence include, the scarcity of both arable and grazing land resulting from high population density, the incorporation of the Sidama into Ethiopian state and the integration of the Sidama economy into the larger capitalist economic system. These factors, among other things, brought about a major shift in agricultural technology and in cropping pattern. Let us elaborate on these changes in turn.

7.1 **Cropping Pattern**

As mentioned above sorghum was the main field crop grown by Sidama. However, with the adoption of permanent cultivation they entirely gave up the production of sorghum and have begun to cultivate other crops like maize, barley and wheat, **teff** and coffee, while **enset** remained the most important diet of the people. The Sidama seem to have abandoned

producing sorghum for it was susceptible to damage by birds (Hamer, 1987). Some informants also pointed out that the decline in the productivity of sorghum had forced Sidama cultivators to resort to other more productive crops.

7.1.1 **Enset (wese) Production.**

Enset (**Enset ventricosum**) was the first crop domesticated by the Sidama who claim that the Sidama highlands are the original place of the **enset** plant. There are about eight recognized species of **enset,** of which **Enset ventricosum** and probably **Enset edulis** are economically important (Sandford, etal; 1991). **Enset** is grown in both the Sidama highlands and mid land, but it is evident that the highland is more suitable for **enset** production. The size and productivity of **enset** vary depending on variety, soil fertility, rainfall, etc. Depending on these basic factors, the plant may reach a total height of up to 10 meters and a base circumference of up to 3.5 meters (Sandford, etal; 1991).

In some African countries like Kenya, Uganda, Cameroon and Zaire wild **enset** is quite common (Taye, 1984, in Mehtzhun, etal; 1994)). However, Ethiopia is the only country where farmers cultivate **enset** for human consumption (Mehtzhun, etal; 1994). **Enset** provides the main staple diet for a large number of people in the southwestern part of Ethiopia, including Sidama.

Unlike many other crops grown in Sidama, **enset** is propagated vegetatively. Farmers dig out an **enset** plant of about one or so years old, and cut the bottom part (corm) into two or four parts. The splitted corm is buried in the ground covered with dung. Then new seedlings with many sprouts emerge. The seedlings are transplanted in different plots fertilized by animal

manure. Transplanting could be done up to four times. **Enset** can be harvested for consumption in four to six years.

Adult men are held responsible for planting and replanting. Land preparation, planting and replanting, in most instances, is preformed from mid April to the beginning of June. **Enset** is a backyard crop, which needs close follow up and proper management. Though planting and replanting is men's activity, the production of **enset** is unthinkable without women's involvement. This is to say that right from the propagation stage **enset** needs fertile soil for its growth. To this effect they use dung and wastes to fertilize the soil. Applying dung on **enset** land is the exclusive responsibility of women. Unlike women in some parts of Ethiopia where firewood is a serious problem, Sidama women do not use dung cakes as a source of fuel. The use of dung to increase soil fertility is a long established tradition. The Sidama peasants say that the practice is as old as **enset** production itself. Manuring is the day-to-day activity in which women are involved and by which they are valued by their husbands and the society at large. There is an old saying, " good wives are good managers of **enset** yards".

Enset harvesting is also assigned to women. The Sidama women are good at identifying an **enset** plant that reached maturity and in selecting the right season in which **enset** is to be harvested. As women informants indicated, **enset** should be harvested when it reaches flowering stage, if a good yield is to be obtained. In addition, they pointed out that it is not recommended to harvest **enset** in the rainy season, because they learnt from experience that when an **enset** is harvested during the rainy season the quality and the quantity of the edible product would decline. Thus, they are of the opinion that December and/or January are more preferable times for **enset** harvesting. However, in most instances, many households do not

strictly follow the appropriate harvesting time. They harvest the plant whenever there is a pressing need to fulfill the household food requirement.

Enset is a multi purpose crop. It is used for human consumption, animal feed and for extraction of fibres **(K'acha)** used for making bags, rope, gunny bag, etc (Mehtzun, etal; 1994). The different purposes served by **enset** plant involve a distinct division of labor between the two sexes. Women play the major role to prepare **enset** for human consumption. On the other hand, both men and women are involved in animal feeding, while making different items from the enset fibres and marketing these finished products are men's exclusive domains.

Two women informants identified twenty-one varieties of **enset** plants grown in and around their villages, while the data obtained from **Woreda** Agricultural Office indicated that there are about seventy-one varieties of enset plant in the **woreda** in general. The following table depicts **enset** varieties identified by women informants according to size, productivity, medical value, colour etc.

Table No 6 some varieties of **enset** plant grown in the two research Sites

Serial No	Vernacular Name	Size			Main Use	Remark
		Small	Medium	Large		
1	Medicha	-	-	√	Human consumption	Widely grown
2	Addo	-	-	√	Human consumption & for eye treatment	Widely grown
3	Goloma	-	√	-	Human consumption	-
4	Alaticho	-	√	-	Human consumption and for medication (animal disease)	-
5	Genna	-	-	√	Human consumption	-
6	Gerbo	-	√	-	Human consumption	-
7	Siriro	-	√	-	Human consumption	-
8	Sediso	-	-	√	Human consumption	-
9	Botate	√	-	-	Human consumption and for medication	-
10	Bilik'e	-	√	-	Human Consumption	-
11	Haysa	-	-	√	Human Consumption	-
12	Wanik'ore	-	√	-	" "	-
13	Damala	-	-	√	" "	-
14	Dowiramo	-	-			
15	Bira	-	√	-	" "	-
16	Fela	-	√	-	" "	-
17	Gadimo	-	√	-	" "	-
18	Chacho	√	-	-	" "	Fast fermentation
19	Gasalo	-	√	-	" "	-
20	Agana	-	√	-	" "	-
21	Birbo	-	-	√	" "	-

Source: field reasearch

To sum up the discussion in this section, **enset** is the single most important crop for the very survival of the Sidama. It is used for a variety of purposes ranging from making fiber crafts to fulfilling the basic food requirements of households. Though men are involved in the planting and replanting of **enset**, it is, by and large, considered women's crop, as the overall management of the crop rests on women's shoulder. It is, however, paradoxical that **enset** has received little attention from the government and other development agencies. No effective attempt has so far been made to improve the technologies used to produce and to process the crop or to introduce improved varieties of the crop. It is only recently that the **Woreda**

Agricultural Office has established a one-hectare **enset** demonstration site in each of the two study areas.

7.1.2 Maize (Bedela) Production

Maize, **zea mays,** is one of the major crops grown in the study areas. The Sidama cultivate the crop both for household consumption and for the market. Unlike **enset** and sorghum, maize is not an indigenous crop of the Sidama. Maize, according to informants, was recently adopted from other groups. However, the informants were not able to indicate the time and the place of adoption. What is now clear is that the production of maize is highly encouraged by the government and has become one of the few important crops grown in the study areas. In **Fulassa**, where coffee is not widely grown, the peasants depend highly on maize to obtain cash. As a result, currently, the largest proportion of the total land holdings is put to maize cultivation.

Maize is grown on peasant's own land and shared croplands. The use of shared croplands is a recent introduction. The apparent variations in land holding size, labor availability and types of agricultural technology among peasant households gave rise to share cropping. In the study areas, the most common share cropping arrangement takes place based on the agreement that all required inputs (labor, agricultural implements and seed) other than land are to be provided by the peasant who shares crops with the landowner. For the input the peasant contributes, he retains half of the total grain yield, and the landowner takes the other half.

As opposed to sharecroppers, those peasants who grow maize on their own land rely on the labor of individual members of their households or on the labor sharing arrangements discussed in the preceding chapter. However, according to informants, household labor is less

important in the production of maize, rather many peasants exclusively rely on the labor pool system. Many farm households use **huchato** to obtain extra-household labor to undertake major activities like ploughing/hoeing, fertilizing, sowing, weeding harvesting and transporting. Men carry out these activities. As women are tied up to the preparation of food and drinks for the work parties, they do not get involved in such activities.

Maize is one of the **belg** crops of the Sidama. Maize fields are prepared at the beginning of March, with the arrival of the short rains season. From the beginning of March to mid April, activities like fertilizing and sowing are performed. The weeding of maize is done from May to the end of July. It is harvested towards the end of the main rain season, October.

As information obtained from the **Woreda** Agricultural Office indicated, planned efforts are being made to increase the productivity of maize through the adoption of modern inputs. The Ethiopian government has recently launched an agricultural development programme, which aims at improving the country's food security. Sidama is one of the administrative region in which this programme is currently operational. The programme is called **Extension Package Programme.** During the fieldwork, there were 165 registered beneficiaries, 86 in **Fulassa** and 79 in **T'aremiessa**. These male farmers had easy access to chemical fertilizers, extension services, herbicides, improved seeds and other agricultural inputs. As women do not own land, they are denied access to these important inputs.

7.1.3 **Coffee (Buna) Production**

Coffee is one of the major export crops of Ethiopia. It accounts for more than half of the total export proceeds. Sidama is one of the leading coffee producing areas that contribute to the

country's foreign exchange earnings. Coffee is mainly grown in the midlands of the Sidama. Of the two study sites, **T'aremiessa** is among the main coffee growing **kebeles** in the Sidama Zone. In this **kebele** a large proportion of the peasants' croplands is used for coffee. As mentioned before coffee production and marketing are important processes through which the Sidama's household economy are incorporated into the world economic system.

There are competing views with regard to the origin of coffee in Sidama. Some informants said that coffee had a long history in Sidama. They claim that coffee was used as a beverage crop over a long period of time. Other elderly informants, however, rejected this claim and suggested that coffee has only recently been introduced into Sidama's agriculture. Elderly informants indicated that some sixty years ago the **Aletta** Clan of the Sidama first acquired it from their **Gedeo** neighbours. It is firmly believed among the Sidama elders that the Gedeo people were the first among the Sidama neighbors to cultivate coffee. Later, the **Aletta** introduced coffee to other groups of the Sidama. However the production and marketing of coffee gradually increased after World War II as it became the major export item of the country. In the 1950s realizing the benefits obtained from coffee production a number of Amhara settlers were involved in the large-scale production of coffee. Particularly some Amharas who held more fertile lands in the mid-land areas where the weather and soil type were favourable for coffee production benefited a lot from coffee trading. **T'aremiessa** was one of the areas in which Amhara settlers brought a large acreage of land under coffee cultivation. This does not however mean that the Sidama were not involved in the large scale production and marketing of coffee. Some Sidama **balabats** who worked peacefully with the new settlers grew a large amount of coffee for cash.

During the Derg regime with the abolition of land lordism, the Sidama tenant farmers began to cultivate coffee on individual basis. Later, they established producers' co-operatives and pooled their resources together so as to improve the quality of production, market facilities and road networks. After the fall of the Derg, the producers' cooperatives were dismantled and individual cultivators again began to produce on private basis. Currently, like other crops, coffee is only grown on individual plots. However, to facilitate coffee marketing service cooperatives are established in many coffee-producing areas, including **Taremiessa**.

The quantity of coffee production is first and foremost, determined by the size of plot, the amount of labor obtained and the application of modern inputs. In **T'aremiessa** land is a critical factor of production. As opposed to the popular opinion that suggests scarcity of land leads to intensification of agriculture, in the study area where land is a scarce resource agricultural intensification still remains at a low level and labor is found to be the important factor of production, particularly during harvesting season.

Land preparation and coffee planting are performed at the beginning of April while harvesting is done between November and December. In the land preparation and planting period labor is more abundant. Every farm household depends entirely on the labor of its own male members. However, during harvesting season there is often a severe shortage of labor.

As it was observed and informants indicated, the months of October and November are the peak agricultural periods in coffee growing areas. Every coffee producer is busy picking coffee berries and transporting them to hulling and pulping stations. Since these stations are open for only a few weeks, every cultivator rushes to sell the produce before the stations are

closed. Once the harvesting season begins Sidama farmers work hard in order to avoid the dangers of sudden hailstorms and petty pilfering by women and children (Hamer, 1987). Thus, coffee harvesting is a labor-intensive task.

Since during the harvesting season every individual farmer is busy working on his plot it is not possible to organize any work parties. In addition, coffee picking cannot be done by individual household labor alone. Thus to avoid the above mentioned problems that can stem from delay in harvesting coffee, producers resort to other option: the use of hired labour. Hired labor can be obtained from three different directions (1) it may be recruited from the **woreda** town: **Leku** (2) it may be drawn from the **kebele**'s landless and poor peasants or, (3) it may also be obtained from **dega** peasants who are always in short of cash needed to meet their requirements, other than food. According to informants the payment rate is **birr** 3:00 per day, but the **dega** (**Alicho**) laborers are made to work longer hours than the laborers from the vicinities. Since the **dega** laborers come from distant places they stay in the home of the host until the work is accomplished. The host provides them with food and shelter. This may partially explain why **dega** laborers work longer hours than the other two groups of laborer.
As in maize production, women do not have significant role in coffee production. As mentioned earlier, in some instances, they may pick coffee cherries, for home consumption or for sale. It is also a norm that only men are involved in hired labor. Therefore coffee can be regarded as men's crop.

In an attempt to increase the country's foreign exchange earnings the government encourages coffee producers to boost their productivity as much as possible. As a result coffee producers

have easy access to marketing, credit facilities, extension services and improved varieties of coffee seedlings etc.

7.1.4 **Teff (gashshe) production**

Teff, Ergarositis abyssincia, is one of the local plants grown in Ethiopia. It is the major food crop grown in the northern highlands of the country. This crop, compared to other crops, is a recently introduced food crop in Sidama. Elderly informants indicated that the Sidama acquired **teff** from **Amhara.** The word **teff** itself is borrowed from the Amharic language. Until the **Amhara** occupation of Sidama, the crop was unknown to Sidama cultivators. It was almost half a century ago that the Sidama began to cultivate it. Nonetheless they have never used it as part of their diet. In other words, they produce it primarily for cash rather than for household consumption.

Despite the efforts made by extension workers of Agricultural Office to expand the production of **teff** in Sidama, it has not yet been fully accepted by Sidama farmers. At present only very few individual cultivators grow **teff** occasionally. This is partly attributed to, (1) the heavy labor it demands (2) the Sidama's reluctance to take it as part of their diet (3) the low income the farmer's generates from the sale of **teff**

Teff is one of the **meher** (main crop season) crops grown in Sidama. Like maize, it is a crop that demand heavy toiling and is thus labor intensive. The Sidama rely on collective labor to produce **teff.** Land preparation for **teff** commences at the beginning of July. It is sown between July and August. Weeding is performed right from the beginning of September. Harvesting, threshing and storing take place between January to February.

Teff is designated as men's crop. Firstly, men control the management and disposition of the crop and secondly, all the responsibilities of **teff** production fall to men. Land preparation, sowing, weeding, harvesting, storing are done by men. In fact, the use of extra-household labor is the rule to perform most of these activities.

Table No. 7 Farming Operation calendar by main Crops

Type of activities	Crop types and months			
	Enset	Maize	**Teff**	Coffee
Land Preparation	April	Beginning of March	July	April
Planting/Sowing	May-June	March-Mid April	Mid July to August	April
Fertilizing/Manuring	Routine activity	March	-	-
Weeding	September	May- July	September	August-September
Harvesting	Dec.-January	October	January – February	Nov.-Dec.
Storage	All the Year round	December		Nov.-Dec.

Source: Compiled from field notes.

Table No 8 Source of Labor, aims of production, and gender division of labor by major crops

Types of Crop	**Source of Labor**	**Aims of Production**	**Gender Division of Labor**
Enset	Household labor	For household consumption	Women play the dominant role
Coffee	Hired labor	For the market	Men's domain
Maize	Share cropping, work* groups and household labor	Primarily for the market but also used for household consumption	"
Teff		For the market	"

*Work groups are the major source of labor

Source: Compiled from field notes.

In Sum, women in Sidama, are directly engaged in the production of backyard crops like **enset** and cabbage, and control the management and disposition of these crops. Men, on the other hand, are the main actors in the production of such field crops as maize, coffee, **teff** etc, which ultimately fall under their control. This vivid division of tasks by gender in cropping systems seems partly to tally with Sachs's (1996) classification of men and women's crops. According to her, men's crops are more likely to be grain or tree; non-food; raised for market and for export, while women's crops are vegetable or root; food; raised for subsistence; or raised for local consumption (1996:68).

Among the Sidama, **enset** and cabbage (root and vegetable crop respectively) are the main food crops cultivated by women. These crops are primarily raised for home consumption. While men produce grains or tree plants mainly to obtain cash income. They raise coffee for export market and grow maize and **teff** for local market and household consumption. What goes against the premise of Sachs is that men in Sidama control the production and disposition of both non-food and food crops that have high market values. As historical evidence suggests, with the introduction of a cash economy, Sidama men began to control the production and disposition of food crops that have high market values. For instance, they switched from the production of sorghum, which had low market value to the production of food crops that are more marketable such as maize and **teff**. This means that the shift from subsistence to market economy attracted men into the production of crops that only have high market values, while women remained in the production of subsistence crops that have no or little market values.

7.2 Agricultural Technology

In the former days when shifting cultivation was the norm, the Sidama used to rely on traditional farming implements. Wooden digging stick (**wenincho**) and wooden hoe (**onkolo**) were the main hand tools. The former was used to prepare sorghum plots while the latter was used to plant and weed **enset**. In Sidama, only men wield these traditional tools.

With the intensification of agriculture, the Sidama abandoned the old wooden implements and replaced them with iron hoes: **saffe**, **shodira** and **t'ike**. Though some peasants have begun to use ox ploughing for crop production, it is still uncommon in most parts of the Sidama. As data obtained from the Regional Planning Bureau indicate, only 20% of the peasants rely on ox power for traction. Thus hoe cultivation has retained its dominance in the agricultural system. This is due largely to shortage of oxen, land fragmentation, and the rugged and mountainous nature of the **dega** landscape.

According to informants and **Woreda** Agricultural Office experts, the use of ploughs is more common in lowland and semi lowland areas where there is low population density. In these agro-climatic zones, land is less fragmented and relatively more plentiful, there is no shortage of draught animal, the landscape is conducive to drag plows with the assistance of ox-power, and the production of perennial crops is more important than permanent crops like **enset** and coffee. All these features of the lowland area contribute to the importance of ox-drawn plows in crop production.

As in other rural agrarian societies of Ethiopia, agricultural extension workers in Sidama make relentless efforts to promote the use of ox-drawn plows. They teach the Sidama peasants the advantages that the use of ploughs has over traditional hand tools. The

advantages include, (1) overcoming the labour shortage, (2) speeding the sowing and weeding than when done manually, and (3) improving the soil quality and its water retention capacity.

In spite of the advantages of ploughs over traditional implements and the efforts being exerted by extension workers, the use of animal-drawn implements still remains at low level. In each of the two research areas, peasants employ different farming techniques for crop cultivation. In **T'aremiessa** hoe cultivation predominates while in **Fulassa** plough cultivation is dominant. As data from the survey indicated, only 14% of the respondents in **T'aremiessa** currently practice plough cultivation, while the highest proportion rely on hand tools. This may be partially attributed to lack of oxen and small individual land holding. Only 12% of the interviewees owned two oxen and the average land holding size of the peasants was found to be less than 1.5 hectares.

Though only a small proportion of **T'aremiessa** peasants practice plough cultivation, most are not alien to plough culture, and some peasants who allot relatively large plots of land for grain production like maize and **teff** tend to rely on ox-drawn plows. From in-depth interviews, it was realized that some peasants who previously used ploughs have now abandoned it and resorted to hoe cultivation. This is so largely because of the ever-decreasing arable land and pasture and partly because of the expansion of coffee production. The main farming instruments now used in **T'aremiessa** are **Saffe** (instead of plough) for land preparation to grow maize and **teff** and **shodira** and **t'ike** to plant and weed the two principal crops: **enset** and coffee. As the latter crops do not need heavy toiling, ox-drawn ploughs are not as such important to grow them. In this **Kebele**, according to the information obtained from **Woreda** Agricultural Office, these two crops took up more than 60% of the total cultivated land in 1998. Thus, the types of crop widely grown in a society also determine the type of agricultural technology employed.

In contrast to peasants in **T'aremiessa, Fulassa** peasants rely heavily on ox ploughing for agricultural production. As the survey finding indicated, 62% of the sample population were plough cultivators. Apart from the flat topography and the relative abundance of cultivable land, the type of major crops grown in this **Kebele** partly explains the use of plough. In **Fulassa**, unlike in **T'aremiessa**, maize is the principal food crop. Since this crop needs heavy toiling, the farmers depend heavily on ploughs for land preparation.

Plough cultivation was adopted early in the twentieth century. As elderly informants pointed out, before the conquest of the Amhara settlers ox-drawn plough were unknown to the Sidama. An elderly informant indicated how the Sidama acquired the knowledge of plough cultivation as follows:

> Before Amhara came and settled here, the use of ox-drawn plough was uncommon among the Sidama. We used to cultivate our staples with the help of simple hand tools called **wenincho** and **onkolo**. The former was used for land preparation while the latter was used for weeding. Later our people changed these wooden farm implements into iron hoes of various forms. Some people who do not have oxen still use iron hoes for crop cultivation.
>
> Now I am 62. I cannot trace the exact time when plough was introduced into the Sidama. As I heard from my paternal uncle (**Wasile**) and other elderly relatives, it was during the **gebbar** system that the Sidama have begun to acquire the skill of using ploughs. During the Amhara administration, our people used to work for Amhara landlords. The Amhara brought ploughs with them and made the Sidama **gebbars** use them for land preparation. It was not an easy task. Our people did not adopt it easily. At the early stage the Sidama used ploughs only to prepare the plots of Amhara landlords, they did not use it on their individual plots. But later with the introduction of new cereals like **teff** and maize our people began to use ploughs (interview, December, 1999).

As the information from informants indicated, plough agriculture is not a recent introduction. Despite this fact, and the concerted efforts being made by agricultural workers, peasants in most parts of Sidama rely heavily on the old agricultural implements.

7.2.1 **Variations in gender roles in the two systems of agriculture**

As already mentioned, there is a clear distinction between the two study areas in the use of agricultural implements. In **T'aremiessa** hoe-cultivation predominates, while in **Fulassa** ox ploughing is the dominant agricultural system.

As corroborated by data obtained from the two research sites, the types of agricultural work assigned to the two genders are almost identical in the two **Kebeles** where different agricultural techniques are employed. In both hoe and plough cultivation areas, men are the main cultivators, they do the hoeing and ploughing. The land in the two areas is prepared for sowing and planting by men using oxen (in **Fulassa**) and hand tools (in **T'aremiessa**). Other agricultural activities like weeding, harvesting, transporting, storing of grains and coffee are predominantly done by men with some direct and indirect assistance from women. The production of backyard food crops like **enset** and vegetables is largely left for women, with little assistance from men.

The main distinction envisaged in the two areas is that in **Fulassa,** where ox ploughing is the dominant practice, the peasants usually organize work groups. Land preparation, sowing, weeding and harvesting of maize fields are performed mainly through workgroups in which women prepare food and drinks. On the other hand, in **T'aremiessa,** where hoe-cultivation predominates and coffee is the main crop, the use of hired men's labour is more common.

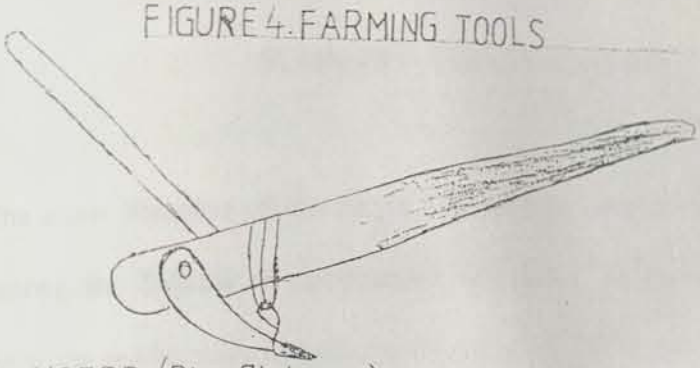
Let us now see whether or not the transition from hoe to plough agriculture had an impact on gender roles in agricultural production. In Sidama, at large, major changes have occurred in the agricultural production system. Chief among which was the radical shift from the use of wooden digging sticks and hoes to the use of ox-drawn ploughs in some parts of Sidama. **Fulassa** is one of the few areas in which major changes is occurred. The peasants in this **Kebele** have made a shift, though far from being complete, from hoes to ploughs.

In the former days when the Sidama used digging sticks and wooden hoes, there was a clear and rigid division of tasks between men and women. Men were usually responsible for field crops while women were mainly responsible for **enset** production.

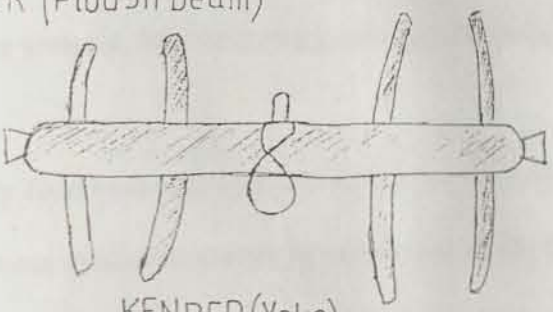
As argued by Boserup (1970), the introduction of plough cultivation diminishes women's pivotal role in agricultural production while men become important actors in the production process. The general view she holds is that hoes are women's agricultural implements while animal-drawn plows are men's instruments. With the transition from hoes to ploughs, women lose their former agricultural work and as a result are relegated to the domestic domain. As described earlier, in Sidama hoes and ploughs are men's instruments. Women do not hoe or plough even in the absence of male heads of household. In female-headed households, hoeing and ploughing are carried out through workgroups.

The technological change from hoe to plough did not result in a reallocation of tasks between the two genders in agricultural production. Sidama women did not lose their traditional roles and are still important actors in the management and production of **enset** and cabbage, while the production of maize, **teff**, coffee has remained in the hands of men. Thus we can argue that Boserup's model of technological determinism does not seem to explain either the current or the past pattern of task distribution in agricultural production among the Sidama.

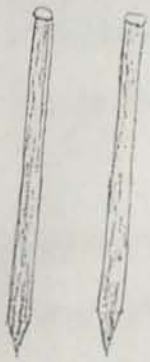
FIGURE 4. FARMING TOOLS



MOFER (Plough beam)



KENBER (Yoke)



WENINCHO (digging stick)

SHODIRA (double tip hoe)

SAFFE (axe)

T'IKE (iron hoe)

ONKOLO (wooden hoe)

ANTU (sickel)

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The main objective of this thesis is to describe the gender roles in agricultural production among the Sidama of Southwestern Ethiopia. The thesis also explores the relationship between gender roles in agricultural production, on the one hand, and agricultural techniques, land tenure systems, form of marriage and type of marriage payment, on the other.

This study found out that men and women perform culturally defined distinct tasks. Unlike many African countries, women in Sidama are not the main actors in agricultural production. Men play the dominant role in agricultural production while women are the key actors in the management and processing of **enset** and in the daily maintenance of households. Men do major agricultural operations like hoeing, ploughing, planting/sowing, weeding and harvesting. These activities, in most cases, are carried out through work groups in which women play important roles. Women prepare and provide food and drinks for members of the work groups.

Men are largely involved in the production of maize, **teff**, and coffee with little assistance from women. Women, on the other hand, grow cabbage and are engaged heavily in manuring, harvesting, storing and more importantly in processing **enset.** Land preparation, planting and replanting **enset** are men's exclusive domains.

As available data indicate, there exists a clear distinction between the activities of men and women. Men grow cereals and coffee for the market while women are largely involved in the

production of backyard crops for household consumption. The other notable difference is that women do not use hand tools or plows and work on individual basis. Men, in contrast, wield both hoe and plough and, in most instances, work collectively using different forms of work party.

The role women and men play in Sidama, though different, is complementary. Women do tasks culturally considered appropriate for them and avoid certain activities that are considered demeaning. For instance, they do not plough, hoe and sow even in the absence of male heads of household. In female-headed households such activities are carried out entirely through work-groups attended by men. Women contribute labour to the daily maintenance of their households. Apart from the procreation and nurturing of infants, Sidama women are always busy processing and preparing food for household members. Men work in the field to provide the basic household requirements both through own labour and through cash income.

In Sidama, the division of labour between the two genders appears to correspond to their access to and control over resources. Men, by virtue of their important roles in agricultural production, control key factors of production. They control land, and own farm implements and oxen. In addition, they control large livestock and crops like maize, **teff** and coffee. The general pattern is that by virtue of being food providers, women control **enset** and cabbage and have easy access to livestock products like milk and butter. Widows are the exception to this general pattern. With the decline of levirate marriage widows have begun to enjoy easy access to important resources, including land. This access, however, is limited to widows who have male child/children from their deceased husbands. But, in most instances, widows

cannot fully own or control household resources, since they are expected to keep them in thrust for their children.

The Sidama have experienced changes in land tenure systems, agricultural technology and cropping pattern in the course of their history. During the last hundered years customary land tenure system has changed, coffee production was introduced and in some areas hoe cultivation was changed into ploughing. Despite these new developments, however, the long-standing gender division of labour in agricultural production has remained intact. Men did not take over women's traditional role and women did not replace men's former domains. Women remain to their traditional roles while men have added maize, **teff** and coffee farming to their older agricultural tasks. In short, before and after the Sidama encountered these new developments, men remained dominant in agricultural production. It is therefore, safe to argue against the claim that in hoe-based African agriculture women do the bulk of agricultural work and their dominance declines with the introduction of coffee and plough agriculture and the change in the customary land tenure systems. These changes do not adequately explain the dominance of men in agricultural production among the Sidama.

In Sidama, hoe-based production system predominates and men play the dominant role in agricultural production. Thus, Sidama is likely to fit neither in African nor in Asian patterns of cultivation system and gender role described by Boserup and Goody. Though hoe-cultivation is the dominant system, plough agriculture is also practised in Sidama. The reasearch accordingly sought to investigate whether there is a difference in gender roles between areas of hoe and plough agriculture. The findings suggest that there is no significant difference in

gender roles between the two systems of agriculture. Men do the bulk of agricultural works in both hoe and plough agriculture areas.

The study also found out that the prevalence of polygyny and bridewealth does not explain women's dominance in agricultural production. It is confirmed that most Sidama men who have relatively large plots of **enset** tend to practice polygynous marriage. They marry more than one wife not because of women's overall dominance in agricultural production, but rather because of women's indispensable role in manuring, harvesting and processing **enset** and of men's desire for many children. The finding of the study also goes against the thesis that claims in plough agriculture monogamous marriage predominates while in hoe-based agriculture polygynous marriage is more common. It was, however, found out that in the two different systems of agriculture monogamy is the norm and men in the plough agriculture area are more polygynous than in the hoe farming area.

Enset is the most important food crop grown in Sidama, and women play an important role in the management, manuring, harvesting and processing this staple. Despite this important role women play, the Agricultural Development Program launched by the government did not include them. As a result they are denied access to extension services, credit facilities, improved seeds and other modern inputs. This finding indicated that the government has failed to realize its two basic development objectives: to integrate women in development and to solve the problem of household food insecurity.

Goody (1976) and Boserup (1970) argue that in societies where hoe agriculture predominates and women play a key role in food production, bridewealth is a common form of marriage

transaction, whereas in plough agriculture dowry dominates. However, the study found out that the data from the two research areas do not tally with this contention. In contrast to Boserup and Goody's conclusion, bridewealth is found to be the sole form of marriage transaction in both hoe and plough agriculture areas where men are the main actors in agricultural production.

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Appendix 1 Household Survey Questionnaire

A. Demographic and social characteristics

1. Name of the household head _____.
2. Sex

   Male = 1

   Female = 2
3. Age _____
4. Marital status

   Never married = 1

   Married = 2

   Divorced = 3

   Widowed = 4
5. Age at first marriage (not applicable to those who are not married) _____
6. If married, how many wives do you have? (not applicable to female heads of household)

   One = 1

   Two = 2

   Three = 3

   More than three = 4
7. Do you have children?

   Yes = 1

   No = 2
8. If yes, how many children do you have?

   Total_____

   Female_____

   Male_____
9. Number of household members_____

B. Subsistence Basis

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

    Crop cultivation = 1

    Cattle rearing = 2

    Trading = 3

    Handicraft = 4

    Others (specify) _____

11. List the major crops grown on your farm plots

    _____ _____

    _____ _____

    _____ _____

    _____ _____

12. Which members of the family are engaged in the following activities :

Activities	Responsible members			
	Women	Men	Children	
			Female	Male
• Hoeing • Ploughing • Weeding • Harvesting • Transporting the harvest • Storing • Marketing • Honey production				

13. What are the implements commonly used for agricultural activities?

Iron hoe = 1

Wooden hoe = 2

Ox-drawn plows = 3

Digging sticks = 4

Other (specify) _____

14. Does your household have a farm plot?

Yes = 1

No = 2

15. If yes, indicate the size of the plot (in hectar)

less than half = 1

0.5 - 1 = 2

1 - 1.5 = 3

1.5 - 2 = 4

More than two = 5

16. Does the household own livestock?

Yes = 1

No = 2

17.If yes, number of livestock owned by the household?

Oxen _____

Cows _____

Pack animals _____

Sheep _____

Goats _____

Camel _____

Chicken _____

Beehives _____

18. Does your household use ox-drawn ploughs?

Yes = 1

No = 2

19. Whose domain is ploughing?

Women's domain = 1

Men's domain = 2

20. Do you often use group labour (labour parties) to undertake agricultural tasks?

Yes = 1

No = 2

21. If yes, what are the major activities that require group labour?

22. Are women involved in labor parties?

Yes = 1

No = 2

23. If yes, what are the major activities in which women are involved?

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my work and that all sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Name: Sintayehu Dejene

Signature_____

Date of submission 14/06/2000

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as a university advisor

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Date---19.5.2002

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Date---19.5.2002