

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

ZEGE AND IT'S COFFEE

LOCAL LIVELIHOODS AND NATURAL RESOURCE
UTILIZATION IN NORTHWEST ETHIOPIA: THE CASE OF
ZEGE PENINSULA

BY
RAHEL MESFIN LEIKUN

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OF
ZEGE PENINSULA

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In Memory of My Mother
Weizero Aster Maru

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Glossary

Debtera	unordained pries
Deldays	those who undertook the physical land distribution during 1975
Desh	Village
Edir	voluntary traditional funeral association
Gebeya	market
Gesho	is a plant whose scientific name is <u>Rhamnus prionides</u> , it is used for the preparation of local alcoholic beverages
Geter	countryside or rural area
Gult	land right given by ruling kings, it also allows the endowed to undertake administrative and judicial activities
Jefel	harvested coffee with its husk
Kada	scale of measurement of land, 1 Kada is approximately 0.5 hectare.
Kebele	Local level government administration unit
Kesher	sloughed coffee
Kollo	roasted cereal/grain (usually combination of wheat or barley, chick pea and sunflower seed)
Mahber	a voluntary association formed by orthodox Christians to celebrate saint's day
Matcha	resource (often land) given to newly wed couples to run their married life and new household
Mote Keda	system of land re-allocation, whereby land of the deceased or those that left the area is given to others
Nefro	boiled cereal/grain
Rist	hereditary use right of land
Semon	land of the church
Senbet	Sabbath day i.e. Sunday
Senbete	a voluntary association formed by orthodox Christian men to celebrate the
Shimagelewoch	elders
Shimgelina/Shimgelina Menesat	process of solving dispute through Shimgelina
Talla	traditional alcoholic beverage prepared from barley
Tanqwa	small boat/canoe made of reed
Woreda	district level government administration unit
Zegegnas	The people of Zege

Acronyms

BoA	Bureau of Agriculture
DoA	Department of Agriculture
KPA	Kebele Peasant Association

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Map I Administrative Regions and Zones of Ethiopia

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PREFACE

This thesis attempts to explore and comprehend the factors influencing natural resource utilization in Zege peninsula, northern Ethiopia. It tries to examine and understand what factors influence the manner of utilization of natural resources particularly land and forests. It is believed that an insight into the livelihood situation of the people can serve as a means for grasping the dynamics and interplay of social, economic, political and cultural challenges that elucidate the manner of resource utilization.

The thesis is composed of six chapters. The first chapter is an introductory part dealing with statement of the problem, objectives of the study, fieldwork condition, methodology and theoretical orientation.

The second chapter describes the geographical location, population and natural resource endowment. It also further analyzes, the historical background of the peninsula and its relation with the outer world and the socio-economic condition of the people.

Issues concerning the social organization of the people of Zege, are raised under chapter three. The chapter touches upon issues concerning the formation of the household and its relation. Related to this the chapter also entertains topics regarding the role of kinship, marriage and the bases of social stratification in Zege.

Chapter four is dedicated to examining the factors influencing the utilization of natural resources. In so doing, the role of tenure system, traditional natural resource management practices, religion and modern agricultural inputs are explored.

Chapter five, discusses, natural resource based conflicts and resolutions mechanisms. The chapter describes the common types of disputes and their causes. Cases of actual disputes over land and trees are presented.

The thesis ends by giving a summary of the main points that emerged in all the chapters and attempting to give a brief conclusion which reflects on the basic question of the study.

Abstract

The thesis is committed to explore and comprehend the factors influencing natural resource utilization in Zege peninsula, northern Ethiopia. Zege peninsula is located in West Gojjam zone, Bahir Dar Zuria *Woreda* (district administration) of the Amhara region. The research attempts to give an overview of the livelihood situation and natural resource utilization of the people in Zege.

The people of Zege earn their living from the cultivation of coffee. Yet, as it's cultivation is characterized by uncertainty, they compliment their income by engaging in trade and sale of fuel wood. Challenges such as shortage of land, threatening deforestation and lack of other vital resources such as labor and capital/cash are often faced by the people.

The people enter into various relationships in the attempt to fulfil their needs and face the challenges they encounter. Disputes over natural resources are part of such relationships. Attributed to the land tenure system of previous and current governments, the people try to procure land by utilizing obscure means such as bickering over land boundaries. Such conditions have also created power disparities and manipulation of various social, economic and political means to solve the disputes.

Zege's changing environment and it's network with the outside world due to trade related activities, is forcing the society to encounter constant changes and adapt to the changing environment. As a result, people are caught in a dilemma between upholding cultural values and adapting the changing environment. These changes are also affecting their manner of resource utilization.

On the whole the study is exploring such conditions by focusing on the livelihoods of the people. It is assumed the community norms, social relations and religious values and institutions will have an important bearing on household decision making on natural resource management. Hence, the study will attempt to go beyond identifying the factors of the commonly mentioned physical or non social and cultural factors such as natural calamities, population pressure, land degradation etc. and explain the interaction of such problems by implementing these anthropological research methodologies.

Chapter I

1. INTRODUCTION

This research was inspired by the uncanny interest on environmental issues and most importantly by the desire to address the alarmingly deteriorating environmental situation in Ethiopia. Numerous studies, literature and conferences have been aiming at acclaiming the subject of environmental degradation in Ethiopia. Based on such research findings and as a student of social anthropology I was keen to explore the seldom considered social and cultural factors that can enrich the discussion on environmental concerns in Ethiopia. More specifically, the thesis is committed to explore and comprehend the factors influencing natural resource utilization in Zege peninsula, northern Ethiopia.

In order to materialize my interest, I was interested to select an area affected by some environmental problem. Ensuing, considering the period I have allocated for fieldwork (ranging from 2-4 months), I decided to select an Amharic speaking area as it can facilitate communication.

I first heard of Zege around five years ago when I was touring some of the historical sites of northern Ethiopia. As in most historical areas, I was impressed by its long historical background and religious heritage particularly the ancient churches estimated to be built between the 14th-16th century. The trekking to the churches gave me the opportunity to learn about the coffee production of the area which make the peninsula one of the few coffee growing areas in Northern Ethiopia.

Zege provided a dimension for my research problem as I have come across some official reports of the Bureau of Agriculture (BoA) and non governmental organization such as CARE-Ethiopia which appraised the state of the environmental problem particularly deforestation in the peninsula. The above mentioned factors, and the religious influence which to a certain extent intervened in the production system, Zege served as the ideal site to examine the hypothesis of the study.

The sixty-eight days of the fieldwork permitted the research to attain or grasp a wider understanding of the situation and become acquainted with other pertinent issue concerning the livelihood situation of the people. Such encounters ultimately extended the course of the research interest. This research then attempts to give an overview of the livelihood situation and natural resource utilization of the people in Zege. This will bring into the scene the diverse issues, from which other research interests can be articulated.

As part of the curriculum in the study of social anthropology, students are acquainted with the important anthropological research methodologies in the two years of the course work. Accordingly, the anthropologist during the fieldwork is expected to observe or inspect closely, perhaps participate and understand the way of life of the concerned people. Despite such theoretical acquaintance or familiarization, I am of the conviction that the emotional, unrest and anxiety one experiences in the field needs to be given due importance. Reflecting on my own encounter, I recall the countless occasions, my emotions fluctuated between confidence, irritation and anxiety during my stay in Zege. I tried to justify my feeling by referring to the literature on fieldwork. Though each had differing suggestions, my remedy for the worries was to pursue the plan I drafted, my instinct and continued to identify good sources of information.

At the commencement of the fieldwork, I introduced myself to the relevant government bodies. I tried to gather information on the region, concerned zones, Woredas and Zege. Moreover, I obtained letters of cooperation from the concerned bodies, which requested the assistance of the officials and professionals in Zege. Ensuing, I investigated the presence of an NGO operating in Zege. CARE-Zege was the sole NGO in the area. I was also shown similar cooperation for the successful completion of my fieldwork.

At the site, I contacted the concerned Woreda, Kebele, and KPA officials all of whom conveyed their support to the success of my field work. I recall an event when I was even pledged an armed militia man to accompany me during the daily trekking to the villages, though the area is very peaceful. I was amused by the thought of summoning someone to

converse with in the presence of an armed man. I politely declined the offer acknowledging the tranquility of the peninsula. I however expressed my gratefulness.

Initially, I visited the churches in the various corners of the peninsula which gave me the opportunity to get acquainted with the area and people particularly the clergy. I thought the blessing of the priests and elders was important for gaining access to the communities and the people.

At the beginning I tried to learn about the historical background of the peninsula and the area by interviewing priests and elders (both women and men). Such inquiries gave the people the impression that I was a tourist or a journalist, as these are the issues tourists usually inquire. I had the chance to observe the preserved religious materials mostly religious books, paintings and attires donated by the different reigning kings in Ethiopia since the 16th century. I noticed that as in most areas the priests and even the ordinary people are proud to relish the long history and heritage of the peninsula. They usually discourse about God's blessing and His pledge to Abune Betre Mariam (one of the founding fathers/monks of Zege) to preserve the peninsula naturally endowed, fertile and suitable/comfortable area to live and dwell in. Though the people acknowledge their virility, they still believe that it is God's pledge not the sustainable and high production of coffee and *Gesho* cultivation, sustained their lives amidst their poverty.

I tried to identify the main features of the villages. Though most of the villages exemplified similar features in some instances proximity to the town, natural settings, access to services exemplified some distinct features. For instance, in areas adjacent to the town, the people are more active in trade and related activities aside from coffee cultivation. These areas are also relatively more populated with artisan-farmers (as they also engage in the cultivation of coffee). There are also areas frequented by tourists and where the inhabitants generate nominal income from the tourist market by selling paintings, basket work, religious books and from tourist guiding.

It was very clear to assess the impact of such frequent encounters. I came across some youngsters either drop outs or who quit school to take up the irregular and competitive tourist guiding. Some have maintained contact with the tourists that once visited the area. They receive gifts and financial assistance from their 'friends'. Such relations have in some aspects had negative effect as these youngsters rely on the irregular assistance and money from the tourists which made them dependent. Hence, some prefer to anxiously await the arrival of the tourist boat from Bahir Dar rather than pursuing school, taking part in farming or other activities. Instead, they spend most of the day under a tree shade, playing cards with money, quite often with the US dollar they obtain from tourists.

Concerning the selection of the research site, I was more interested in selecting an area which is not very close to the town yet has access to it and where the people engage in cultivation as well as other activities (such as trade) which diversifies the household income; such is very typical feature for households in Zege. I finally chose Deber *Desh*/village in Mehal Zege Yiganda KPA, situated in the north west corner of the peninsula. The people also refer to it as Mehal Zege Giorgis *Desh*. Betre Mariam church is found within (in the vicinity) this village but people use the name Giorgis to refer to the area, as it is the oldest church built presumably between the 13th-14th century according to local sources. The presence of these ancient churches of the peninsula also enticed me as it exemplify it's rich religious and historical heritage.

My acquaintance with the priests facilitated the introduction with the people. Such acquaintances were crucial to the commence my assignment. I introduced myself as a university student from Addis Ababa who came to Zege to study the history and culture of the people. Some appreciated the idea whilst some were quick enough to criticize my intention and disclosed that some people both local and foreigners have embarked on similar tasks previously, but yielded nothing to the people. *"We have not seen anything from these studies you claim to have been conducting."*

At the beginning, I visited people I met through the priests, then gradually extended my network. I interviewed people whenever possible, I even conducted informal interview whilst walking down the narrow path to and from the villages as the people inquire the purpose of my presence; often assumed as visiting family members in Zege. Such junctures usually paved the way for initiating a conversation. Aside from these opportunities, the field staff of the BoA and CARE-Zege also introduced me to some people and provided general information on the villages.

Gradually, I felt comfortable and people began to recognize me. However, I was given several identities which at times were for my benefit whilst in other occasions hampered attempts to access certain information. Initially, I was regarded as a tourist, then employee of CARE and eventually when I started inquiring about land issues, people assumed I was a government employee studying land re-distribution and 'measuring land' "*meret yemetelekawa*". In some instances, I was summoned to visit the field of some people and requested to measure the plot as they wanted to show the size of their holding is inadequate and also to explain boundary disputes. Despite such encounters, I was convinced that no matter how much I tried to assimilate (at least to a certain extent) they will always see me as the outsider specially considering the time spent in the field.

Eventually, I believe I became known as the student, as I did not fit precisely in the assumed categories or identities. Due to such multiple identities sometimes some people were keen to allocate time for interview appreciating the mere fact of my presence in the area, away from my home, family and relatives. Some conveyed their hope if I would help the area by opening some type of company or a factory, create employment opportunities or income generating activities for the people. On the contrary, some considered my attempt/study/presence as futile effort and felt that I was wasting their and my time.

In the course of gathering information, I encountered both encouraging and frustrating situations. It was occasionally difficult and discouraging when people consecutively delay or cancel appointments. Though I was at times frustrated I had to deal with it. Some on the contrary came prepared with some written documents or religious books and family heritage or explained in great detail some of the issues of my inquiry. I enjoyed their respect, amazed by their eloquence, awareness and their manner of expressing and explaining certain situations in their own way. There were also occasions where the issues I raised interested them more than I thought it would and provided me with detailed information. Others were not comfortable to discourse on certain issues and were lenient to be interviewed.

Regardless of such encounters, I also knew that everyday made a difference. People also became used to my roaming around and asking questions, attending events such as religious celebrations, visiting mourning people, local 'courts' and observing litigation and some public gatherings. Some even bothered to inquire if I have managed to find the people I looked for or successfully gathered information and whether I have seen progress in what I was trying to study. Some extended their desire for the successful completion of my mission.

1.1. Research Interest

Regarding the shaping and amendment of the research interest, during the first phase of fieldwork in July 1998, the compiled data during the fieldwork and observation pointed out the need for the amendment of the focus of the research. This was important as unlike the initial impression, the gathered information seemed less relevant.

It was during the daily trekking that I noticed the ill-defined boundaries of adjacent coffee tracts. I was interested to know how they manage to distinguish the boundaries and if people encounter dispute over the demarcation. Sparsely planted trees, bushy plants, narrow path, hooks and rocks used to indicate the boundary. Even though most people say they have no difficulty of indicating their boundaries, I noticed that some areas posed

difficulties. I wondered if people biker over such issues. My hunches proved me right when I visited the KPAs office and the social justice committee which functions as the local court. I was startled by the number particularly of cases on land demarcation and related land issues such as access and division of land among joint holders.

In defiance of the people's affirmation of the identification of the boundaries of their holding, I was intrigued by the frequency of the disputes over land demarcation yet they never mentioned or raise the issue. At that juncture I was aware that the topic of land tenure and dispute over land boundary should be where I need to concentrate. However, despite such overwhelming fact I was also keen to entertain other issues as various relevant topics that were of great relevance aside from the land dispute were unraveled. For example, Zege's trade network and it's relation with the outside was also one of the many topics of interest. Gradually, I was also able to learn that the diverse topics of interest which compelled me realize the role of web of factors that affect resource utilization in Zege.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

This study is an effort to address issues pertaining to the utilization of natural resources. It is an effort to understand the web of causes and processes that explain natural resource degradation. The justification for this research is based on the conviction that isolated analysis of the problem, in this case resource degradation, mainly deforestation and focusing solely on the symptoms, may hampers an in-depth understanding of the situation. It is this dimension that the research endeavors to entertain by assessing the underlying issues affecting resource utilization.

It is believed that an insight into the livelihood situation of the people can serve as a means for grasping the dynamics and interplay of social, economic, political and cultural challenges that elucidate the manner of resource utilization. The ecosystem approach which is oriented towards systems analysis, portrays issues as part of a wider system. Such

an approach hence, permits wider understanding of the interplay of these challenges of the people and its impact on resource utilization. Yet, rather than posing the society as a stagnant relic denied of responding to the changes around it, issues of adaptation that capture the responses channeled to constant challenges and unsteady conditions will be discussed.

Further, Vayda's [1990:276] diachronic approach which emphasizes the analysis of specific activities along with the wider context (in which they are situated in), is assumed to be of relevance for this research to avoid over simplified explanations of the problem. As Manger pointed out very often there is a tendency to attribute symptom of particular environmental degradation to 'an immediate human cause'. Therefore there is a need for more elaborate or complex presentation which "makes room for the independent working of social, economic and political factor" and by establishing the dynamics in these fields its implications on the environment becomes more lucid [Manger, 1988: 156].

On the whole, the main focus of the thesis will be to examine and understand what factors influence the manner of utilization of natural resources particularly land and forests. It is assumed that range of factors affect directly or indirectly the resource utilization. At a local level is assumed the community norms, social relations and religious values and institutions will have an important bearing on household decision making on natural resource management. Hence, the study will attempt to go beyond identifying the factors of the commonly mentioned physical or non social and cultural factors such as natural calamities, population pressure, land degradation etc. and explain the interaction of such problems by implementing these anthropological research methodologies.

1.3. General Objective

In the light of the prevailing problems regarding the status of natural resources in the area, the research will look into the factors that have contributed to the deteriorating situation. In doing so, it is believed that examining range of factors including social and cultural factors such as religion, role of traditional institutions/associations, traditional practices, gender relations will give an insight to the problem.

Specific Objectives

1. Document the pattern of natural resource utilization
2. To explore and analyze the role of various factors in affecting individuals choice of certain natural resource utilization practices. Among these factors that will be examined are the political atmosphere, economic realm and social and cultural such as norms and values, religion, traditional institutions, gender, kinship, relation between the members of the community, ownership and inheritance rights and other related issues etc., in affecting individuals choice and in adopting certain natural resources management practices.
3. Examine the different perception of the people regarding utilization of natural resource and the factors affecting it by age, gender, religion, education etc.
4. To analyze the effect of external influences such as state policy, migration, markets etc. on the utilization of natural resources
5. Attempt to draw a lesson from the situation of Zege regarding traditional resource utilization practices

1.4. Significance of the Study

Considering the current status of natural resources of the country, the value of any research on this subject in yielding a better understanding is unquestionable. In this regard then, this anthropological research which is dedicated to the exploration and explanation of the factors that have to do with the utilization of natural resource is hoped to contribute towards a better understanding of the situation. The research can serve as

ethnographic material on one of the historical and unique areas of the country, about which little has been written so far.

1.5. Framework of Analysis

The interest of anthropology and particularly social anthropology in natural environment has been sharpened particularly since the 20th century with the emergence of the sub-field ecological anthropology. This part of the discipline has been duly focused on the relations between “population dynamics, social organization and culture and the environment they inhabit” [Orlove, 1980]. In other words, ecological anthropology asserts that the “relations between humans and their environment are mediated by culture” [Ingold 1992:39].

The theoretical foundations that emerged thereafter, have articulated the locus of anthropology to focus on various environmental issues due to the continuously changing relation of society and nature. As a result, the contribution has been directed towards topics such as sustainable livelihoods, traditional knowledge and resource management and conservation. As Descola and Palsson mentioned “the recognition that nature is a social construct and that conceptualization of the environment are the product of changing historical contests and cultural specification presents a difficult challenge to anthropological inquiry” [Descola and Palsson 1996:13].

In this regard, the contribution of anthropology in the management of natural resources extends to include issues concerning construction of local knowledge, decision-making and people’s pressure on the use of resources, how the environment affects or ‘speaks back’ to people, the unprecedented demands and over utilization of natural resources, coping or adaptive strategies in the face of natural hazards etc. [ibid., 1996].

Most importantly, the role of anthropology in the study of traditional resources management is unquestionable since studies on such issues require sufficient

“appreciation of social, economic and environmental conditions which nurture and modify them” [Fikret 1989:67]. In this regard, anthropology enhances the knowledge on natural resource management by giving due emphasis to people’s cultural perspectives and local knowledge on the use of such resources [Croll and Parkins 1992].

In the attempt to procure extensive understanding of the people-environment interaction, and avoid deterministic explanation some frameworks have been developed, amongst which is the notion of ‘ecosystem’. The development or the application of the notion of ecosystem in social anthropology seem to emanate from the frustration of a single factor analysis and the inability of examining the relationship of different factors that can depict or capture the dynamism of the given society. This was also the concern of Douglas [1972: 131] when calling for systems-analysis to depicts complexity and the extension of analysis to incorporate larger contexts which can extend to continental level.

In it’s literary sense, ecosystem is defined as “all the organisms in a given area interacting with the physical environment, so that a flow of energy leads to a clearly defined tropic structure, biotic diversity and material cycles” [E. Odum 1971:8 as quoted by Moran, *ibid.*]. Ecosystem is also understood as simply one of the specialized concepts pertaining to empirical systems and consists a set of generalizations about the interdependent nutritional and population processes of plant and animal species living in defined physical environments (Tansley 1935).

Borrowed from the biological discourses the notion of ecosystem has come to be used in social anthropology to infer the relationship between what seem to be distinct features or variables. In it’s basic form it makes wide use of the systems analysis as it emphasizes the interrelationship of the components of the ecosystem. By simplifying the complex interactions, it permits the study of behavior of the whole and the parts of the concerned ecological system [Moran, 1982: 54]. Such a manner of analysis has served as a means to achieve a more pragmatic holistic manner for analyzing issues.

Ellen [1990: 191] also testified that “it has shifted the emphasis away from the vulgar correlation of environmentalism, possibilism and cultural ecology toward more specific and integrated studies and avoided simple-minded determinism by its stress not only on reciprocal causation but also on complex networking of mutual causality.”

The basic premise of ecosystem analysis pertains to the systems analysis which assumes that the system is made up of parts which cannot be understood apart from the entire system. Concepts of homeostasis or equilibrium which constitutes the integral explanation of systems analysis, refer obliquely to the static nature of the system and portray it as self contained. In other words, as Moran put it, the ‘cybernetic quality of ecosystem leads naturally to the use of systems analysis techniques’ [Moran, 1982:54].

Systems analysis has become a useful approach for anthropologists since it begins with a holistic model of the components and interrelations of an ecosystem, essentially in a qualitative and descriptive process with which anthropologists feel at ease. However, it then proceeds to simplify these complex interactions so that it can quantitatively study the behavior of both the whole and particular parts of an ecological system [Ellen, 1990:191].

Ellen also argued that it permitted the focus on population rather than on groups defined by parameters (ethnically or socially) hence it has offered a much more satisfactory basis for establishing conditions of ‘analytical closure’ and for the exploration of the validity of the concept of adaptation. Not only that but also in acknowledging environmental and cultural variables it served as a means for analyzing complex and diverse interactions of environmental and cultural features [ibid.,].

Greetz’s work in Indonesia (1959) on the ‘Agricultural Innovation’ is regarded as one of the classical studies in social anthropology which made use of the ecosystem as a unit of analysis. His work is acclaimed for its zeal to elucidate economic stagnation of the nation by considering range of factors aside from the technological and environmental causes;

but through factors which fall under the historical and political stipulations. To this end, he maintained a diachronic approach to capture the dynamic nature of the economic system [Moran, 1982:55].

Similarly, the role (attempt to bring nature and society into a common framework) of ritual in maintaining the equilibrium of the ecosystem was the core of the Rapport's work (1968), 'Pigs for the Ancestors' on the Tsembga Maring of New Guinea highlands. Focusing on the Tsmgegas decision to slaughter pigs to maintain the balance of the ecosystem which otherwise spell burden. Thus, the unruly behavior of the herd of pigs and the damages they incur need to be dealt with' in the Tsembga case through a ritual of slaughtering the pigs. Not only does the ritual helps to reduce the stress of the excess pigs but also plays a crucial part in the social-relations of the Tsembga with the surrounding as it marks the beginning of warfare. The whole process has relevance in maintaining people-land ratio as both the number of pigs and slight decrease of the human population due to the inter tribal warfare. This will allow fallowing of the land for some time until the situation is repeated again. [Moran, 1982: 274].

Regardless, of ecosystem approach, its acclaim for being a useful approach in anthropology mainly due to the holistic approach based on the interrelationship of parts within the system, it's insinuation of balanced and static explanations have earned both the systems and the ecosystem analysis criticism for lack of depicting dynamism. The main focus of the critics of such an approach was it's implication of homeostasis which also insinuated the stagnation of the society. Further, as Bennet, J. (1976) raised it undermined the role of individual's in decision making [Moran, 1982: 56]. This premise has earned it the label of neo-functionalist.

Vayda [1990: 267] in this aspect argued that the regular use of the ecosystem approach can hinder research activities dealing with natural resource management and endurable relations between people and the environment. Endorsing Di Castri's view on the ecosystem approach [1976:245, in Vayda 1990: 267], he suggested that environment is not

confined within ecosystems and hence precludes the people environment interaction. Economic systems which involve network that cut across ecosystem and which compliment harmful utilization of resources in different ecological zones are excluded in such analysis.

On the other hand, he also argued that the proponents of the systems analysis cannot be accused of neglecting the dynamic nature of society and depiction of stable homeostatic picture. The core of his contentions is that though the failure of the systems analysis is not for lack of consideration of the changes in people environment interaction, rather the weakness lies in the magnitude of their analysis; the changes within the bounded system were considered as such occurrences were the main issue of interest[*ibid.*,].

As an alternative to such methodological obstruction, Vayda put forward the notion (research approach) of 'progressive contextualisation' which emphasizes discerning 'interacting causes and effects' to gain commensurable understanding of the problem. 'Progressive contextualisation' as the phrase indicates, reviews the identified problem in the wider context. In this regard, it focuses on vital human activities or the relations of people with their environment and inspects such relationships by taking into account or placing it or viewing it as a part of a wider context.

...focusing on significant human activities or people-environment interaction and then explaining these interaction by placing them within progressively wider or denser contexts...Put the interaction in question into contexts sometimes by going far beyond the boundaries of a nation state or island [Vayda 1990: 267].

In so doing, in his study on deforestation in East Kalimantan, Indonesia, Vayda [*ibid.*, 266], sticking to the progressive contextualisation, he identified different stake holders of the forest and analyzed the causes and the effect by adopting holistic analysis and hence regarding it as part of a complex interaction. Convinced by the notion of "thought experiments" of placing oneself in the place of the actors and attempting to understand 'what there might be in their situations to make them do what they do', attempted to view the situation by gaining a wider understanding. In so doing, Vayda refrained from identifying a research unit as according to his argument the unit responding for a

particular environmental problem differ in accordance to the nature and extent of the problem. Further, absence *priori* assumptions was also regarded as the very essence of the approach rested on specific activities, place and time which permitted better understanding of the activities.

Such attempts have not escaped critics for instance Hill (1970) in discussing her research on West African rural economies states:

But if one cannot plan one's work in advance, how can it be directed? For myself I depend very much on my naive feelings of surprise-holding that the most surprising "events" are most worth pursuit. To do research is search for anew idea one missed last time when formulating the packet of conscious, pre-conscious and unconscious assumptions one carries to the field [p.xiv, in Vayda, 1983: 274]

However, the proponent of progressive contextualisation have also pointed out that the approach may not be applied in the same manner in different subject matters, hence, some amendments are necessary. Despite this, the approach is regarded as relevant for acquiring balanced view of a given situation as it permits studying stable, unstable, and transitory phenomena.

Ellen in this regard, conducted study on the Moluccan islands of eastern Indonesia. The whole attempt of the exercise was to show that a given population can be part and parcel of 'graded boundaries' within a system. By focusing on trade networks, Ellen identified networks at local intermediate and regional level. Each group entered the trade network at various levels due to certain reasons and had varying consequences. By this Ellen wanted to show that gaining understanding of the function or the role of a particular situation in both the local and wider context allows to comprehend local changes induced by the inclusion of the external cause. In other words " to go beyond the explanation of a particular local change or pattern with reference to some general 'external' event(s) and specify in more detail how a cause has been transmitted from an imputed point of origin and transformed through intermediate variables, with varying and multiple consequences, to produce a particular local effect." [Ellen,1990: 220]

1.5.1. The Process of Adaptation

The study of adaptation is regarded as a possible way of addressing the issue of change in dealing with ecosystem. Adaptation “is a term that refers to change in modes of behavior designed to manage or improve the lot of the individual and the group” [Bennet, 1996: 33]. Further expounding the term, Barlet (1978:549) indicated that the term was borrowed from the evolutionary biology and “imply that the resulting fin or fur is the only solution to a specific environmental situation, nor does it imply that the solution is the “best” one, given the resources at hand. Likewise Manger (1996, 1996a) mentioned that adaptation “signifies a relationship between a given population and its environment and in biology as the process by which an animal or plant becomes fitted to its environment.”

One of the vital issues in the rhetoric of adaptation has to do with the adaptive unit: individual vs. group/population adaptation. The interchangeable use of these tends to obscure the process of adaptation. Whilst, such discrepancies are not magnified or are hidden in the case of group adaptation. Thus, it refers generally to manner of the management of physical resources and focus on the role of institutions, system of subsistence and “cultural pattern” [Bennet, 1996:27].

Though there are copious themes and point of emphasis within the subject matter or concerning the subject matter of adaptation in both physical and cultural anthropology, the gist of the discussion here will rest on the process of adaptation and how it can benefit or enhances our understanding of the human environment interaction without being caught in the ecosystem type of argument of homeostasis.

When focusing on adaptation as a process, attention needs to be given to the ‘mechanism of change’ by giving due attention to constraints and decision making which shape or lead to the emergence of individual adaptive strategies [Manger, 1996:32]. Thus, the social, cultural, economic, political and historical contexts which can shape the adaptive process should fall under scrutiny. Further elucidating the notion of adaptation, Manger

further indicates that adaptation needs to be regarded as a socio-cultural change, as the whole process of adaptation is a carrier of culture. In view of systems analysis and the process of adaptation, the emphasis becomes on acknowledging the role of the various systems in the adaptation process at different levels. In this, 'progressive contextualisation' adds the need to acknowledge and elucidate the various systems working in the specific premise of the problem and bring into the scene the dynamic nature of these systems at different levels [ibid., 34].

1.6. Literature Review

The term "natural resources" extends to include "something naturally occurring, needed by an organism, population or ecosystem for energy conversion or used to satisfy human needs including, air, water, vegetation, mineral, wildlife, etc." [FAO 1993:13]. Gibbs and Bromely [1989:23] explained that the mere existence of such natural components will not make them seen as resources unless they serve as means of livelihoods for people. Therefore, indicating that the boundary of the definition of resources can expand and go beyond short term utility as more components of nature such as solar energy are utilized to sustain livelihood.

Grima and Berkes explain that according to the ecosystem approach, the 'interdependence of the various components of the ecosystem and the ecological value of resources' is emphasized. Thus it highlights that the manner and extent of utilization of one will affect the other. Moreover, the approach is in consent of what Gibbs and Bromely depicts resources not as mere factors of production (as they may not be desirable in themselves) but rather as means to an end or in other words are valuable only to the 'extent that they can be used to create goods and services' [1989:33].

The cultural definition of what constitutes a natural resource has been raised by Zimmerman [1951, as mentioned by Grima and Berkes 1989:34]. The main emphasis of the argument is that 'resources are not what they become' rather are culturally defined and acknowledges the variation of the cultural definition of natural resources which can include and exclude certain natural components as natural resources.

Further elaboration is also given by Gibbs and Bormely which accentuate the existence of natural resources within a particular technical and institutional environment. In this regard, the former provides tools and knowledge to use resources and the latter defines issues of resource control and the technologies applied [1989:34].

Natural resources are considered as renewable and non renewable. Renewable or sometimes referred to as flow resources such as water, sunlight, forests or water fisheries are assumed to exist in stock and thus depending on the manner of management of the utilization, are considered inexhaustible or can be sustained indefinitely. However, some flow resources such as forests and grasslands have critical levels, beyond natural capacity to replenish which if the natural capacity to replenish itself, the resources are doomed to be destroyed and disappear unless restored at some cost [ibid.,1989]. The non renewable or the stock resources are seen as exhaustible to a state of depletion. As a result, the physical quantity is of considerable importance.

In Ethiopia, during the last few decades studies focusing on environmental issues have been forthcoming. These studies are greatly focused on the appraisal of environmental degradation and conservation and on the analysis of factors and its impact on various sectors. Issues pertaining to agricultural particularly peasant production and resource utilization, land tenure, policy and practices of fragmentation and land use had been of common concern. Ample attention have also been given to environmentally induced problems such as drought, famine, land degradation, erosion etc. the problem of land shortage, rise of population, and the worsening rural poverty are the common explanations or features depicted in various literature.

In this regard, different studies have resorted and adopted multifarious methods of expounding or analyzing the issues at hand. One of the widely entertained issue in the literature on natural resource in Ethiopia is land tenure. Addressing the policy dimension of land related issues, Dessalegn (1985, 1994) presented a review of the land tenure systems in Ethiopia and highlighted the weakness and aftereffect of the land tenure systems instituted in Ethiopia. On the whole, he argued that the paucity of incentive to invest on land and protect or conserve natural resources is caused by tenure insecurity. Such argument has also been held by [Gezachew:1994, Sutcliffe:1995, Yeraswork: 1995].

Among the environmental problems of the country, land degradation and its impact on crop production is an issue which has not been denied scanty recognition. As mentioned earlier, erosion and the lack of farmers initiative to invest on soil conservation and management due to tenure insecurity is mentioned as a probable but not sufficient cause in Ethiopia [Sutcliffe 1988, Wood 1987]. In this aspect, Sutcliffe pointed out that studies on land degradation concentrate on appraising the symptom and land use practices. Studies on the implication of production and on the wider environment or the relationship of land degradation with the wider context of farmers livelihoods, national and international socio-political and economic aspects had not been forthcoming [1995: 65]. In this regard Sutcliffe forwarded the need to take local (site) and individual considerations into account in determining the death of motivation of farmers to invest on soil conservation [ibid.,82].

The impact of population growth henceforth pressure is also a major factor that elucidate the issue of natural resource degradation. The impact of rapid population growth, and pressure, decrease of size of land holding, shortage of land which resulted in the abandonment of certain conservation practices [Alemneh 1990, Yeraswork 1995, Aklilu 1994, Markos 1987, Yared 1995, Dessalegn 1994, Mesfin 1991]. Markos in this regard stressed that in a situation where development and technological input are almost stagnant the rise of population is doomed to lead to massive displacement of population hence intensify the need for off-farm employment. Hence, mentioned the relevance of population policy to address or minimize its effect in the long run.

Faced with shortage of land mainly because of population growth, the adaptive responses of peasants such as land leasing, terrain polishing , share cropping, intensive cultivation land leasing, terrain polishing , share cropping, intensive cultivation as some of the commonly sighted strategies have also been documented [Aklilu and Tadesse 1994, Alemneh 1990, Dessalegn 1994, Wood 1994, Pausewang 1994] .

Alemneh attributed the 'vicious cycle' of environmental degradation drought and famine to three factors: overgrazing, over-cultivation and deforestation [1990:3]. Further explaining the situation in northern Ethiopia factors such us intensive cultivation, overpopulation, political and economic forces are seen as escalating the pressure on the environment [ibid.,] related to this however, Alemneh in this regard recognized that environmental degradation is affected by local social, economic, and political forces. Consequently, he calls for systematic field study by identifying or considering such processes in understanding or tackling land degradation.

Among such studies Pausewang,S. et al. (eds.) (1990) presented a multidisciplinary work addressing the issue of natural resource management in Ethiopia. Wood A. (in Pausewang, S. et al. (eds.), 1990), for instance discussed the combined effect of increased human and livestock population, deforestation which fosters soil erosion, certain farming practices and government policies on the environment for the last 80 years in the northern highlands of Ethiopia. Further, the study looked at the role of socio- political environment of the peasant farmers which affected their access to land and thus curtailed their interest in conservation activities.

1.7. Methodology

The study utilized a range of anthropological and sociological research methods. The necessary first hand information was gathered through the field work which lasted altogether for 68 days. During the field work the researcher was able to be in close contact with the concerned communities, and had the chance to observe and record activities of their daily practices such as religious and cultural and more specifically those related to the natural resource utilization, attitudes, norms values, customs etc. had been observed and recorded.

The observed and recorded facts were further strengthened through interview (both structured and unstructured) of selected community leaders and other relevant personalities. Along this, household survey was also carried out on 152 households in Mehal Zege Yiganda KPA. The appropriate sampling techniques was employed for the survey. In order to look at the different categories of the population i.e. age groups, gender, class etc. stratified sampling was employed .

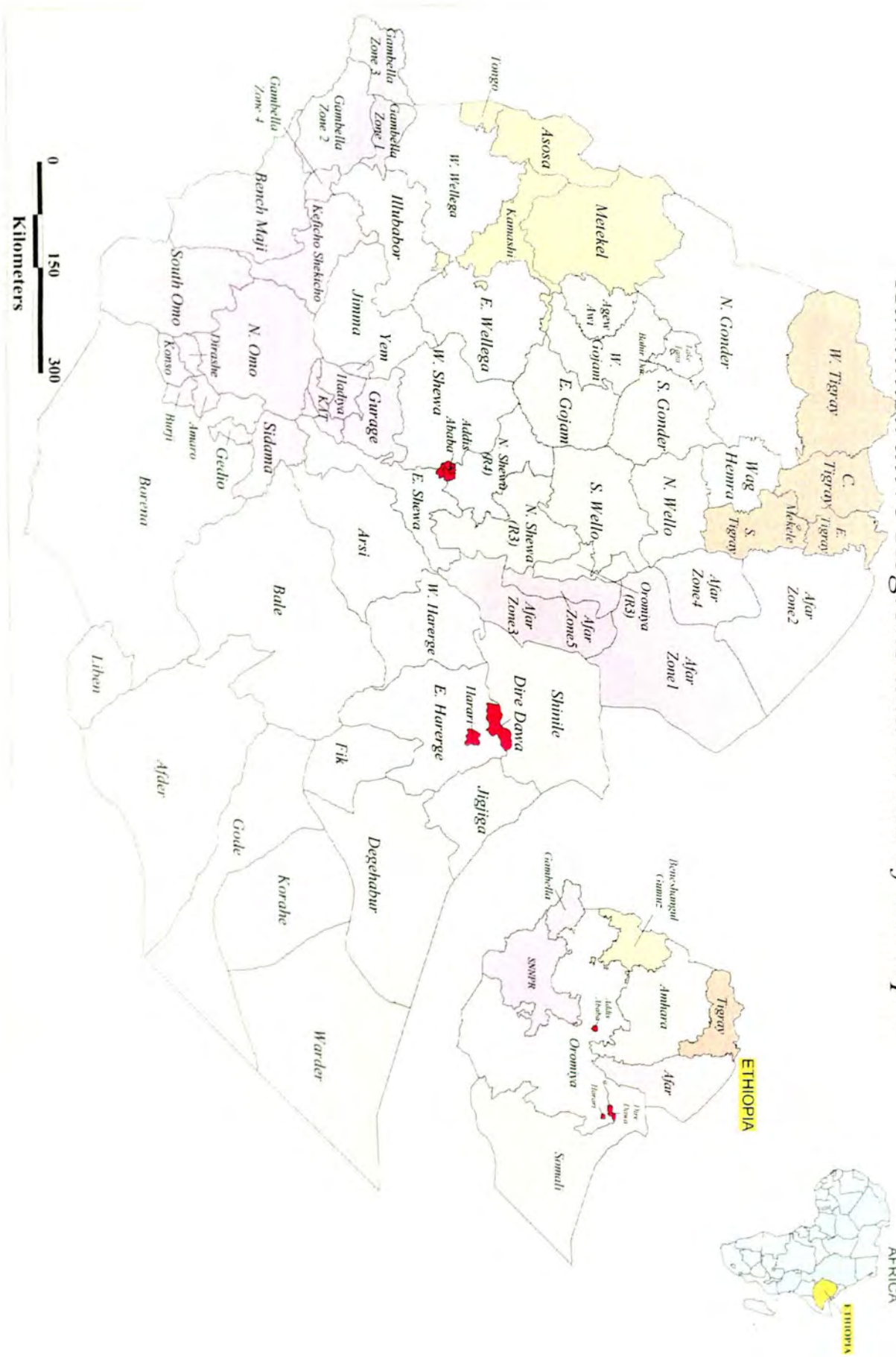
The quantitative data was analyzed by using the appropriate computer software for data processing Statistical package for Social Sciences(SPSS+). The specific issues generated was examined and analyzed in relation to other variables and various theories and views.

A limited number of case studies (between 20-25) was conducted to develop a better understanding of the changes of the environment through time. Different categories such as families, individuals from different age groups, gender and social background were considered for the case studies. Furthermore, the findings from the field work was enriched by reviewing various outlooks and perspectives from relevant literature and reports of various organizations.

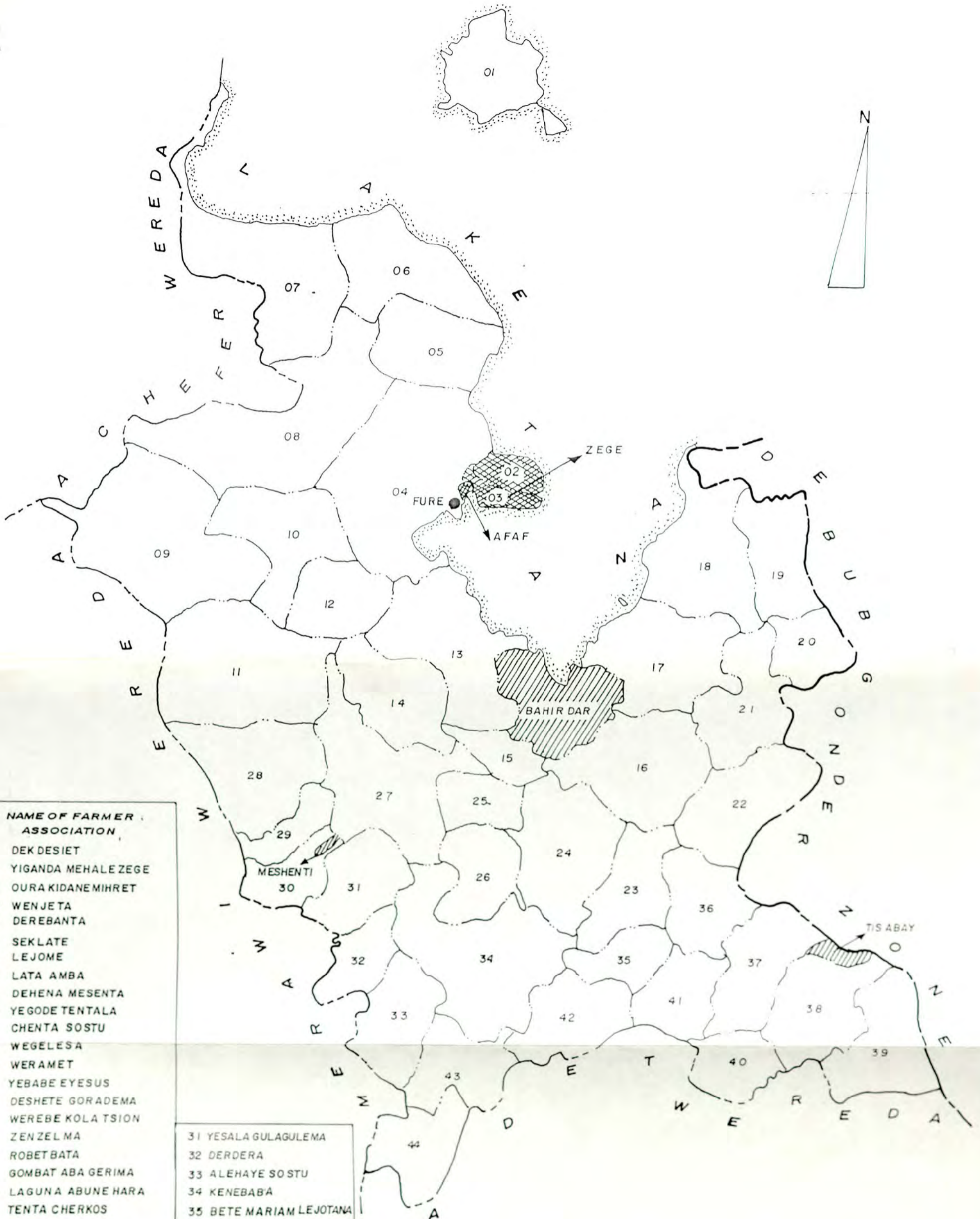
1.8. Limitation of the Study

The study lacks a thorough information on how dispute are settled even though the process followed for in the settlement of dispute has been outlined. As most of the presented cases (which were picked from the local court) of disputes are pending they were not solved during the field work. This can be attributed to the time required by the dispute solving body to review the cases. Related to this, the manner of land demarcation in solving land boundary related cases was not also captured during the field work. Had the cases been finalized in a shorter time and the decision of the dispute resolving body was known, the information would have yielded a better insight.

Administrative Regions and Zones of Ethiopia



BAHIR DAR ZURIA WEREDA



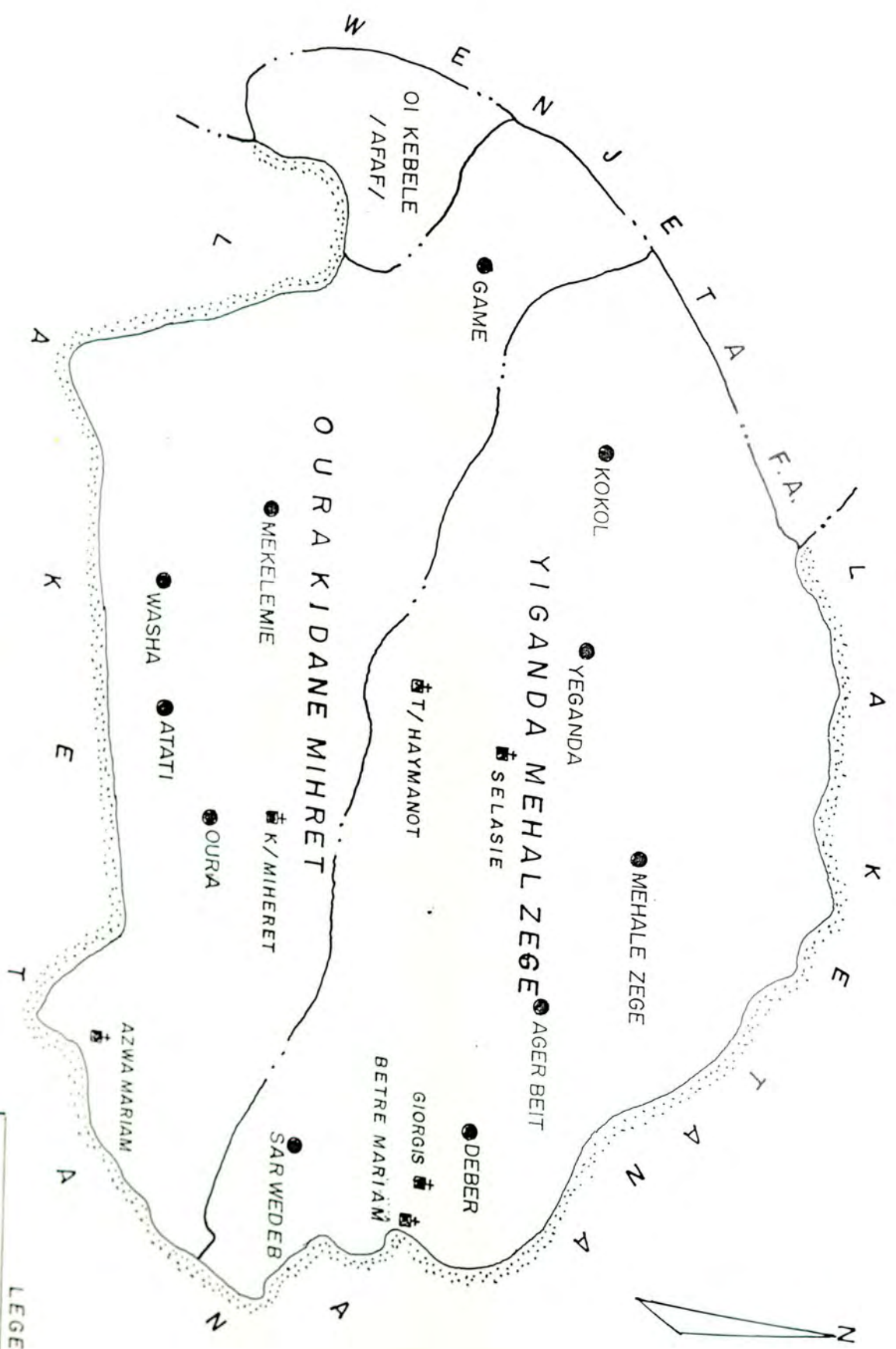
NAME OF FARMER ASSOCIATION	
01	DEK DESIET
02	YIGANDA MEHALE ZEGE
03	OURA KIDANEMIHRET
04	WENJETA
05	DEREBANTA
06	SEKLATE
07	LEJOME
08	LATA AMBA
09	DEHENA MESENTA
10	YEGODE TENTALA
11	CHENTA SOSTU
12	WEGELES
13	WERAMET
14	YEBABE EYESUS
15	DESHETE GORADEMA
16	WEREBE KOLA TSION
17	ZENZEL MA
18	ROBET BATA
19	GOMBAT ABA GERIMA
20	LAGUNA ABUNE HARA
21	TENTA CHERKOS
22	YEMOSHET DYEMA
23	YEGOMA GEBREAL
24	SEBA TAMETE
25	ABA RAJE
26	WENEDATA
27	YENASA SOSTU
28	YELOMA YEGENFAT

31	YESALA GULAGULEMA
32	DERDERA
33	ALEHAYE SOSTU
34	KENEBABA
35	BETE MARIAM LEJOTANA
36	YEGOMATENEBA
37	MAJEDEBERE NIGEST
38	YEGENDE WELEKE
39	WEJER W/MENTA
40	LOME KULKUAL
41	YEMEKAT DENGAY DEBELO
42	KEFELO MAQUAL

Scale 1:225,000

LEGEND	
	ZONE BOUNDARY
	WEREDA
	FA/KEBELE/
	TOWN

ZEGE PENINSULA



Scale 1:25,000

LEGEND

- F.A./KEBELE BOUNDARY
- LOCALITY
- ✙ CHURCH
- OURA K/M. NAME OF F.A.

Chapter II

The Physical and the Socio-Economic Condition of Zege Peninsula

2.1 The Physical Setting

Zege peninsula is located in West Gojjam zone, Bahir Dar Zuria *Woreda* (district administration) of the Amhara region. The peninsula extends into the southwest corner of Lake Tana and is situated at an altitude ranging between 1778-1962 meters above sea level. Zege is located 595 k.m away from Addis Ababa and 32 k.m away from Bahir Dar by vehicle or 15 k.m by boat. The size of the peninsula is estimated to be between 1400-1600 hectares and it is characterized by uneven topography/landscape [refer to maps 1-3] Lake Tana which is estimated to cover an area of 3600 Km² with 70 km long, 60 km wide and 8.9 meters deep, is the sole source of water for the peninsula [Bureau of Agriculture (BoA):1994].

There are two Kebele Peasant Associations (KPAs) and a small town in Zege. The two KPA are known as Yiganda Mehal Zege and Ura Kidane Miheret. Afaf or 01 Keble is the small town in Zege which serves as a center for market and communication services such as telephone, postal and port for the government run marine transportation services). The people of the peninsula belong to the Amhara ethnic group and are by enlarge followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church though there are some Muslim residents in Afaf town.

The climate of the area can be described as mild/*weyenadega* weather. Yet, people mention about the changing condition of the weather and particularly the constant decline of rainfall and rise of temperature. Affirming such remarks, the BoA report [ibid.] indicated that from 1964-1984 the average amount of rainfall has shown a decline from 1501mm to 1029mm. Whilst the highest temperature has been 26.2 °c and lowest 10°c.

The vegetation of Zege is characterized by natural Savannah forest. The forest is highly populated with indigenous species bushes and other plants. Coffee is the major crop cultivated which the people mainly rely on for living. Aside from these, fruit trees, ginger and *Gesho* (*Rhamnus prinoides*) are also grown in the area [BoA:1994].

2.2. The Population

According to the 1994 national census the population of the KPAs is estimated to be 3,900 and 2,817 for Yiganda Mehal Zege and Ura Kidane Mihret respectively. Out of the total population 2,058 in the former and 1,559 in the latter are females. Though the assumption is not validated by a data, the high number of females can be explained in terms of male who have easy access for out migration for further education, in search of job and other opportunities unlike the females who are often tied up with the domestic responsibilities and marriage and may not enjoy similar opportunities.

There are seven villages or *Desh* as they are locally referred to, in both *Ura Kidane Mihret* and *Yiganda* KPAs. The *Deshes* comprising *Yiganda Mehal Zege* KPA are: *Agerbet*, *Sar Wedeb*, *Mehal Zege*, *Deber*, *Yiganda*, *Kokel* and *Tan Gedel Deshes*. *Ura Kidanmehret* KPA hosts *Azewa Mariam*, *Atati*, *Ura*, *Gami*, *Washa*, *Mekelami*, and *Broramia*.

Though the name 'Zege' refers to the entire peninsula, for the inhabitants, it refers to the peninsula outside Afaf. The *Zegegna* are the people of Zege usually those from that part of the peninsula outside Afaf. The *Zegegnas* also make distinction between them and the farming or cereal growing areas adjacent to the peninsula. They refer to these places as *Geter*. *Geter* in Amharic means country side or a rural area. They refer to all these places as *Geter* though these places have specific names. Such description gives the impression that these places are regarded as 'backward' or 'uncivilized'. In some instances the *Geter* seems to be stigmatized by the *Zegegnas* as certain features such as 'early marriage', illiteracy of the people in the *Getres*. Despite such rhetoric, people have often kinship ties in these neighboring areas which they generally refer to as '*Geter*'. In fact some

Zegegnas were born and lived there for sometime until the regularly mentioned hail storm which devastated the area in 1970.

As in other areas the people of Zege and the elders praise the area and the people. “*Yeneka new ye Zege sew*” (the people of Zege are enlightened) and the land is blessed, it is fertile it can grow/suitable for any plant. Despite such flaunting, people complain about the hardship since past decades due to population rise, lack of attention from government to develop the area, declining productivity of coffee and shortage of land to carry the growing population.

The other issue that is worth addressing is the attitude of outsiders on the people of Zege. During and in the post fieldwork period, some people, often those from Gojjam, disclosed that the people of Zege are regarded as knowledgeable on traditional medicines that create hallucination or can manipulate evil spirits to act on people; hence are labeled as ‘*medahanitegna*’. Priests or *Debeteras* (unordained priests) are usually associated with such acts. In fact, outsiders at the beginning of the research continuously advised the researcher to take extra care and avoid opportunities to associate with the *Zegenas*. The *Zegegnas* seem to be regarded as possessors of evil spirits and evil eye or medications that create hallucination.

A civil servant in Zege but originally from other part of Gojjam disclosed that when she was first appointed in Zege to work for a government organization, her family members were distressed and shed tears thinking that she will not be safe (in the above mentioned ways) and was in fact accompanied by some family members to Zege because of the such belief.

2.3. The History Background of Zege and Its coffee

Zege is said to have been founded during the reign of Emperor Amde Siyon (1508-1540). In this regard however as in most oral historical accounts there are some discrepancies in the reporting of the periods as some informants date back the foundation of Zege to 13th-14th century.

According to the information there is a strong myth that Zege used to be part of Jerusalem and was inhabited by a people characterized by unreligious life style. Discontent with the situation, there were two hermits in the area who scrupulously prayed for God to help the area and them. Their prayers was answered when God raised a storm and separated the section of the land and brought it to Lake Tana. At the crack of dawn when the inhabitants of Wengeta (currently neighboring Zege refer to map II) saw the land mass they asked “*men zeg belo adere?*” “What has afloat (on the lake) during the night?” So the name Zege came from the word ‘zeg’, which means slow down when translated from Amharic. Another account on the naming of Zege asserts that the place where the two hermits lived was called Debre Zigag and they named it after that place. Zigag meaning according to informants secluded, hidden ‘*sewara bota*’.

The hermits supposedly died there when they were told by St. Mary that Zege was not their place of reverence rather God had assigned it for the veneration of a spiritual person who will rise in the future. Punished by God for their insistence to leave the area the two hermits died.

Abune Betre Mariam, who had been born in Showa around Muger (Central Ethiopia), moved to Northern Ethiopia to preach religion after completing the required church education. He was renowned for his evangelization and miraculous deeds of healing the handicapped and the sick in most places he stayed such as Damot (in Gojjam), Denbia (in Gondar) and Desete Gelilia around Lake Tana. At the peak of his religious achievements God assigned him to go to Zege. There he met seven monks who came to receive him as they had revelations of his arrival. These seven monks also referred to as the seven stars

are said to eventually establish monasteries around the lake and on the islands of Lake Tana.

Upon the permission of the reigning Emperor Amde Siyon (1314-1344) who had heard about the eminence of the monk, he built the first church Mehal Zege Giorgis (some informants said that it was built in 1290). The king is also said to have visited the peninsula and the monk and was impressed by the natural endowment of the area. He then named the place as Libanso. The king after his visit allocated budget for them and gave silver and gold *Selat* (tabernacle). Twenty three years after the king's visit, Abune Betre Mariam died and he was succeeded by Abune Berteleomos who wrote the chronicle and built the church Abune Betre Mariam.

The chronicle mentions that God promised Abune Betre Mariam a fulfilled and peaceful life for his followers or children (of the church). God also promised that the Zege is blessed and will remain endowed with resources that will last for generations. The people to be bright and wise, enlightened, skilled with a receptive mind. He also pledged that the people will not be harmed by the wildlife in the peninsula nor will they be struck by lightning.

Coffee is also said to have grown from the miraculous stick (of *Gesho* plant) of Abune Betre Mariam. That stick is said to have kept the monk afloat on the lake when his *Tanqwa* (canoe made of reed) capsized. Upon God's command, the stick was later planted in three pieces and it regenerated into coffee, *Gesho*, and *Ades* (*Myrtus communis*). Other accounts indicated that lemon and citrus also grew from the stick. These plants were blessed by God to provide for the people and the generations to follow. Abune Betre Mariam was also told that livestock should not breed in the peninsula nor should the people plough with oxen '*be be're endayetares, giraf endaychohebet*'.

Regarding the development of communities in Zege it is believed that those (usually elders) who came to join the monastery from parts of Gojjam, Showa, Tigray and other parts of the country, they were gradually joined by their family members. Land lords

often warlords, who were given land by emperors eventually appeared. Other settlers from the neighboring areas also cleared and entered the peninsula. Though Zege is regarded as a 'monastery' it has communities amidst the peninsula. As explained by the priests, there are different types of monasteries: '*Yeandenet*' unity which is exclusive to either men or women and '*Mahberawi*' social or community based monastery where by ordinary communities inhabit the area.

On the other hand, a similar story is also found in Ura Kidane Mihert KPA attributing the establishment of Zege to Abba Yohannes, a monk who established the oldest monastery and founded the supposedly oldest church in the peninsula, Ura Kidane Mihret church. Abba Yohannes is said to have come from Axum, and believed to have gone to Egypt and Jerusalem as part of his religious indoctrination and pilgrim to become a monk at a very young age. During his visit in Egypt he was informed by a monk that he has been chosen to take three or four '*Tselat*' (tablets of wood or stone for making the Tabernacle) from Jerusalem to Ethiopia. Guided by St. Urael he built the Churches in Mecha, Eyesus church and in Zege Ura Kidane Mihret, Azewa Mariam and Selassie churches. The name Ura is said to commemorate the kindness of the local landlord by the name of Uro in Mecha who helped the monk by allocating land for the construction of the first church. Abba Yohannes built the churches in Zege after obtaining permission from Emperor Amde Siyon. The monk asked the Emperor to establish a monastery in the peninsula. It is said that the Emperor gave him half of Zege (other accounts said the whole of Zege).

In reviewing historical documents, Zege is often associated with its coffee cultivation. The coffee cultivation of Zege has been documented by Pankhurst in which he cited accounts of European traveler's in the 1830's admiration of the high quality of the coffee beans and large coffee plantations in the beginning of the 20th century [202:1968]. As noted by Abdussemed [1996: 555], coffee plantations was run by the priests with the slave labor in the 20th century.

Regarding the cultivation of coffee Zege traveler's accounts from the 19th century have been documented by Pankhurst [1968:202].

Cultivation in the Lake Tana area was reported early in the 19th century and continued throughout our period. The main centers of production were Zege on the south side of the lake. Zege was described by Ruppell in the 1830s as producing the best quality beans while Stecker half a century later declared that it was "especially famed for its coffee plantations". These were evidently well developed, Sir William Garstin noting in 1904 that "the whole of the hilly peninsula is practically one large coffee estate". While Cheesman stated in the 1930's that the area was by covered with coffee plantation. Output was estimated by Cortesi at 1,000,000 to 1,200,000 kilos, but this may well have been less than formerly, for Rosen says that production declined on account of competition from Harar after the establishment of the railway.

Some historical writings of traveler's have also provided information on Zege specially in the 19th century. Zege was depicted Zege as:

"one of the largest and wealthiest towns" in the country with as many as 2000 houses, but was twice raided by Tewodros' army; Rassam claims that on the second occasion, in February 1866, in less than two hours not a house was left standing. A couple of generations later the Duchesne-Fournet Mission thought that the town had only 1,200 inhabitants, while the Guida later described it as no more than an extended village. [Pankhurst, 1968:694].

Coffee in the early days was also used as a trade commodity. Trade links extending to Sudan particularly through Metmema have also been mentioned by informants. Abdusmmed in this regard noted that the coffee of Zege was destined to Sudanese market and that even the price it fetched was set by the price in Metema, Gallabat, adjacent towns and Anglo Egyptian Sudan respectively [1996:545]. The high return from coffee encouraged the development of large scale plantation and the demand for slave labor from southern and western parts of Ethiopia.

On the other hand, there is the presence of Portuguese who came to assist Lebne Dengel (1508-1540) against the invasion of Muslims led by Gragn from the eastern part of the country. The Portuguese are said to have reached Zege and built some of the roads and path inter-linking the communities [ibid.,]. The Italians also stayed in Zege during the five years of occupation of Ethiopia in 1935. They are said to have introduced the motor boat to cruise on the lake particularly to Bahir Dar [Seltene 1987: 135]. In this regard, as Abdusemed documented Italians interest to divert the coffee of Zege from Sudan to

Eritrea. Hence, in the 1930s the Italians drafted a scheme of introducing motor boats on Lake Tana to ultimately transport the coffee to Rome [Abdusemed 1996: 555, Pankhurst, 1968:202].

2.4. The Natural Resources Of Zege

2.4.1. The Land

There are two types of land holding: individual and joint. What is termed as individual holding is the individual land holding obtained either through the land distribution of the 1975, and/or allocated by the KPAs after the land distribution, upon request for additional land and/or inherited from family members. The average land holding is estimated to be 0.75 ha. The highest land holding is again estimated to be 2.5ha and lowest 0.5 ha [BoA:1994]. In this regard, the survey conducted on 152 households in Deber and partly Yiganda *Desh* shows that the highest holding amounts 7.5 *Kada* (3.75 ha) and 1 *Kada* (0.5 ha) as the lowest size of holding.

The joint holding is the land again obtained through the above indicated means but held by more than one individuals. In such a system, two or more people are given a plot ranging from $\frac{1}{4}$ of *Kada* to 3 and in rare cases 4 *Kada*. Such kind of arrangements came to place after the land distribution due to the shortage of land.

The land in Zege is mostly covered with trees and coffee plants. There are some open areas in *Ararat* and *Wash* used for small scale cultivation of maize and Eucalyptus. These areas are regarded as common property areas. As elders explained these areas meant to be used in the '*kefu ken*', the cruel days, meaning at times of desolation, impoverishment or when disaster strikes. So the people use small portion of the land to cultivate crop during the rainy season, usually for household consumption. Recently, these areas are being used as grazing areas for sheep bred by some people.

2.4.1.1. The Land Tenure System

i. Prior 1974

As in most parts of the country prior to the landmark event of the 1975 proclamation No.31 of 'Public Ownership of Rural lands', which transferred all land to state ownership, land in Zege, was held by individuals through the *Rist* and *Gult* systems, and the *Semon* land of the churches.

Rist is a system which endows descendants of a common ancestors with hereditary use-rights to land. The ancestor in Hoben's term (1973) the 'legendary figure' is believed to be the first proprietor of certain stretch of land. Pankhurst in this regard cited the Fetha Negest and explained that in the *Rist* system 'ownership rights could be obtained by the mere fact of cultivating unoccupied land' [Pankhurst, R. 1968:136]. Generally, in the *Rist* system land is shared by the descendants or 'corporate group', thus individuals that can trace kinship affiliation or descent to the ancestor can claim access to a portion of the land [Hoben:1973, Pankhurst:1968, Dessaleng:1985]. Further explaining the notion of *Rist* Hoben indicated that the term refers to both rights and the actual tract of land [ibid.,: 12-13].

The other system of obtaining land is through the *Gult* system particularly in the southern part of the country as opposed to the *Rist* in the Northern [Dessalegn 1985: 17-18]. Under the *Gult* system large land holdings were granted by the reigning Emperor to individuals often the nobility, or those that performed commendable service to the Emperor such as soldiers [Pankhurst,1968, Dessalegn 1985]. Those endowed with *Gult* land had the right to collect tax and tributes and undertake administrative and judicial authority [ibid.].

According to the informants, most of the land in Zege prior 1975 belonged to landlords who obtained land through *Rist* and *Gult* system. Aside from, Abune Betre Mariam and some monks who first arrived in Zege, the first settlers are said to have come from the neighboring areas mostly Wengeta (which is 10-15 k.m away from Zege, see map II),

* 1 *Kada* is estimated to be 0.5 hectare[BoA:1996]

Mecha and from northern Ethiopia such as Axum, and settled there by clearing the forest. Others also eventually came to Zege by buying land from the first settlers. As some elders disclosed, some soldiers also obtained *Gult* rights from some of the reigning kings. These holdings have been passed down to generations. The churches were also endowed with land known as *Semon* land, to support the activities of the church. Priests also obtained land through the *Rist* system. In those days, the priests of Zege aside from serving the endowed churches, they were active in large scale coffee cultivation through slave labor which brought them wealth and prestige [Abdussamed, 1996:545].

Peasants on the other hand, had either allotment through the *Rist* system or worked on the lands of the landlords as tenants and obtained $\frac{1}{4}$ of the produce of the land. Informants also disclosed that in the early days there were slaves that served the landlords. Slaves from Oromo, Sidama and Gumuz were said to play an important role in the coffee economy of Zege [ibid.,:543].

ii. The Land Reform of the 1975

The dissolution of the customary rights and redefinition of property rights at the aftermath of the 1975 proclamation which affirmed state ownership of all land, is widely documented. Likewise in Zege, the landlords and the churches lost access to their land and with that the system of *Rist* and *Gult* came to an end. Households were given use rights over the land allocated to them through the KPA in accordance with their family size. However, some households that got less land despite their family size were eventually given additional piece of land by the KPA. Under such conditions many families were assigned joint use rights over certain portion of land.

Hence, it is important to note that though people indicate their total amount of land or size of land they have in joint holding, they may not separately use the apportioned land. Rather, the land remains intact and the people are entitled to the harvested coffee which is equivalent to their total share of land in the joint holding. For instance, if a household is said to be given 1 *Kada* of land of the 4 *Kada* jointly held land by 5 people, the person will get $\frac{1}{4}$ of the total harvest. While the other three people will split the remaining

harvest according to their entitled right (which can even be less than 1 *Kada*). However, in circumstances where the joint holders dispute over sharing tasks over the land, they will divide the land (with the help of the *Deldays*) among themselves in accordance to the size of land they are entitled.

From this it is important to discern that firstly, people tend to refer interchangeably to the amount of land and their share of harvest. This implies that what people actually have in joint holding system is usually the right to certain portion of the harvest rather than the land, excepting those that split the land. A person who is entitled to 1/2 *Kada* of a jointly held land (regardless of the total size of the jointly held land and the number of people assigned to it), obtains 1/2 of the total produce of the land. Secondly, joint holding does not necessarily imply equal share of the harvest between the holders. As a result, it is important to distinguish between individual and joint holding. Such situations makes the land tenure system of Zege unique. The survey in this regard shows that from the 99% of the households have access to land and that 82% of them have also access to joint holdings. The highest joint holding is 7 *Kada* and the lowest is 1/2 *Kada*. The survey also indicated that on the average a group of 5 people are assigned to the same joint tract.

The actual distribution of land was handled by *Delday* committees specially organized for such purpose. The *Delday* are the members of the community that were assigned the responsibility of the actual distribution of land in 1975 after the proclamation of land reform. In the Zege, the criteria set candidates were land-less peasants and those regarded as honest and good members of their community. The elected committee of five comprised chairperson (who was also the Keble chair person), secretary and three members. The distribution of land in 1975 was said to have been carried out according to family size. However, as the available land was not sufficient certain measures were adopted. As a result, households with 4 and less members received land in accordance to the size of the family. Whilst those with 5 and more members obtained land less than the family size, i.e. members that had 5 and more members received 1 *Kada* less.

However, as some people disclosed the above described procedure of land distribution was not entirely observed. Shortage of land was the excuse given for the contingencies and people were pledged more land in the supposedly second round land re-distribution, which never materialized.

The other arrangement which however served as means for addressing the land shortage was the '*mote keda*' arrangement. In such arrangement, the land of deceased members of the community with no family, was given to others that applied for land. The allotment was handed by the PA committee. It is not difficult to anticipate the leeway for bias in selecting the individuals to be endowed. Not only the land of the deceased members of the community was given out but also the land of those that left the peninsula for various reasons such as job elsewhere or education was also confiscated. The process of obtaining land in such process is called '*bemote- keda*' which means deceased and the abandoned.

The land reform endowed land to landless peasants and migrant daily laborers from neighboring areas. It is also said that the land reform disturbed the settlement pattern, of the people mainly due to the "*Mofer Zemet*" arrangement, which disallowed people to retain land holding in more than one area (outside their KPA). Hence, some opted to settle near their fertile land (part of what used to be their *Rist*). Whilst others wanted to remain where they were and maintained the sanctioned amount of land from what once used to be their *Rist* land.

The people also mentioned that people of Zege remained dispersed as a result of the land reform which confiscated the 'abandoned' land. In this regard, particularly those people that left the area due to the 1970 hail storm which destroyed the coffee plants, lost their land in Zege and pursued their life in Bahir Dar mostly as textile factory workers (which was opened in 1961) and as farmers in the neighboring areas such as Wengeta.

iii. Access to land Post 1991

After the fall of the Derg, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) also carried out land re-distribution in some areas. The justification for the land re-distribution was the unjust accumulation of land by some individuals or bureaucrats primarily officials of agricultural cooperatives of the past regime [Dessalegn 1994]. The Amhara Region, was one of the few regions that administered land re-distribution. As part of Bahir Dar Zuria Woreda, Zege was initially included in the plan. However, the land re-distribution was not conducted in the anticipated time. According to some Woreda and KPA officials, Zege posed a problem to undertake the land re-distribution as it is entirely coffee cultivating, a perennial crop.

Rearranging the boundary and deducting the unjustly acquired land in farming areas is relatively easier as the land is cleared after each harvest. Whilst in Zege, it was postulated that grabbing the unjustly held excess land with the coffee plants which have been cultivated for decades and involved several years of toiling, would create instability. Consequently, the re-distribution has been postponed under the recommendation of the Woreda to the regional council. It is said that the Woreda will conduct a study into the situation prior any action.

2.4.2. The Lake

Zege peninsula is endowed with a range of natural resources. The Lake Tana as the only source of water, it is used for various purposes. Aside from household consumption, people depend on it for transportation, fishing and for irrigation by few farmers.

One of the important uses of the lake is transportation. As there is no all weather road for vehicles for public transportation the people either walk 15k.m or they mostly rely on the water transportation. For this they use the *Tanqua* (papyrus made canoes) and the boat of the marine transport authority. There is a daily round trip from Bahir Dar to Zege and once a week to other neighboring islands and Gondar. The marine transport is said to have began during the Italian occupation in the late 1930s.

The water transportation is one of the main and swiftest means of transportation to Bahir Dar. The transportation is often terminated during the rainy session due to the rise of the water level of the lake. Such interruption of communication with Bahir Dar and other neighboring areas has an impact on the regular trade activities interlocking these areas. As a result, such interruptions are often accompanied with the increase of prices of some items (such as butter and red pepper) as the flow of items to and from neighboring areas to, Zege and Bahir Dar is hampered.

The lake is an important source of fish. Though large scale fishing is not common, few individuals have been organized into groups by the Fishing Authority of Ethiopia. Under the scheme, fishing boats and equipment were given to the farmers on credit which is eventually paid. These farmers sell their fish to the authority and hence serve as one of the regular suppliers. Similar scheme was also adopted by CARE-ZEGE where around 50 farmers organized in groups were given boat and equipment or net on credit to be paid in five years time. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church also donated fishing equipment and motor boats to some of the churches. Aside from fishing, the priests also use the boats for public transportation.

Households on the other hand have regular access to fish for consumption and at times for the market in Zege. It seems it is as a result of such endowment that people are not affected with goiter which is a common occurrence in most parts of the central and northern part of Ethiopia.

Aside from such uses, the lake, in some instances is regarded as hexed by evil beings/spirits. Such stories often creep up during accidents of drowning. When such catastrophes occur some people say that the accident was bound to happen as it an annual act of the evil spirits. In fact if the corpse of the drowned person/s is not found, people usually the acquaintances, neighbors, relatives or other inhabitants perform a ceremony where by sheep is slaughtered and the blood spilled and coffee prepared by the shore to mediate with the spirit to release the body.

2.4.3. The Forest

One of the natural wealth of Zege is the forest. One cannot help but notice the dense coverage of the forest from far. The forest hosts various species of trees such as *Tid* (*Juniperus procera*), *Wanza* (*Cordia africana*), *Sensel* (*Justicia schimperianan*), *Sesa* (*Albizia gummifera*), *Itsepatos/Tebatos* (*Dracaena steudneri*), *Indod* (*Phytolacca dodecandra*), *Gerar* (*Acacia albida*), *Berbera* (*Millettia ferruginea*), *Ades* (*Myrtus communis*) etc., and shrubs. Wild life like monkeys, hyenas, porcupines, squirrel, and numerous birds also inhabit the area.

The forest caters for the multifarious needs of the inhabitants. The people use the trees for housing, as shade for the coffee plants, fuel and source of herbs used for various medicinal and spiritual purposes for both the household and market. Though there is no nationally demarcated forest reserve area, the official report of the Region 3 Bureau of Agriculture [BoA: 1994] points out that the estimated natural coverage of forest is around 1219 ha.

Monkeys are widely found in Zege. People often complain about the destruction incurred by the monkeys on some of the fruit trees, maize and vegetables which are cultivated by the people during the rainy season. Despite their frustration people seem to observe the government's prohibition on hunting. It is quite common to hear people criticize the prohibition on the hunting of wildlife as it is affecting their daily life. However, as the monkeys and squirrel pose a nominal threat to the coffee plant their frustration is self contained. According to some informants, monkeys do not harm the coffee trees or beans though they start eating the beans during the beginning of the harvesting season but after few days they 'get fed up' and refrain from consumption.

2.4.4. The Trees

Trees are one of the vital natural resources required for the household in Zege. The various species of trees are utilized for different purposes. The manner and use of the trees differs according to the species. For instance *Wanza* is used for housing though these days due to the decline of its coverage Eucalyptus is replacing it. *Sesa* is said to be good shade tree for the coffee plants as it does not shed its leaves. Eucalyptus is not common, yet some people plant it near their homestead mainly for market (as fuel wood) and for construction of houses. The monks of the neighboring Kebran Gabriel Island have also certain plots on the peninsula where they plant Eucalyptus. It is possible to come across fallen trees due to strong wind and storm, particularly during the rainy season. Yet, not all the fallen trees are a result of the natural causes rather are cut by people for the market.

2.5. Socio-Economic Activities of The People

The livelihood of most of the inhabitants of the peninsula is based on the cultivation of coffee, which is believed to have been cultivated since the 16th century or as suggested by most scholars from 19th century. Abdusammed [1996: 556] in this regard dates coffee cultivation in Zege to the early 19th century. Whilst, Rita Pankhurst mentioned 17th century Portuguese Jesuit Manoel de Almedia account of coffee cultivation in North of Lake Tana [Pankhurst, 1968].

Other agricultural activities such as livestock breeding or ploughing are not practiced, due to the religious reasons (refer to section 2.3) in the 16th century, which prohibits livestock production. Hence, the inhabitants do not engage in such activities (despite some recent exceptions in certain areas). Consequently, people use hand implements in land preparation and for the cultivation of maize which is practiced by some farmers during the rainy season from June-September. Aside from the limited cultivation of these crops, some people also practice fishing and bee-keeping. The people also try to earn supplementary income from the sale of fuel wood and trade.

The women in this regard, aside from the household routines and carrying out farming activities, are actively engaged in trade. Coffee, *Gesho*, lemon and the husk of coffee beans are main items sold by women in the main market, *Zege Gebeya* in Afaf. *Zege Gebeya* serves also as the main market for the peninsula and the neighboring communities.

The usual trade does not only involve selling such items in *Zege Gebeya*. Rather, women also travel to the neighboring markets to sell and purchase items such as butter, cereals and other consumer goods from the markets. In this regard, Bahir Dar plays a crucial role in the whole process as it provides a wider market to the product from Zege and neighboring area. It also serves as a supplier of some consumer goods, vegetables and some cereals. Thus, the women assume an important role in the transaction of the various items in Zege and neighboring areas.

Trade also raises the issue of mobility and frequency of movement to the market areas. On the average women that concentrate on trade travel to Bahir Dar two to three times per week and to the neighboring markets once a week. Women travel to Bahir Dar on Fridays with their items and return on Saturday or Sunday after selling and purchasing goods for the Tuesday market in Afaf. They then move to Chinba market on Wednesdays or Thursdays to return either the same day or the following day with items to be sold either in Bahir Dar or Afaf on Saturday which is one of the main market days.

At times of traveling to these markets, the women often spend the night in groups in a relative's house, rent a room in people's houses or stay with people in villages with no fee. For instance in Bahir Dar, they either stay at relative's house (as most people have relatives in the city) or pay 0.50 Birr per person (excluding children who travel with their mothers') for a single night.

Women are not organized in groups as traders. They however travel to the neighboring market in groups, usually neighbors, relatives and friends. Though they do not have specific time and place where they discuss and plan their trip, they exchange such information whenever it is possible: at a *Mahber*, Church, other social gatherings or by going around and discussing the possible date for the trip. Once the traveling team is identified they set out in the morning with their items.

Upon reaching the market they go to their separate ways to sell and purchase the items. They however, share information about the prices for certain items, they exchange information on price of items on the trip to and from the market. Whilst others, walk around the market and assess the prices and some rely on what they heard from others and think is a reasonable price for sell their-goods. On the other hand, the role of relatives in the hosting towns in yielding information on weekly exchange prices needs to be taken into account.

Explaining the overall process of transaction, depends on the season women concentrate on particular market for purchasing and selling specific items. For instance, in the rainy season women go to Chinba market which is around 3 hours walk (single trip) to sell coffee and lemon. In return, they buy butter as the price decreases and sell it (either to the merchants or other consumers) in Bahir Dar where it can fetch good price. Likewise from October to April they concentrate on selling *Gesho* as it is the harvesting season and purchase corn, barely and other cereals from the surrounding markets to Zege *Gebeya*. Coffee however can be sold anytime of the year by approximating the price to the selling prices with the nation wide price disclosed on the radio. Though most of them do not have access to radio they use informal means by asking others how much it should fetch and selling the price in the preceding weeks. Despite this, merchants from Bahir Dar visit Zege almost three times per week and buy the coffee from different people by bargaining the calling price.

The issue of women and trade may seem to have implication on the position of women in Zege. The relative economic role or ability to earn income to the household and the associated frequent mobility seem to have allowed the women become active entrepreneurs as well as farmers. However, as many women disclosed the nominal income they obtain from such transaction is invested on the household and used to compliment the overall income of the household rather than themselves or they are not in a position to exclusively use it to promote or invest on their trade and engage in activities that earn better income. Despite this there are some women that have earned names as successful traders and have by enlarge concentrated on trade. Such situations are usually seen in female heads of households who often hire laborer to look after their land and concentrate mainly in trade. Yet, successful married women traders are also present. Concerning the importance of trade for the household, it is said that women that concentrate on trade are likely to sustain their household. On the contrary, others asserted that the income does not stretch beyond covering the unending household expenses. Both married and unmarried women tend to engage in trade activities.

Trade is vital to sustain the household. As farmer they cultivate coffee, there is a need to sell the harvest and purchase items necessary for the household. Moreover, in situations where the coffee cultivation of coffee is characterized by irregular harvest, the search for complimentary income is inevitable. In this regard, men usually resort to occasional sell of fuel wood in Bahir Dar and women engage in trade.

Aside from trade women also sell local traditional drinks such as *Talla* and *Areke*, whilst others spin cotton or take up embroidery and basket works for both the market and household use. On the other hand, women who cannot afford to reserve initial capital to engage in trade activities, become daily laborers by performing activities such as sloughing the husk of the coffee beans with the traditional stone grinder or grinding cereal and transporting water.

On the whole, trade has enabled women to develop and use their entrepreneur skill. Despite the conservative attitude of the Amhara society which associates women mostly to the domestic sphere, women have the independence to move the neighboring areas frequently. As such movements are characteristic of Zege women, it seems to be accepted as a way of life. In fact the strength or success and achievement of women in trade is positively upheld and such women are regarded as hardworking women who play a crucial role to sustain their household.

Children in Zege undertake their share of responsibility by working in the field, household and in the market. There are two elementary schools in Afaf. The people value modern education and do not hesitate to enroll their children in schools. Such an attitude is attributed to their affiliation to the church as clerics. Upon completion of elementary school education, some continue their education in Bahir Dar. Family financial support is crucial for pursuing education. Students usually rent a house in Bahir Dar or stay at a relatives house. Families in Zege usually cover their cost and even send their daily meal by the daily boat that links the peninsula with Bahir Dar. Those whose family cannot afford to render support will usually remain in Zege and follow suit and engage in the cultivation of coffee and trade. Others try to get income by becoming traders, tourist guide, selling fuel wood, selling painting religious painting and making baskets for the irregular tourist market.

Church related activities and services is the main concern of the priests. Though the peninsula is regarded as a monastery there are few monks. Two of the churches out of the seven in Zege have monks who conduct the mass. The monks, priests and other clerics enjoy respect within the community. Apart from undertaking religious activities the priest also have coffee plots which they got during the land distribution of 1975. Some compliment their income from the sale of coffee and by painting and selling religious paintings.

The villages across the peninsula exemplify similar features. The people engage in similar activities of cultivating coffee and earning alternative income to compliment the irregular income from coffee production. Some villages are populated by artisans due to the proximity of the area to the town. There are also some elevated areas around Selassie and Tekle Himanot churches, which do not have easy access to the lake hence experience shortage of water as the uneven terrain makes daily water fetching an arduous task.

2.6. Zege and Its Relation With The Outer World

Zege retains very wide and divers network with adjacent villages and Bahir Dar. It's trade network mentioned above portrays it's links and relevance in the area. As one elder said "Zege died after giving birth to Bahir Dar." Zege is one of the oldest places surrounding Lake Tana. Bahir Dar (Bahir Dar Giorgis, it ancient name as a monastery) remained a religious administrative locus until the 20th century. Seltene Seyoum [1987: 128-135] mentioned, after the 20th century, the gradual expansion of landlords to the area, brought slaves and other laborers. Further, the development of the market in Bahir Dar served as a central grain market for the grain cultivating areas that surrounded it and this in turn attracted people from various areas. Eventually, with the gradual expansion of the Italians the area began to acquire some of it's urban features.

The development of various services such as communication facilities, construction of roads and establishment of motor boats on the Lake during the Italian occupation, expanded it's link and attracted people. With the gradual opening of the textile factory in the 1960s by the Italian as war indemnity, more and more people came to Bahir Dar.

According to informants, Zege supplied most of the factory workers specially after the hail storm in 1970 which destroyed the coffee trees of many farmers. As a result, most *Zegnas* have kins both in Bahir Dar and the neighboring farming villages. This is particularly witnessed during major church celebrations, weddings, funerals and coffee picking seasons when the people from Bahir Dar and neighboring communities flock to

Zege. Some *Zegenas* also keep livestock with these people (some can be relatives) in the neighboring communities. With the recent reaction of people against animal particularly sheep breeding such practices are common as those that did not manage to sell their animals (due to the recent ban), keep them in these communities.

Trade is the other activity which brings the peninsula, the adjacent villages and Bahir Dar in close contact. The market in Afaf which is the main market for the peninsula and neighboring villages, attracts merchants from various places. Coffee also attracts merchants mainly from Bahir Dar as they can fetch reasonable prices by purchasing coffee directly from farmers (with no middlemen). Bahir Dar also provides educational, health, transportation services which the people require from time to time. As a regional capital and host of various governmental organizations, the people go to Bahir Dar for various reasons including some legal cases that are handled by the Woreda court.

Regarding the relations with the adjacent cereal growing areas. Again, trade is one of the activities that play a major role in bringing these communities together. The women in this regard play a crucial role in facilitating communication and the exchange of range of items as they constantly travel across these places. On the other hand, laborers who come to Zege in search of daily jobs in the coffee plots are frequently seen in the peninsula.

In this chapter it has been shown that, Zege peninsula is one of the oldest areas surrounding Lake Tana. It is endowed with various natural resources. The people are descendants of migrants from various parts of the country. Coffee is the main source of livelihood of the people even though its production has been declining for sometime. Consequently, the people have attained other complimentary income earning activities such as trade and sale of fuel wood.

Zege is not a self contained and bounded society. Through out the years since it's establishment, Zege and it's people have been exposed to various changes due to it's vital links with the outer world. As a result of such contacts it has experienced social, cultural, economic and political influences.

Chapter III

The Social Organization of the People of Zege

3.1. The Household

The nuclear family, which comprises the wife, husband and their children forms the basis of the household in Zege. Aside from these members of the household can also include children from previous wedlock and grand children and parents or relatives of the spouses. A household in this study, comprises those people that shelter and consume food in the same dwelling unit. Hence, employees (usually maids) living in the household will also be considered as household members. The data gathered from the research area indicated that on the average a household has around 5 members [fieldwork survey, 1998].

The formation of a new household is marked by marriage of the couples. There are also household set up by cohabiting couples. Single headed households of unwed individuals, are not common, yet there are few nuns and monks leading their household single handedly with occasional labor support of neighbors.

Land (coffee plot), labor, cash from other complimenting source such as trade or sale of fuel wood are the vital necessitates for the survival of the household. The fertility of the land, the nature of coffee plants, access and size of land, access to regular labor and ability to earn income from other non-farming activities like tradê; the combination of such factors can play a role in determining the economic hierarchy of a household. Some households have managed to gain more income by renting other people's land which indirectly gives the life long access to additional land. Others specially those that have access to credit from organizations operating in the area (as in the fishing, water pump schemes of the fishing authority and CARE respectively), also obtain an additional income. It is important to note that as the produce of the coffee is not sustainable, a

household needs to obtain income from other sources to survive during the gap period ranging from one to two years, until the next good harvest period.

Male headed households enjoy better access to labor, land and at times cash income. The very fact that there are two adults each with sets of responsibilities says more that needs to be explained. Women in such households may not have full decision making authority in every issue. As in most Amhara societies the man is considered as the head and hence the ultimate decision maker. There are however issues and items that are solely decided upon by women. For instance, purchasing of food items type and variety (although the amount is dependent on the amount of money available) is subject to the decision of the woman. Cash is usually retained by the man and when the woman forwards request for money, the required some may be channeled either upon discussion or usually upon the wish of the man.

On the other hand, the female heads of households enjoy relative freedom as they are usually the sole decision makers of their households and have unlimited access to their own resources of their respective households. Yet, they are overwhelmed by household chores, taking care of children and the fieldwork. In the absence of domestic labor, they occasionally hire labor to perform some of the activities in crucial times of clearing, planting and coffee picking. Trade is the best alternative source of income for female heads. It requires frequent traveling, it may be an arduous task specially for those with young children. As a result, mothers usually travel with one or two children during the journey to neighboring villages and Bahir Dar.

Single male headed households can suffer most in the absence of a woman to undertake the household chores which are regarded as cumbersome and improper to be handled by the bachelor. Women family members will usually come to rescue them. Others who can afford a maid will do so though her status may eventually change and become a housewife. Such male headed households are rare except in the case of some priests and monks.

3.1.1. Intra Household Relations

The household is characterized by gender based division of labor which prescribes household chores, child care, fetching water and firewood and purchasing household necessities to the woman and/or other females of the household. The male members expected to tend to all the activities of coffee cultivation and the men represent the household in the non-domestic sphere.

Elders are respected members of the society. The men are often regarded as knowledgeable in history and church education. Their role in mediating disputes is also crucial due to the respect they enjoy. Children usually assist their aged parents and hence, tend their land and undertake the necessary activities. On the contrary, elders with no supporters are liable to experience difficult life. In such cases they lease their land and often sell the trees on their land to fuel wood traders.

Children are expected to assist their parents both in the domestic activities and out in the field and market. The absence of livestock breeding (at least until recently) has relieved children from the responsibilities of looking after animals which is a common feature in most parts of rural Ethiopia. Informants disclosed that as a result of this most children in the peninsula have the opportunity to attend school. However, the recent sheep breeding which is witnessed in both KPAs, created new responsibilities of looking after the animals.

Though this is the classical division of labor particularly in the Amhara household, in practice women participate in almost all activities. They clear, weed, harvest and plant coffee seedlings in the field. They also attend to the garden within the homestead particularly the *Gesho* plants and other vegetables. Analogous to most Amhara society, women seem to be considered inferior to men. This is witnessed in many aspect such as access to education. For instance, as the orthodox church services are carried out by male, they have had opportunity to learn church based education for the various positions

within the church and hence are literate as they have had access to some form of education. Whilst women have been denied such opportunities due to cultural values which did not value the relevance of female education. The literacy campaign in the 1980s gave some women access to education. As most informants disclosed, though the elementary schools in Zege were established around 1948, it has been only few decades (2-3 decades ago) since the young female generations began to enjoy access to modern education.

Women's illiteracy has also marginalized women from assuming various positions in certain government instituted administrative structure such as the KPA office. The other area where the consequence is felt is in the dispute settlement process. Women rely on the men to have applications written for the local KPA based social and justice committee (refer to chapter 5). Related to this some women disclosed that they rely on the male members of their families when they have to stand in front of the committee or elders council during litigation as they lack the know-how. They say that the men know how to handle or present cases or arguments. However, there are also few women despite such marginalization, who do not seek such kind of male assistance.

The case of Weizero SG can give an insight into how women can be marginalised in the society.

Weizero SG is a divorcee and a mother of three children. She recently sued her neighbor who has been cheating and taking more than his share of coffee from their joint land holding.

Explaining the case, she said that during the land distribution in 1977, she was very ill and could not be present when the Deldays allotted her share. Her neighbor told her that he will be present and the note the boundary of the land she was to be given. The neighbor did that as he promised. He informed that amongst the land she procured, they (Weizero SG and him) were jointly allocated 1 Kada. He informed her that they were to split the produce equally. So from then onwards they have been splitting the produce in such manner. Few months ago she wanted to rent out her land to her neighbor (to the same person mentioned above). An acquaints advised her that it is not worth to rent out her land as long as she is getting the larger share of the produced in her jointly held land. At that

junction, she said it came to her attention that her neighbor was supposed to get only ¼ of the coffee produced. She sued the person but he failed to appear. The kebele officials did not assist her much. She claims he has good relation with the officials and hence they are negligent.

Blaming the Deldays, Weizero SG also disclosed that they gave land in less fertile area. She said she had no relative that can argue on her behalf when the Deldays gave her that land and she did not know how to befriend and bribe them as others did to get good land.

3.1.1.1. **Decision Making And Resource Allocation**

There are different spheres within the household which require the sole or joint decision of the spouses. Women's sole decision making power pertains mostly to the domestic sphere on issues concerning purchasing and identifying the required household consumption items. The husband controls the stock of the harvested coffee. He usually allocates the amount of coffee for household (from which the woman sells in the market and obtains cash for the domestic use) use and for the market. The cash from the sale of the large amount of coffee and fuel wood is retained by the husband. Women retain the money from trade which they usually use to fulfill the requirements of the family.

The coffee produced is not sold in one instance. Portion of the harvested coffee will be stored as a saving to be used upon major requirements such as supporting children's education in Bahir Dar, feasts and used as insurance for unprecedented events. Whilst, certain amount of coffee will also be allocated to cover the regular household requirement.

Decision as to the amount of coffee to be apportioned as a saving and for household use usually rests on the husband though at times the spouses jointly reach a decision. In situations where the husband makes such decisions, his power can extend to deciding on the amount of coffee to be sold from time to time to cover household consumption expenses.

The marketing (except for the sale of wood log to Bahir Dar) is often the responsibility of the wife. Cash from the large quantity of the coffee will be subject to the husband's control. As most women disclosed the cash they earn from trade is retained by themselves. "*We use the money for domestic purposes, make ends meet. The men are not interested in such small amount of money.*" Women are given a portion of the stored/harvested coffee to cover the household expenses. Regarding the decision on the amount to be spent, some disclosed that both the wife and the husband have equal say and hence decide jointly.

3.1.2. Inter household Relationships

At the village level, households belong to locality based *Edirs* and *Mahber* where on a particular saints day members take turn to prepare *Talla* and *Kollo* and consume the food at one of the members houses. The members of *Senbete* (which are all men) also meet on Sundays usually at a church or shelter built by members or one member, where they consume *Talla* prepared by one of the members (the *Talla* is prepared by women, hence either the wife or the other female members of the household prepare the *Talla* for the *Senbete*). *Senbeta asenbet* which is also similar to *Senbete* but both men and women are members and they meet every three months. Members here also take turns to prepare *Talla* and *Kollo* and invite members to their household. Economic factors rather than social reasons play a crucial role in determining membership of the household in such voluntary associations. The data from the fieldwork shows that around 91% of the total 152 households belong to *Edirs* and again 63% (of the total) are members of *Mahbers*. Those who are not members give economic reasons for their abstention.

In addition to this, people of the same *Desh* come together to perform some community services such as clearing the main road of the community, the compound of the neighboring church or the church within the community, assist in the preparation and serving at big church feasts and celebrations.

There seems not to be a tradition of co-operation or even in most cases inter-household labor exchange services. People that have access to joint land holdings can work on their land together. But such forms of co-operation may not hold true when considering labor exchange services on private land holdings.

Immediate family members such as children often render labor services to their parents specially at times of carrying out certain seasonal activities such as clearing the land, coffee picking and planting period. At times when households require additional labor they hire daily laborers. In situations where continuous assistance is required, for instance as in the case of elderly and physically weak people, renting out the land in return for obtaining half of the total produce is a common practice.

3.2 The Role Of Kinship

The people of Zege emphasize kinship ties. As some elders disclosed, most of the people of the peninsula have either consanguineal or affinal ties. This has had implication on marriage where genealogical distance up to the seventh generation is stressed. As some remarked, such cases pose difficulty in identifying partners that are not related.

Though the land reform of the 1975 had altered the settlement pattern, kin groups can be settled in one area specially if the land is *Rist* land i.e. passed down from a descendant. People in most cases maintain patrilocal residence pattern thus are surrounded by relatives of the husband as opposed to the wife unless she is also from the same locality.

Kinship ties are emphasized to foster strong relationships. This can be for various reasons. One of the occasions where kin relationship is stressed is during mourning and weddings. Relatives from various corners are expected to attend the event, unless they are disputing amongst themselves. Even in situations of contention, kin groups can come together during mourning, though the same may not be true during weddings.

On the other hand, in the dispute settlement process, members of kin group can be of assistance to the disputing party by advising and/or representing them in the litigation or by mediating the case. Likewise, as the role of *Deldays* is crucial in land related disputes, people try to gain favor by manipulating kinship ties.

The case of **Ato D** and his sister can be mentioned here.

According to his information, when they were about to solve their long lasting boundary related land dispute by having the land re-measured by the Deldays, his sister refused to do so in the final day saying that her 'relative' (father of her son) which is one of Deldays is not present. He said, she was not convinced that the others will measure the land impartially.

The other events which brings families and their siblings together is the coffee picking period. Household members collaborate in picking the coffee during the picking season. The mere reason for the union or even presence of those family members or claimants that reside elsewhere, is usually to obtain their share of coffee without delay and immediately after the harvesting period. It is because of this that family members collaborate in picking the coffee. Yet, others (children) assist their parents during this period. The coffee picking weeks not only bring such family members but also daily laborers from neighboring villages and from Bahir Dar flock to Zege. According to the 01 Kebele official it is estimated around 1000-2000 people (mostly laborers) from neighboring villages and Bahir Dar, come to Zege in this period.

Apart from the above mentioned forms of co-operation amongst kin groups, it seems they do not act as corporate groups in under taking any activities. Perhaps the behavior of the *Zegegnas* in this regard best fits Hoben' s description of the Amhara in which he mentioned the lack of solidarity and cooperation but purposive union among kin groups [1973:16].

3.3. Marriage and The Formation of the Household

The formation of the new household is marked by marriage. As in other orthodox Christian societies of northern Ethiopia, the people of Zege practice monogamy and are exogamous as their spouses are outside the descent group [Hoben:1973, Messing:1957, Bauer: 1963]. Marriage of couples up to the seventh degree of genealogical relationships is strictly forbidden, at least in theory as some elders remarked few exceptions whereby people only considered relation up to the fifth generation in fostering marital relationships. The explanation given for such inconsistency is the difficulty of tressing families, that are not related.

Newly wed often maintain a patrilocal residence and set up their household either in close proximity or within the compound of the groom's parents. In such conditions the households may and may not have economic ties. Economic ties exist under conditions where both households have access to the same land. As a result, they come together to work on the field and split the produce jointly. On the whole, these households may not form important economic relations, except occasional labor services of the children and other family members in fieldwork and the household.

The decision regarding such settlement site can also be determined by factors such as fertility and accessibility (location), size of the farm land. The other condition where the patrilocal residency is not observed is when the man comes from another area, usually as a daily laborers from the neighboring communities, marries and moves in with a woman in Zege.

Parents often inquire the background i.e. line of descent '*Zer*' (descent, bloodline), social and economic status of the bride and/or groom. Though it may not be always possible, parents would like to marry their children to households of equal or perhaps higher status. In such conditions marriage creates alliance between two separate households quite often for economic reasons and transfer of wealth. In this regard, access to land is a crucial

factor. As in most Amhara societies the parents of the couples are expected to give the newly weds land and perhaps some money which assists the newly weds set up their household. This is known as *Matcha*.

According to the informants, *Matcha* particularly in the form of land is an important factor which can affect opportunities of marriage. Similar opinion or fact on the relevance of land endowment has also been mentioned in several studies [Dessalegn (1985), Hoben (1973), Pankhurst, H.(1990), Aspen(1993)].

Each partner in marriage are expected to pull 1 *Kada* of land as *Matcha*. Though the land is supposedly to be given to the couples as *Matcha*, in real sense, it can be the land they are entitled to as a result of the land distribution of the 1975. Henceforth, those that procured land during the land distribution in 1975 often get access to their independent share upon marriage. In such cases, as mentioned previously the land often remains intact and the share of the coffee produced will be directed to the household of the newly wed child.

As land is a crucial asset to the household, those that obtained land (as part of the family member) through their family during the land distribution and those that eventually inherited land from family members tend to be in a better position to get married. It is also vital to take into consideration that not all children in the household are endowed with land. As children that were not of age to procure land during the distribution and those added subsequently in the household or those children in households with more than 4 members (refer to section 2.4.) were not fortunate enough to obtain either 1 *Kada* of land or land as a whole. Such conditions which deny access to land have implication on the chance of getting married and establishing an independent household.

Concerning the manner of allocation of land as *Matcha*, such cases imply the land remaining intact and allocation and recognition of the right of the child to obtain the coffee produced on the total household plot thereupon. For instance, as explained, if a

family has 4 members and has 4 *Kada* of land, then the child who is getting married will be given $\frac{1}{4}$ of the total produce of the coffee as *Matcha*. In like manner, in situation where the total number of the current family members and size of land is not compatible, the coffee will be shared amongst the family. Hence, the share they are to obtain will be the *Macha*. Regardless of such facts, in some situations, the land to be given as *Macha* can be physically deducted from the total family holding and allotted to the newly wed child.

As mentioned by some informants the land distribution of the 1975 temporarily affected the relation or marriage arrangement. As the land distribution allowed only ownership of land in one's locality, people lost their land in other KPAs. It was due to such circumstances that people unclear with the situation delay weddings between couples residing in different KPA in fear of losing their holding when their residence pattern is altered upon marriage. Such conditions were eventually availed as people were assured. Similar uncertainty and changing of settlement site was also witnessed during the euphoria of land re-distribution that was to be undertaken two years ago.

Marriage can be aspired by the need to pull resources both land, and labor into the household. Specially during the second or the subsequent marriages as some informants explained, the marriage can be established to gain labor or any form of assistance, '*Tredagnalech* or '*Yeredagnal beye*' (thinking she/he will assist me). An older woman or a mother with young children, will appreciate the availability of a male labor to look after the coffee field and perform other tasks which demand male labor. The availability of the male labor among other things, can spell the economical viability of the household and may grant the woman increased time concentrate on the alternative income sources such as trade which requires frequent traveling.

The cases of Weizero E and Ato D depicts this truth.

Weizero E is a divorcee and a mother of two grown up daughter, one of which is currently residing with her. She said that few years after her husband who was the father of her daughters died, she married a daily

laborer. "*Yeredagnal beye*", I married him anticipating his help. I needed someone to look after the field and assist me maintain the household. But he was lazy, so after few years we were separated." She also married another one who eventually left her. Now she has given up on marriage and is trying to do everything herself.

Ato D upon his divorce from his former wife, took a maid who used to work for him long time ago. He said "*she came here and told me she has nowhere to go and needed to work,*" so I took her in. I repaired the house and now she lives with me and is a mother of our son."

This however does not imply that women are unable to perform the farming activities single handedly. On the contrary, as the task does not solely entail male oriented tasks like ploughing, women can undertake all the required tasks or at times hire labor to accomplish such tasks. Though, the absence of male labor may not immensely affect female headed households, it may have some repercussion on the household. In this regard, the vitality of male support in litigation particularly in land disputes as presented in section five. Further, the role of representing the household in community mobilized activities of road clearing, house construction, church repair, public meetings at the KPA office etc. will fall on the shoulder of the woman unless the woman has older children that can share the obligation. On the whole, as the woman is expected to cover both male and female responsibilities it is no doubt that is a tasking duty.

The people of Zege observe the strong restriction of conjugality with the artisans. On the other hand, these artisans do not seem to be segregated in most social functions such as *Mahbers* and *Edirs* or in religion yet, they have settled in two villages, Kokel and Gami which are close to Afaf as it is convenient for the market. It is also possible to hear stories of some artisans that are regarded as possessors of the 'evil eye' or *budda*. Most people have an amulet '*budda medhanit*', medicine against the *budda* that they hang around their neck. Aside from their coffee cultivation, the artisans often engage in diverse activities. For instance, the husband (along with male members of the family) is a blacksmith and the wife is a potter. The tanners usually sell and work at the market. Their

activity involves covering some household goods such as baskets, containers etc. with leather which makes it durable. They also prepare leather knot for some baskets used in the household and other small items used for carrying goods.

3.4. The Bases for Social Stratification in Zege

The bases for the economic and social differentiation in the Zege society is the resultant combined effect of access and control of resources such as land, labor, capital usually cash from complimentary income sources, which indirectly implies diversification of the household economy.

The role of access to such resources and including oxen, or draught animals, seeds, capital labor as a determinant factor in marking the basis for stratification in the northern part of Ethiopia has been widely documented [Bauer 1963; Hoben 1973; Messing 1957; Reminick 1970; Teferri 1998].

3.4.1. Land

The vitality of land as the bases for inequalities for marking the line of stratification in a predominantly agricultural based society is unquestionable. Amount of land covered with coffee plants has been and still remains to be one of the major indicators determinant of the inequality. As some informants disclosed, size of *Rist* land and at times access to slave labor [Abdusemed 1996: 555] or number of peasants and the corresponding amount of coffee production served as indication of wealth. Government appointees, representatives such as the *Lik'e Red*, *Mesle Ene*, *Atbiya Dagna*, Priests [ibid.,] were endowed with large land holdings covered with coffee which brought them prestige.

Land also became a vital indicator for marking and instigating inequality in Zege specially after the land distribution of 1975 and the years that followed. As the underlying essence of 1975 land distribution was to address the social differentiation resultant of the disparities to access to land holding, the allocation attempted to be conducted by

considering compatibility of the family and land size. Yet, the attempt transcended the conditions set for the allocation and eventually resulted in differentiation amongst farmers.

In the absence of clear guidance of handling the actual distribution, land allocation has been subject to local (various) discrepancies in various areas [Dessalegn 1984, 1994, Bruce et al. 1994, Yared 1995]. Likewise due to the shortage of land in the peninsula, some discrepancies were introduced to suffice to the needs of the inhabitants. As indicated in section 2.4.1.a. households with more than 4 members obtained land 1 *Kada* less.

Concomitantly, some informants disclosed they were able to procure land in accordance to the family size as stipulated above. Yet, others were less fortunate and did not access their 'rightful' share, as the stipulations were violated in the name of shortage of land.

Individuals in this regard were keen to manipulate individual relations and networks to gain access to the available land. As some informants disclosed, favoritism, bribery, mis-measurement, characterized the performance of the *Deldays*. Consequently, those that had strong financial power (usually those that had large land in previous times) were able to win the heart of the *Deldays* and secured more land. Some *Deldays* are also said to grab land often more than their share in idle locations.

The data in this regard substantiates the argument regarding the differentiation of size of holding. The table indicates the incompatibility of the size of land holding with the corresponding family size. In other words, the size of the holding did not increase with the corresponding size of the family. As discussed above this can be attributed to factors mentioned such as shortage of land and the problems faced in the land distribution which did not have distinct manner of allocation of land to households that expanded after the official land distribution.

Through the combined result of size and fertility of land, number of household size and access to resources have a significant impact on affecting the productivity of the land and hence, the benefits obtained from the land, the data can be taken as an indication that in a situation where modern agricultural inputs are scarce and households do not have access to sufficient land holding, the level of the return (benefits from production) from the land is likely to be minimal. It is such kind of circumstances/conditions that necessitates the need for complimentary income such as trade sale of fuel wood for the household. On the contrary, those families with larger size of holding and less family size can benefit more from the endowment.

Not only accessing land is crucial but the type of land obtained amongst other factors played a significant role. The fragmentation of the land holding assisted to address such concerns. It is not however unusual to learn about situations whereby the entire or most of the land is situated in less fertile location, whilst the favored ones were endowed with fertile settings. On the other hand, as mentioned in the euphoria of the land distribution in 1975, there was sudden shift of the location of the dwelling unit. Hence, some people (usually those with large land holdings) moved and built new household close to their fertile tract in order to retain and gain access of their former holding in the land allocation. In this regard, rich families endowed with large *Rist* land managed to settle around the best part of their holding and were successful in procuring the plot. As Yared noted [1995:3], such occurrences were often “issue of conflict between households, and people felt insecure about land that was next to somebody else’s house.”

The other system which contributed to the differentiation of the land holding was the *Mote Keda* system. Again manners of land allocation through this system also varies from place to place and has also been modified or characterized by local scenarios. Such circumstances again paved the way for the discrepancies.

The *Mote Keda* system of allocating land in Zege gave away the land of the deceased members (often with no heirs) of the household and those that left the area for elsewhere

(usually for good) to the landless or to those families who applied for additional land due to the insufficient land they procured during the distribution. However, at times, land of the deceased and those that left the area was not given if there were new members in the household (usually newly born, children that come of age, dependent relative). The *Mote Keda* system in Zege also gave the land of those household members that left the area for a job opportunity elsewhere. Information tips regarding the whereabouts of the person to the committee, helped them to act upon the information. However, such kind of confiscation land of those that left for a job was not strictly applied on some household.

As in Zege, Yared, in his study of land redistribution in Northern Shewa, Yared [ibid.: 5] mentioned that upon the death of the male head of household, some officials took land of the head's share from family's holding. Yet, the land of the wife and children's share was not often confiscated in that anticipation of second marriage and birth of other children. He also noted that replacement for the confiscated land in situations where the family size has increased eventually, was not considered.

The other situation that explains the discrepancies of land holding can be witnessed when examining or considering the condition of the newly formed households. As discussed in the section 3.3 about marriage, couples are expected to draw land to the household. In situations where they are not to procure land in such manner parents allocate land from their share or they may get land from a relative who endow them to look and serve as a care taker. Due to such circumstance such households attempt to secure land through the *Mote Keda* arrangement but the return may not suffice to the growing family size. Hence, the resort to renting land and focusing on other source of income such as trade and sale of wood log and daily labor work is often practiced.

It is not obscure to conjecture the position of the female headed household in a society where women are subordinated and do not assume a leading role. In this regard, though the aspiration of the land reform was to equally endow women with land, the practice seem to have marginalized such women. As some of the cases portray, unlike the men

who foster deals in the local bars women did not have the chance to gain from such arrangements. Thus women often needed the assistance of a male relative either to reach agreement with the *Deldays* or monitor the manner of allotment of the *Deldays*. As a result, they were likely to be cheated and procure less and undesirable type of land.

Regardless of such happenings, the *Mote Keda* system endowed nominal amount of land to the landless and to the migrant laborers who remained in Zege upon marriage. Migrants were legible for such endowments upon submission of a letter of proof of now such endowments from their previous KPA .

3.4.2. Labor :

The other factor that needs to be regarded in discussing social differentiation is access to labor. Labor to tend to the coffee plot particularly to undertake seasonal activities is a crucial as access to land. labor can be secured with there from the household members or by hiring daily laborers. Hired labor is a requirement for almost all households during the coffee picking season which mandates the coffee to be harvested within the allocated time. Aside form that , planting and seeding periods can be other occasions that require labor either hired or from the household members is required.

In this regard, households that lack such vital source of labor as in the case of elderly people with not care takers, will be forced to give their land for '*Le Ekul*' rent their land and obtain half of the produce. On the other hand, those that have the capacity to work and endowed with labor gain access to more land by 'renting' due to such conditions.

Unlike farming areas where male labor is decisive for ploughing and crucial in the production activity; in Zege households and particularly female headed households do not seem to be greatly affected from the lack of male labor in the cultivation of coffee as it does not entail activities that exclusively require male labor.

3.4.3. Modern Inputs:

Access to modern inputs such as credit facilities has been resulting in widening the gap between the *have's and the have not's*. The distribution of fishing boats to groups of farmers the fishing development authority and Care -Zege's scheme have had some impacts on the lives of these few people. In situation where beneficiaries are expected to procure advance payment, hence benefiting those with the potential to fulfill such conditions.

The other most important input is the water pump scheme to facilitate the irrigation of coffee tracts. Such scheme again seem to marginalize poor farmers that cannot fulfill conditions of payment of initial installment. Those that gained access to irrigated land have guaranteed sustained yearly production. Evidently, such production rate has yielded related benefits and income to the household which again serve as a factor in differentiating households. Aside from that, the other related benefit from the scheme is that such farmers may have the possibility of renting the land of adjacent farmers who cannot take part in the water pump scheme. Though the scale of such occurrences may not be wide, circumstances such as this did seem to widen the gap of stratification by marginalizing the poor to a poorer level and the rich becoming richer.

3.4.4. Capital/Cash

As mentioned previously due to the irregular coffee harvest (once every two years), households need to secure income from other activities such as trade and sale of fuel wood. Those that are hard and diligent workers also attempt to address their problem through various means such as daily labor work, renting other people's land and selling wood logs to Bahir Dar. Similarly, income from trade and other complimentary resources can benefit the household. Women that have the capacity to engage in trade and earn income that extends beyond covering household expenses, contribute to the overall economic disparity amongst households.

When considering some of the vital social factors that serve as the basis for differentiation, bloodline relation with royalty or tressing descent to a prestigious well known family or kin can earn an individual and his family respect and higher ranking. Church based education and ranks have been one of the important indication of social status. The proof can be seen in the titles or the various church affiliated ranks people (men) retain as reference, until date. Such titles are indication of the level or position of an individual's church based education. Though, the reverence attached to these titles and positions are acknowledged, with the introduction and popularity of modern education such church based ranks seem to loose their social demeanor.

Priests and the unordained church clerics, descendants of landlords and even former landlords, elders, are respected members of the community. Landless laborers, artisans and the economically poor form the base of the social ranking. Social and economic status however, may not often concur in Zege. The priests, the clergy and others which maintain respectable social status may not enjoy similar economic status. Likewise, the socially marginalized artisans may not ameliorate their social standing despite their economic success.

On the whole, it seems that those that had the economical power even during the transition period of the 1975, had greater chance to secure their interest either by manipulating personal relations, or fixing agreements with the *Deldays* or devising a strategy to retain and share amongst siblings part of the fertile land holding prior to the commencement of actual distribution. Likewise, the availability of modern input that suffice to the interest of the farmers, also seem to create a condition that can benefit the well to do farmers.

Though there is still some adherence to such differentiating factors, economic factors as opposed to social play a vital role in differentiating and earning prestige to households or individuals. Further due to the constant vulnerability that the people have been encountering and introduction of new services (in puts) seem to have played a role in

modifying the factors used for differentiating households. Hence, though access and control of some resources such as land are vital, the combined effect of the above mentioned factors serve as the bases for stratification.

CHAPTER IV

Factors Affecting Utilization Of Natural Resources In Zege

4.1. Tenure

The lack of proper and clear land distribution mechanism for the re-allocation of land for households with increasing family size seem to have forced the people to use other mechanisms of gaining resources. The creation of small individual holdings paved the way for the frequent boarder related disputes. As mentioned earlier, the '*Mote Keda*' arrangement which re-allocated land of deceased members or the land of those that left the community, had implication on the natural resources management.

As, some people disclosed previously (in the Derg Period), a family could not pass down their land holding to family members or the land of the deceased family members of family could not be retained by other family members, the land of the deceased family members will be reassigned to other people of the community. Hence, families were not able to successfully retain the land which they have invested on for a along time. Such practices discouraged people to conserve, utilize and invest on their land properly. As the people say '*Ene almeche nege lelea lihed ayedel*', meaning "I toil on the land and tomorrow it will be taken, someone else will claim it." Similarly, currently land re-allocation system for households with growing family sizes and newly formed households, is not defined.

As shall be indicated in the cases presented in Chapter 5 the natural resource based disputes have had impact on the will of farmers to invest on their land. In situations where the cases of disputable tract are not easily solved, some farmers may not be able to use the tract, harvest the coffee, or plant new seedlings on it.

On the other hand, joint land holding system, the land holders may not be enthusiastic to equally share all the responsibilities. As a result, the land is often neglected and farmers may not have the initiative to invest on their land. Cases number 5 and 6 in Chapter 5 depict such truth.

4.2. Traditional Natural Resource Management Practice

In Zege, most of the natural resource management activities are characterized by seasonal calendar. The task begins in the rainy season towards the end of May and extends to mid September. The tasks involved during this season are clearing, weeding the coffee plot and planting seedlings.

The people usually use a sickle-like multi-purpose hand implement known as *Geledo* for clearing, weeding, hoeing (lightly) trimming and removing branches of bushes and trees. The versatility of the implement is attributed to its sharp edges on both the inside and outside and its sharp pointy end. Axe, slasher (*Konchera*) and digging stick are also some of the implements used by the farmers.

Farmers practice mulching where they pile the leaves of the uprooted weeds and pile it around the coffee seedlings. In describing the significance of such practices, they say the leaves on the ground will attract termites to urinate on the layered leaves "*mesit yeshenabetal*". This is believed to create moisture and will decay the leaves and serve as nutrients for the seedling.

Coffee seedlings both cultivated in the homestead and purchased from outside are also planted in the available open space in the coffee plot, *Mechekchek* (inserting in the available space). Though farmers value the relevance of spacing in planting they are often heard remarking "it is not good but we cannot help it as we have to use the available space." Aside from this coffee beans are planted to germinate around the house in shady corners or in small shaded bed in the homestead or near the lake. Not only new seedlings

are planted for future production, farmers use the old coffee trees for regenerating new branches. This is locally known as '*Masgonbes*' meaning bending. This system is known as agrobidal system. In this system, the branch of the coffee tree will be tilted and hooked on the ground, creating a smooth curve. This will eventually give rise to or regenerate new branches. Due to such relevance, farmers prefer to keep all their coffee plants, unless they are totally destroyed due to some disease.

Fruit seedlings purchased from the extension agents of the DoA and CARE-Zege are also planted around the homestead during this season. Following the coffee planting season which can extend up to mid August the farmers are continuously occupied with frequent weeding and clearing until November.

Farmers also practice shade regulating by removing some of the branches of the shading trees. The branches of the trees on the eastern side of the plot are usually thinned for the morning sunlight to penetrate and reach the coffee plants. Whilst the branches of the trees found in the middle and in the west remain thick which will protect the coffee plants from the strong and harmful sunlight of the day which can harm the plants or as they say it '*Mech Yemetawal*'. Low foliage trees such as *Sesa* (*Albizia gummifera*), *Berbera* (*Millettia ferruginea*) are used as shading trees for the coffee plants due to their low foliage.

The period between March and April is assigned for the coffee picking and other related activities. Almost all family members take part in picking coffee. Not only family members are engaged in coffee picking, this is the period in which families hire laborers to pick coffee in the assigned period. Coffee picking is undertaken in certain weeks mostly 2-3 weeks throughout the peninsula. As a tradition the people come together in a public meeting (which is now organized with the help of the KPA administration) to fix the harvesting period in order to prevent stealing. During that period the Kebele administration and each KPA will assign the militia men and additional policemen to guard the area at night. Though such strict measures are in place people still quarrel over

the boundary violation. Hence, the season also marks the culmination of dispute over boarder pushing with the adjoining plot.

The harvested coffee is spilled on the ground and sun dried in the homestead. As the coffee is put on the available vacant space, people temporarily shift the main entrance of the homestead to utilize the often bare space near the entrance. On the other hand, as some people said shifting of the entrance is also to protect the coffee from being stolen.

The dried coffee is stored in a sack or special mat that is sewn into a sack, and kept in the house. The harvested coffee with its husk is locally called as '*Jefel*'. The coffee will be sloughed from time to time whenever it is necessary depending on the requirement of the household. The sloughed coffee is known as '*Kesher*'. Women are responsible for sloughing the husk of the coffee beans with the help of the traditional stone grinder. However, recently people have resorted to using the coffee sloughing machine installed in Afaf. Yet, despite this, people still make use of the traditional method.

4.3. Modern Agricultural Input

CARE- Zege, is the sole NGO operating in the peninsula since 1993. Through the credit scheme farmers have had access to water pumps for irrigating coffee plots in close proximity to the lake. Technical backstopping in advising and acquainting farmers with some methods of coffee production is also one of the activity of the organization. The cultivation of vegetables and introduction of fuel saving improved cooking furnaces are also included in the programs provided by the organization.

As mentioned in section 3.4.3, the water pump scheme has endowed some groups of farmers with increased improved and regular coffee production. Such farmers have been guaranteed yearly supply of coffee unlike the common annual or every two years coffee harvesting. As a result, farmers needed to harvest their coffee earlier and frequently which required some adjustment of the coffee harvesting period for such farmers (as opposed to the few weeks April -March). Yet, as such farmers also maintain tracts

situated in the inland which cannot be irrigated, they still participate in the official harvesting period.

It seems that one of the impact of such modern input is that as the initial installment required by the farmers encompassed in the scheme is 'high', few of the well to do farmers have had access to the pump whilst as informants disclosed, the poorest segments remain marginalized. Consequently, some farmers attempted to gain access (rent) of the land adjacent to the irrigated land. Such arrangement did not escape some bickering.

*Ato A and Ato M had informal agreement and signed a contract in the presence of an elder or **Shimagle**. The agreement entrusted Ato A to the certain portion of land (quarter of a **Kada**) to irrigate and plant coffee seedlings and share half of the produce. According to M, he went away to neighboring island Dek for three years while his wife and children remain in Zege and during this period he said Ato A had not given them anything. He even claimed that Ato A denied them access to the harvest (of the coffee trees that were on the piece of land) during this period. He also said that Ato A modified the boundary and adjoined the land to his holding. Ato M is trying to claim his land back and to evoke the agreement.*

On the contrary, the information from the witnesses also indicated that during the agreement Ato M has given Ato A unlimited right to the land and has been receiving money until the coffee trees on the land were ready to be harvested. Such agreements are regarded as informal way of selling land.

4.4. The Role of Religion In Natural Resource Management

The role and significance of religious values on the environment has been one of the common interest in the current realm of global environmental concerns. As Pedersen wrote, very often religious beliefs and values are regarded or understood as influencing human environmental demeanor [1992:259]. Despite such notion, it is yet naive to assume that all environmental behaviors are explained in terms of such beliefs and values. Similarly, it is also equally important to recognize that religious values by themselves cannot stipulate or predict people's behavior in relation to the environment.

In studying the role of religion on people's environmental behavior Kinsley (1995), White (1967) and Pedersen (1992) have forwarded their views on some of the religions around the world.

In this regard, in analyzing the Judeo-Christianity, Kinsely [ibid.,106] views the religion as incorporating some ethnocentric attitudes which encouraged exploitation of nature. Outlining the main paradigms which endorse such views, Christianity unlike some of the animistic religions, strips the spirituality and divinity of the natural resources and portrays them as resources subject to human exploitation. The religion also portrays humans as superior, "divinely ordained" and other species and nature as a whole are subject to their domination. Further explaining the religion, Kinsely mentioned that, nature is relegated to low status as it is devoid of divinity which in the Christian context is only attributed to the spirit. Hence, " the primary theological concerns have to do with God and the salvation of the soul, the Christian tradition almost entirely lacks ecological motif and is dominated by the spiritual motif." [1995:106-107]. Opponents of such views regard Christianity as ecologically responsible thus negate the idea that the Bible or the religion subjects the environments to human exploitation or does not depict "nature as dead matter" for the manipulation by humans [ibid., 114].

On the other hand, such studies on religion and environmental behavior portray Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism as religions that perpetuate respect for the environment and it's conservation. Izzi Deen [1990:88-92] narrates the significant Islamic environmental ethics values in which he argued that in Islam, humans are entrusted by God to preserve, protect and promote the environment as all creatures have distinct functions hence, should co-exist in balance.

In like manner, the environmental ethics in Buddhism are associated with the fulfillment of life and where humans are wise, "genuinely humble, compassionate guardian of living things and through love, compassion, altruism and self-perfection". The environment is

regarded a sacred and heritage of all the creatures of the world hence, such a conviction does not permit and justify the unjust exploitation of natural resources by humans [Yuthok: 1992:3 quoted by Pedersen: 1992:261].

In Hinduism, "God has absolute sovereignty over human and non-human life. All living creature, human as well as non human, have the same right to existence. Human beings have no special privilege or authority over other creatures; on the other hand, they have more obligation and duties" [Dwivedi 1990: 205 quoted by Pedersen (ibid.,)]. Furthermore, the fundamental notion of incarnation exemplify the environmental values of Hinduism. In incarnation human beings are believed to return to the world after death assuming the life of various animals or species. As a result of such notion, environment is respected and there is a strong conservationist sentiment. In fact in Dwivedi's terms, Hindu scripts stipulate the acceptable behavior and amongst which is the "welfare of the environment" propagating the protection of animals and plants and prevention of water and air pollution [ibid.,205].

Due to such religious values, it is vital to consider religious factors in analyzing people's attitude and behavior towards the environment. For instance, in Ghana community forestry projects failed as in some villages due to the belief which associated planting trees with death "only God may plant trees and that it is impious for humans to do that" [FAO, 1993: 5].

On the other hand, Dejene Aredo studied the effect of religious holidays on peasants farming activities. The study showed that though peasants did not undertake certain farming activities during the religious holidays, they emphasized activities that are socially and psychological important during the holidays. Farmers compensated for the lost days by expanding the working hours during the non holidays. Thus, concluding that though most scholars anticipate the observance of religious holidays affects the productivity of farmers, they emphasized during the holidays whilst other activities are suspended for that while. Hence, suggested that "peasant society can only be identified

by appreciating the environment under which the peasant toils and not by using standard which are developed for urban condition" [1988:172].

One of the relevant subject when considering the role of religion in the coffee production of Zege is the issue of religious holidays. According to the Orthodox Church's teaching, an ardent follower of the religion is expected to fast, celebrate religious holidays and saint's days. In this regard, in Zege, it is believed that by observing such ordinance, the people can appeal to God to prevent punishment often natural calamities of hail storm. The churches constantly teach and remind the people among other things, to commemorate and strictly observe the saint days as Zege is regarded as a place of reverence where such religious rules need to be respected. The following are the main saint days observed (according to the Ethiopian calendar)*

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. the 3 rd - <i>Bahata Mariam</i> : one of the celebration for Saint Mary | 6. the 19 th - <i>Saint Gabriel's day</i> |
| 2. the 7 th - <i>Selassie</i> : celebration of the Trinity | The 21 st - <i>Mariam</i> : - Saint Mary's day |
| 3. the 12 th : <i>Saint Michael's day</i> | 7. the 23 rd - <i>Giorgis</i> (Saint George's) day |
| 4. the 16 th - <i>Kidane Mihret</i> , 'Covenant of Mercy': one of the celebration for Saint Mary | 8. the 27 th - <i>Medhanialem</i> 'death of the Our Lord': celebration for Jesus Christ |
| 5. the 17 th - <i>Abune Betre Mariam's</i> : celebration off the holy father who founded Zege through God's guidance | 9. the 29 th - <i>Be'ale Egziabher</i> : celebration for God 'the Birth of Christ' |

On these and Sabbath days i.e. Saturdays and Sundays, people abstain from drudgery activities such as field work, tree cutting or even chopping wood. Likewise, the women refrain from coffee or cereal grinding both at home or the mill in Afaf. They avoid picking or harvesting *Gesho* leaves, yet they perform the usual household work. Such saint days are also observed even during the few coffee picking weeks. The priests

*More information on the festivals observed by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church can be found in : Aymero Wondemagenehu and Joachim Motovu (eds.), (1970). *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church*. Ethiopian Orthodox mission. Addis Ababa.

remind the people during the weekly church services of the forthcoming saints days. The priest will also scold the people or threaten to collect scone from those who failed to honor the saint days.

Aside from this, the church indulges in a yearly prayer and service beginning *Megabit* 3-10 (around mid March to beginning of April) to appeal God to protect the area from natural catastrophe such as hail storm. During this period they will make *Mehela*, intercession. *Megabit* is regarded as the period when the rain causing clouds move, it is also time of *Lemelame*, when the land becomes green and is a period of fertility. The prayer comes to halt on *Megabit* 10 which is the celebration of the finding of the true cross of Jesus (see Aymero, 1970). As the informant priests said and explain the conical event “we think of the cross as our salvation and appeal to God to save us be our salvation and protect us also from the catastrophes, we think of all these circumstances when we conduct prayer during this special period.” On the last day priests and deacons carrying the chronicle of Abune Betre Mariam and a big cross followed by people, will walk across the peninsula and if possible go around Zege on *Tanqwa*.

Though most people are not willing to discuss and openly acknowledge, they have some superstitious beliefs on the *Bered Tebaki*, ‘protector of the hail storm’. The *Bered Tebaki* is an individual who with help of some of the Muslims around Fure (refer to map II) brings certain type of plants from the ‘desert’ or remote area (lay people do not seem to know the location). The people in the peninsula contribute and pay the individual to bring the plant. Upon return the plant will be taken around the peninsula and kept in a hidden place of an elderly man’s house. It is believed that this plant and scrupulous prayer of some specialists will protect the area from hail storm. People’s opinion towards the relevance of the *Bered Tebaki* differs as some insist on the relevance and existence of the practice whilst others speak of it as something of the past and mention it’s irrelevance as despite such adherence disaster hit the area. They claim that people have abandoned such practices as the priests have been teaching people to resort to God and abide by the ethics of the religion especially observe the assigned religious holidays.

The people also observe the ban on livestock breeding in the peninsula mentioned on 'Gedle Betre Mariam' 'Book of the Deeds of Betre Mariam'. The chronicle stipulates God's command/wish through Abune Betre Mariam to preserve the monastery as an area devoid of any farming activities and commands the inhabitants to refrain from livestock breeding and even slaughtering such animal within the peninsula. Though most people adhere to the prohibition, few years back specially since 7-10 years ago people started breeding sheep. As most families asserted, the constantly declining coffee production compelled them to seek alternative income to sustain the household. Due to the absence of grazing area in the peninsula the sheep are let loose in the farm plot so that they can graze on the leaves of some shrubs in the coffee plot and around the homestead. However, in recent times, such conditions created disputes between neighbors as a result of the destruction of their coffee trees by the loose sheep that are out of the command of the care taker. An ideal case can be the story of Ato G.

He recently sued his neighbor whose sheep destroyed about 200 coffee trees. He said despite the regular appeal he made to his neighbor, the neighbor an elderly person have been negligent. Ato G said in September when he was away the sheep caused a major damage to his coffee seedlings by feeding on the bark. He said that though he knew that it was my neighbor's sheep that caused the damage, He had no proof to take him to court. So in the days that followed he hid near his farm plot and was awaiting anxiously to catch the neighbor red handed. So when he finally managed to catch the sheep and the shepherd, he gathered three witness and reported him to the KPA office. The sheep were taken to the kebele and bailed out after three days. He finally managed to sue his neighbor. The court after hearing the case advised them to have their case seen by the elders council as it can help the disputants negotiate and reconcile which will also ease the amount of compensation fee of the offender.

The increasing number of breeders and the growing population of the sheep entailed more discontent and agitation. One of the cause of the frustration was related to the movement of the herd, which destroys newly planted seedlings. Further, the constant movement of the animals prevents water to penetrate the soil and makes hoeing difficult as the hooves of the animals harden the ground. It is as a result of such disgruntled that the people in a public meeting decided to ban sheep breeding and to take out their sheep out of the

peninsula. Yiganda Mehal Zege KPA effectively implemented the decision of the people in November 1998.

In conclusion it can be said that a range of factors seem to affect the manner of natural resource utilization in Zege. In the preceding sections, it was possible to highlight the role of these factors. Tenure related issues due to the lack of properly defined system of land allocation have resulted in the expropriation of the land of from the 'rightful' owners. Further the ill defined system for the re-allocation of land has resulted in the neglect of the natural resources.

The role of religion as a factor affecting natural resource utilization has also been thoroughly discussed. In this regard, despite the notion that religious holidays as affecting or interfering with the day to day activities, such holidays allow the people to undertake other important functions of the household. On the other hand, the strict observance of the holidays is assumed to be relevant for obtaining good harvest. Hence, such factors need to be given due consideration in the discussion concerning natural resource utilization in Zege.

Despite such religious conviction of the people, their adherence to the religious regulations seem to be challenged when viewing the current practice of sheep breeding which is supposedly banned in peninsula. The need of the people to ameliorate their daily life seem to have forced them to disregard the religious based ban. Yet, in spite of such attempts the new practice also seem to have resulted in disputes and other related problems that affect the cultivation of coffee in the area.

Furthermore, though, some of the religious practices retain their relevance, other non-religious practices exist side by side. As in the case of the '*Bered Tebaki*' which are assumed to prevent hail storm, such practices still retain their relevance in the society. It seems that in situations where people have no control over such as natural calamities, the people adhere to the existing practices in hope of preventing the disaster.

Chapter V

NATURAL RESOURCES BASED DISPUTES IN ZEGE

5.1. Land Related Disputes

People enter into various relationships in their day to day life. Disputes are also part of such relationships. As Cheater put it conflict and dispute are endemic to human society [Cheater 1986:205].

One of the intriguing findings of the research was the prevalence of disputes instituted by natural resources and particularly land related cases. The quantitative data showed that 45.4% the surveyed households have experienced land boundary related contentions. Though disputes are not manifested in violent manner it has become a common occurrence and almost an element of the day to day drudgery.

Disputing parties very often avoid congregating or assembling in *Mahbers*, *Senbetes*, *Edirs* and other occasions. Neighbors and relatives who recognize the contention may attempt to bring the disputants to resolve the situation, yet such attempt is not common due to the delicacy of land related squabbles.

5.2. Common Types Of Disputes Related To Natural Resources

5.2.1. Land Boundary Related Disputes

Tampering with the boarder of the coffee plot is one of the dominant causes of contention in Zege. As mentioned earlier land boundaries are demarcated by sparsely planted trees, bushes and at times with scantily hooked wooden pegs and big stones. Whilst, some tracts may not be properly bounded and can easily be tampered with. Consequently, people modify the boarder to gradually claim the newly planted seedlings or the coffee plant to be harvested, in the coffee picking season. Boundary related disputes escalate during the coffee picking and planting seasons. As it will be presented in the proceeding pages such disputes may not be entirely attributed to failure to demarcate the land properly, but also failure to clearly show boundary during land allotment.

The following are some of the ideal cases.

Case 1

Ato M is an ex-soldier who got married 5 years back and got land from his mother as Macha. His mother also got it from her mother (his grandmother) right before she passed away. He said that as his grandmother was old she did not look after the land very well. She hired laborers to perform the daily tasks. After he got the land he said he noticed that the boundary has been violated by two of the adjacent holders. There are trees that are sparsely planted for demarcating the boundary. However, these two people planted bushes to modify the boundary. Describing the whole situation, he said that as both of these individuals are very old, he tried to approach them and discuss the situation. Both denied the fact that they have pushed the boarder. Ato M said he used some neighbors to mediate the situation. When both were adamant, he filed a complaint to the social justice committee of the KPA. Both were summoned. As both were hesitant in their response to my complaint, the committee advised us to have our case examined by Shimgelina through the elders of our choice.

Case 2

The case of Ato T is also similar. He sued his neighbor about a year ago when he claimed some of his coffee trees during the coffee picking season. As the process for resolving the case would require long period, he was advised to take three witnesses to the area and give the claimant the harvest of the disputable coffee plants. So they agreed when the case is solved either through elders or the committee, if the coffee trees belong to him the neighbor is to return the equal amount of coffee he harvested in the presence of the witnesses. Well the case is still in progress but According to Ato T the Deldays came and saw the area but the neighbor started to disappears because it was becoming lucid that he was going to lose the case. So now the neighbor is consulting with some elders to convenience Ato T for minimal compensation.

The boundary disputes occur both in joint and individual holdings. Disputes also occur among family members specially in situations where both have jointly held tract.

Case 3

Kese Gebez EM

This is a case of a brother and a sister. He is approximately around 70 years old. During the land distribution of 1975, he and his sister were given adjacent land which used to be part of their father's land. He said that he once promised his sister in euphoria and out of good will and out of a good feeling to help his sister, pledged, in front of people to give her 1/4 of the coffee produced from his 1/2 Kada. The sister eventually wanted to claim the land and demarcated it. He is furious because he promised to split the produce but not the land. I am the one who has been working on the land. Now she wants to split the land and claims

larger portion. He said that he tried to negotiate with her in front of everybody but she refused. "I said let our children (daughters) come and tell from where they have been picking the coffee and how much they split. Finally they departed with no avail. He said that since she is weak and her husband is lazy they do not work on the land. "I work on the land. Now when she sees that the land is in good condition she wants to split it." He initially refused but the witnesses forced him since he has to keep his word.

The sister has 5 *Kada* that she was given during the land distribution according to her family size. She is claiming additional land which the brother promised her. The land was to be demarcated on *Meskerm* 27, 1991 (October 1998) so some *Shimageles* and *Deldays* were present she refused to have the land demarcated because one of the *Deldays* she is related to was not present so she did not trust the others.

Recalling the history of disputes between the two, he said that as our land is adjacent, 6 years ago whilst he was ill and in bed, she collected coffee from his land. He said as soon as he discovered he showed it to witnesses. She was sued and finally asked to pay compensation. I demanded 10 *Madega* coffee (1 *Madega* is approximately 8 k.g, at the time of the field work was 100 Birr) but the court asked her to pay only 400 Birr. (see annex – case related to land of his wife)

CASE 4

Weizero S's case is regarding her dispute with her uncle. She said that during the land distribution of 1975 both were given joint holding which they eventually split. There are trees and pegs that can show the boundary. However, she claims that her uncle used part of her land to cultivate eucalyptus and he used the money from the sale of the wood logs entirely for himself. She is now claiming her share of the money and requesting for the land to be demarcated by the *Delday*. Her brother on the other hand said that the land where he planted the trees fall within his boundary. Their case was heard and they were also advised to have their case seen by elders. However, they could not reach a solution. So they agreed to have the land demarcated by the *Deldays*.

Failure to accurately establish the boundary of land specially in the allocation of land In the '*Mote Keda*' system is one of the main reasons which causes disputes. In such cases the oral account of the transfer of someone's land without properly showing the boundary has been the practiced by the land allocating committee in the KPA. In some instances, *Deldays* may also fail to show the exact boundary when splitting the land hence allocate the land by estimation or lack of proper identification of boundary: as the people describe it "*ayetsh sechew*" meaning visual estimation.

Ato W and four other people jointly hold land which they obtained 'Bemote Keda'. They have sued their neighboring joint land holders for picking coffee from 40 of their coffee trees. When the committee gave them land 'Bemote Keda' they did not show them the exact boundary, as the committee just gave the land without properly showing the boundary. There are some trees that more or less indicate the demarcation. Explaining similar incidents in the past, he said that they have been neglecting some similar but minor incidents, as they did not work that much on their jointly held land. But the large scale theft frustrated all of them.

The other group also claimed that the coffee trees fall under their boundary. As they could not compromise for the coffee lost, they have agreed to have the boundary demarcated. Again Ato W and his co land holders would like to split their jointly held land amongst themselves, claiming that they would properly look after the land once they get their share. He is of the conviction that splitting the land will at least prevent such large scale theft from happening again, as each individual will strive to guard and look after the land properly.

Case 6

The case of Ato AG also gives an insight into disputes caused by failure of properly showing the boundary of the land to the endowed individual. In other words, it is a case of a person was given land in '*be ayetsh sechew*'

*Ato AG is not originally from Zege. He came to Zege in 1978 as a daily laborer. He got married and remained there. As he came to the area after the land distribution he was not able to obtain land. So he applied and in 1985 he was given 1/4 Kada of the 1 Kada land which was jointly held with 3 other people. They split the land into two, so he has been sharing 1/2 Kada with the other co-holder. Describing how they managed the land, he said they worked together, planted equal amount of seedlings and picked coffee from the trees they cultivated. This eventually created problems so they decided to split. The Deldays divided the land in their absence and later roughly showed them the boundary. They were given '*be'ayetsh sechew*'. He said that the adjacent holder picked coffee from his land. They tried to solve the problem through *Shingelina* but the other man failed to show up, so they went back to the social justice committee. According to Ato AG, said that his is also demanding for compensation, as the case has been dragging for some time and prevented him from planting new seedling this time because of the litigation.*

The absence of a properly defined manner of land distribution and allocation has created inconsistent system of land allocation. The *Mote Keda* system in this regard has paved the way for obscure ways of obtaining land. Such incidents instigated some bickering among community members. There had also been incidents of obscure means of obtaining land mostly by the then Kebele officials who abused power. Victims who could not receive impartial judgment appealed to the Woreda court and the litigation is pending until date. The case of Weizero G presented below reflects such truth.

Case 7

Weizero G who is approximately in her late 40's and is a divorcee who used to live on her parent's land before the 1975 land distribution. During the land distribution she was given 1½ Kada land for her and her son. She exclaimed that she was not treated properly even though she should have received 2 Kada. She said when her son left they gave his share to the KPA chairman. He got it through the 'Bemote Kada' system. She said that what the officials did was not right because even though her son left, she had her niece with her and her son's land should have remained with them because of the additional member in the household. She said that she had applied to get more land when her niece joined her"

Weizero G said there are about 36 people who had been denied access to their land in the same manner as hers. The land were given to then officials of the KPA through the 'Mote Kada' arrangement despite the fact that the same land could have been transferred to the other additional members of the family i.e. those added to the household after the land distribution. The 36 people formed a group and took the case to the Bahir Dar Woreda court (as the case is beyond the level of the social and justice committee). The court ruled in their favor however the ex-KPA chairperson and other appealed so they did not get the land immediately. It was in this legal battle that the Derg government issued a law prohibiting the transfer of land between individuals. She explained that though their contenders were gratified, the 36 people appealed to the court arguing that as their case was pending when the law was issued the law should not affect it. The case is still pending and she said as the current government permits the transfer of land then they may have the chance of winning.

At community level, the two KPA are also disputing and in inhabited adjacent area. The disputable area is around Selassie church. The church is built on a mountain and lower than that there is this area where monks planted some coffee around the area. Most of the area is uninhabited. Both areas are claiming access to that land. Both claim that the area belonged to them even before the 1975 distribution and cite historical evidences. There was a recent clash when people from both KPA tried to cut trees from the uninhabited area. As the situation was above the capacity of the social justice committee the Woreda court was involved. The Woreda court tried to resolve the case by appointing 20 elders (10 from each KPA) to mediate the dispute and demarcate the boundary.

As some people explained all this conflict is just a cover up, the main issue is the people want to have the uninhabited land in their KPA so that if land re-distribution takes place then the people of KAP will have access to the land.

5.2.2. Disputes Related To Tree Cutting

The boundary instigated disputes also pertain to the issue of access to trees. As in most places, trees are to be cut under the permission of the KPA. Permission are given for cutting aged trees which pose the danger of toppling during strong wind and/or heavy rain and for construction of house of the owner of the tree. Moreover, at times of weddings and other big feasts people can get permission to cut the branches, though they ends up cutting the tree. However, as some informants disclosed, the practice is different as "as it seems everybody has obtained permission to cut trees." Though most trees are used as marking the boundary and for shading, can be subjected to cutting.

The gist of the dispute regarding tree cutting is related to cutting boundary marking trees or trees close to adjacent land are cut. In situations where the trees are boundary marking people fail to notify the adjacent land holder. Or cut the tree claiming it falls in ones boundary. Such disputes are treated in the same manner as the above mentioned land boundary related matters.

The other disputes related to tree cutting occurs when cut trees fall and destroys the neighbors coffee plants. In such instances, the tree can be confiscated by the victim or the offender can be fined to pay compensation for the coffee trees destroyed.

Case 8

Weizero D N is between 70-80 years of age and lives in Yiganda. She lives with 2 of her grand daughters as their mother i.e. her daughter died. She said she was mistreated in court and her Gesho plants were given to her bordering neighbor who falsely claimed part of her holding. As the boundary was not clearly marked they gave it to her neighbor. The Delays did not help in this regard they just demarcated and included her 10 Gesho trees within his boundary. Another neighbor who cut tree falling on the boundary and which destroyed her coffee trees. Again they said it is the neighbor's tree and they did not pay her compensation. In the first case her brother was to support her but he advised her to leave the case. "I am a woman I do not know how to go about such problems. Tewkut! Yeste Gef mechem, let the case rest, Ow! So much is done against women!"

5.3. Mechanism For Resolution Of Dispute

5.3.1. Traditional:

Shimgelina Menesat, having a case reviewed through elders council/assembly has been the traditionally dispute resolving method. The elders or the *Shimagelewoch*, may not necessarily be elders but men who the contenders select to review the case. In selecting the elders the disputants prefer to select individuals with whom they have good relation in hope that the person can influence or speak for the disputant or can help the assembly consider the situation of the disputant in reaching a decision.

As some elders disclosed in the olden days before the civil and criminal code of Ethiopia were developed, the administrators of Zege were the *Like red* and the *Meslene* who together with the elders and some community members addressed all sorts of disputes. This gradually changed with the development of the civil and criminal code, the *Atebia Dagna*, the (Judge of the vicinity) also types of administrators (they replaced those mentioned above), in some cases had the legal right to rule over such cases.

Currently, the elders in *Shimgelina* mediate and negotiate*. The elders review cases of social contention, stealing or domestic disputes between family members, spouses and friends/neighbors. Elders or *Shimagelewoch* (which can be priests, neighbors, relatives of the disputants) can play a central role in the dispute settlement process. The process of hearing a case or dispute through elders is called '*shimgilena menesat*'. In such cases the disputants will be

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- **NEGOTIATION:-** one of the distinguishing features that differentiates the two dispute settlement modes is the decision making process. In negotiation the decision making process does not call for the involvement of an authoritative third party. Rather the disputants play a significant role in reaching a joint decision. Yet, there is also the possibility that the mediator can have an important role in bringing the disputants to reach a joint decision. In general the role of the mediator in negotiations limited to facilitation of the process leading to joint decision. Describing the process of negotiation, Gulliver stated that :“It involves the exchange of information: alleged facts and proffered interpretation of them, argument, appeals to rules and values threat, promise, demand, often, counter offer and so no. The flow of information permits a continuous process of learning by each party about the requirement, preferences, expectation perceptions, attitude, feeling, strength and weakness of both the opponent and himself”[Gulliver, 1979:5].
 - **ADJUDICATION:-** the distinctive role of the third party is the integral element of the decision making process in adjudication. In this regard, decision is made by the third party. It involves “unilateral decision making” by the authoritative third party, which can be an individual or group of people. The role of the third party is usually approved or sanctioned by the community at large thus the authority is accepted.

summoned to have their case seen by elders of their choice. The elders in *Shimgelina* though they pass judgment they often attempt to negotiate and reconcile the disputants by asking and convincing them to make compromises.

There is no specific site allocated for the *Shimgelina*. They may decide upon the interest of the disputants or the elders. They can have it at one of the disputants plot, or around the church. It is usually under a tree shade outside the household. Disputants usually defend themselves, yet can also bring someone to speak for them or representing them to present the case eloquently.

The process commences with a short recital of prayer and appealing God to help the parties involved to be truthful and the elders pass be impartial. One of the elders will cite the prayer and the rest will respond will say Amen. The disputants the plaintiff will be given the chance to explain the offense and the defendant will follow suite. At times depending the level of disagreement and if the disputants exchange remarks they may be asked to present their argument separately. Presiding elders often require some time to discuss the case and forward their opinion.

5.3.2. *Social Justice Committee :*

This function as the local courts at the Kebele and KPA * level. The committee is recognized by the government and have links with the Woreda courts. There are 5 members in the committee: chairperson, secretary and three members. The members of the committee are elected by the people yet in most cases they are members of the current ruling political party. Ensuing their election, the members were given 15 days training at the farmers training institute to acquaint them with the legal procedures and civil code of Ethiopia. The committee convenes 6 times per month on some of the locally observed saint's days. However these days may not be kept as the

* In the Derg period: KPAs have assumed many of the functions of the old local administrative apparatus of the previous regime. It is the PA which is responsible for collecting taxes, resolving community conflicts, providing services and maintaining law and order. (pp. 14-16, quoted from Dessalegn Rahmeto (1985) Agrarian reform in Ethiopia. The Red Sea Press. Trenton, New Jersey.

committee may fail to convene due to KPA public meeting or administrative meeting in Bahir Dar or when all the members fail to attend. Such conditions prolong the litigation.

The committee commences by reviewing the application written by the plaintiff and issues a letter for the defendant to appear. The defendant will also submit written reply. After hearing the cases the committee usually persuades the disputants to go to *Shimgelina* as it relieves them from many responsibilities and helps to reconcile the dispute easily.

The social and justice committee is governed by the application of the legal tools. As mentioned earlier the training given to the members acquaint them with the relevant laws and conflict resolution procedures. However, the cultural tools or resources are also given due consideration as this committee also agitates disputants to initially solve their case through traditional means.

The different mechanisms of conflict resolution suggest the tools each utilize in the process. The traditional elders council of the process of *Shimgilena*, focuses on negotiation and makes use of people's religion, cultural norms and values. Values of peacefully co-existing, respecting one another and if possible compromising are stressed and used to mediate the conflict. To achieve the resolution people would stress kinship ties if the quarrel is between siblings or relatives both consanguinal or affinal.

With regard to the social justice committee, people may not get swift service. Cases linger on for months. It has the power to force the defendant and the plaintiff to appear on the set date. It can also take action if the disputant fails to abide by the law. It also gives individuals the opportunity to appeal to the higher court. However, members of the committee due to their political affiliation can hamper certain cases that reflect on the political issues.

5.4. Actors Involved In The Dispute Settlement

5.4.1. Priests, Community Elders: As in other types of disputes, the people living in the neighborhood will be aware of the dispute through their networks. These group of people will attempt to bring the disputants together and after hearing and carefully examining the area will appeal for one who is presumed to violate the situations to leave the space or land

which he assumed. Excepting theories the other can also be member of the elders committee which is ordered by the social justice committee.

5.4.2. Members of the Social Justice Committee: The social justice committee which is the government instituted body at the PA or Keble level is also another means for resolving disputes. The committee will usually hear the case and refer the disputants to the elders council. As mentioned earlier the members of the elders council are selected by both disputants so that the judgment will be free from bias. In cases where the dispute is over land boundary the court convinces the disputants to take their case to a *Shimagele* before they summon the *Deldays* to see the disputed area.

5.4.3. The Deldays: Currently, members of the *Delday* committee, assume important place in the settlement of land boarder dispute. As the *Deldalys* undertook the land distribution, it is assumed that they know or recall how the boundary was demarcated and hence show where the 'actual' boundary of the disputable land falls. It is also believed that they have a good know how to demarcate the land.

In this process, the disputing parties are expected to pay the *Deldays* nominal fee (per diem) of 3-5 Birr in acknowledgment of their effort and time to settle the dispute. Not only this they can also prepare *Talla* (traditional beer) and some *Kollo* or *Nefro* (boiled cereal such as corn, wheat or chick pea). The men usually go to a local bar after they finish the work. The members of the elders council also enjoy such privileges when they engage in dispute settlement process.

It is such kind of practices that some people say is a form of bribery. In actual fact, they said people start inviting the *Deldays* and elders to the local bars in Afaf to discuss the matter or to win the heart the *Deldays*. The *Deldays* tend to postpone or cancel appointments to show their importance and are constantly appealed by the disputing parties to measure the land. Such action of the *Deldays* is considered a sign to the disputants that they need to do more than delivering the court order to them.

5.4.5. The Woreda Court: is the court that handles various civil, criminal and social cases. though almost all land related are handled by the social justice committee, appeals on the decision of the committee is presented to this court. More importantly however, disputes between the communities (as mentioned earlier) is handled by the Woreda court.

The underlying causes of the present dispute over natural resources witnessed in Zege pertains to the issue of tenure and reflects on the issue of access to resources. The current turmoil is by enlarge instigated by: the land reform introduced in 1975, the manner it was handled and consequently the tenure insecurity it instituted ever since. As the land reform introduced new property regime, people were given usufruct rights over land and the right to transfer by sale, lease, mortgage, gift or inheritance was not allowed [Dessalegn 1993].

The issue of land allocation rested on the hand of the *Deldays*. In the absence of clear and specific guidelines distribution was subject to the their discrepancy. Further as the issue of land allocation has been highly politicized, the land allocating the committee was eventually endowed with unnecessary power. As a result, nepotism and favoritism began to govern the distribution which eventually endowed some people with more land and as depicted in cases 7 and 8 others remained with even less than their rightful claim.

Both the above discussed dispute resolution mechanisms yield their own advantages and disadvantages. The traditional means of resolving conflict through council of elders focuses on negotiation. Elders propagate peaceful coexistence and the cultural values of the people, traditional and religious all means are used to resolve the case.

The land reform introduced new land tenure arrangement in place of the traditional system. Land related issues are highly politicized and inflict implication on the government policies and administration and politics. In situations where the decision of the elders council will not ameliorate the underlying conditions and causes, their decision can be a mere trail. However,

elders council can mitigate the dispute by allowing the disputants to abstain from violent scenes. It brings into the scene the social fabrics and values of respect and maintaining a face saving act. Elders also emphasize compromise which again can create discontent and achieve only superficial negotiation. It also lacks the power which can be vital for solving the problem (at least in this case). It advises the disputants and presents the alternatives for solving the problem. Yet, if one becomes adamant (despite evidences of wrong doing), the council has no power, to implement measures required. The elders council in this case is subordinate to the government instituted body. *Shimgelina* however, can also solve disputes in relatively shorter period. It hence, saves time and cost. It utilizes informal and integral resources such as religion, cultural norms and values which help the disputants abide by the expectation of the society. Further the lack of punitive measures again encourages the people to accept their mistakes and also compromise and yield a lasting solution. On the other hand, can also encourage them to commit the same mistake after sometime.

From these observations and interviews it can be said that the *Deldays* still play an important role in the lives of the people. Though the *Deldays* say they remember the boundaries of each person and refer to the record book which has the size of the land holdings of the people during the 1975 land distribution. Despite such manner of working, the judgment of the *Deldays* can be open for bias. In most cases the decision of the *Deldays* is not challenged by the losing party unless they appeal to the Woreda court in Bahir Dar. It seems that the people totally rely on the judgment of these *Deldays* saying they know the boundary and pass a fair judgment after measuring the land with the rope. On the contrary, some say even though a person loses the case thinking and knowing it was unfair they stick to the decision of *Deldays* as they want to maintain peaceful relation with the disputing party and the community at large. Such explanation can be heard from women who say "well the elders and others said it will not mean that much if you lose this small land, it is worth living peacefully once the case is closed." Those that have attempted to appeal to the Woreda court have been discouraged as the court usually refers it back to the social and justice committee which handles the such cases at the KPA level. Others are fade up of the time it takes to resolve the case.

CHAPTER VI

Summary and Conclusion

6.1. Summary

Though the title of the thesis may give the impression that the theme of the research focuses on the cultivation of the coffee in Zege, rather the journey of "Zege and It's Coffee", gave an insight to the issue of natural resource utilization and livelihood situation of the people as it captures multitude of issues surrounding the cultivation of coffee.

The people of Zege dwell in uncertain environment whereby the physical setting is characterized by unpredictable but seemingly declining rainfall, and the threatening loss of forest coverage. Even though viewed from afar, Zege seems to give the camouflage impression as an area endowed with various natural resources, green fertile area and thick forest coverage, it is susceptible to such vagaries. Such surroundings expose the people to constant challenges and it is palpable to imagine and postulate the impact of such vagrant surroundings on the livelihood of the people and the household.

Exposed to such a volatile setting the coffee production which defines the main source of livelihood has come in a serious jeopardy. Aside from the natural setting and impact of the environment on coffee production, the resource management practices which by enlarge utilizes traditional implements may not mitigate the consequences of the dynamic environment.

Coffee, which is considered as the God given crop, is believed as destined to give life long production. Failure and/or decline of production is often attributed to natural catastrophes which are also taken as signs of God's ire. Despite such beliefs the impact of shortage of land due to population growth and the related tenure issues are also recognized by the people as the culprits for the poverty resulting from the declining

production. Concomitantly, such conditions result in an irregular or insecure income and thus constant struggle for the survival. Such conditions force households earn income from off-farm activities namely, trade and sale of fuel wood.

Coffee also raises the issue pertaining to the formation and relation within the domain of the household such as the division of labor, decision making and resource control. The cultivation of coffee brings the household members together to share the required tasks. Yet, on the contrary is the central focus of the disputes scenario for securing more coffee harvest or rescuing the coffee from seizure. This also raises the issue of power disparity and the challenges of the household in solving the dispute it encounters over accessing the natural resource based disputes. The various means of solving such disputes gives the alternative means of addressing the problem. Social as well as economic factors seem to have a crucial role in the resolution process.

Within the household, coffee lays the sphere of it's access and control based on the traditional gender based roles and responsibilities. Men are often the overall controllers of the harvest and women control the part of the yield assigned for a periodic household consumption. Marketing is in most cases (unless wholesale to merchants either in Zege or Bahir Dar) by enlarge the task of the woman and the cash obtained from the sale rests in the domain of the man.

The household is the basic production and consumption unit and plays a significant role in the society. In carrying out its role the household enter into various relationships. It is characterized by gender and age based division of labor which assigns various responsibilities to its members. Access to resources such as land, labor, cash/capital are vital for the survival of the household. As a result the joint effect of these availability of these resources is crucial in determining the economic status of the household.

In Zege, the household has been encountering several challenges which threaten its viability. Such challenges require it to utilize a range of resources and adapt to the changing scenarios.

Prior to the discussion of the overall findings and conclusion of the research it is vital at this juncture to recapitulate some of the major findings that emerged from the overall discussion.

6.1.1. Land tenure

Land tenure is one of the vital issues that cannot be ignored in the discussion of the livelihoods of the people of Zege. Land is a vital resource for the coffee based economy of Zege. It is the natural resource base and vital resource for the formation and development and sustenance of the household. Due to its essentiality, the people resort to any available means to procure land. As a result, they are often engulfed with constant struggle to attain secure land holding.

Access to land in the context of Zege can also refer to access to the coffee harvest. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, section 2.4. both in the individual and joint land holding systems, it is the total harvest that is split among family members (when they claim their share as in the case of marriage) or the group of people assigned to a particular joint land. It is only in few cases that the actual land holdings split among joint holders or deducted to a marrying child.

Land among other resources is also vital for the formation of the households. Its endowment and lack serves as a key factor in the stratification of the society. As presented in section three, the economic as opposed to social value of marriage necessitates the land endowment of the couples entering marriage. The youth that did not procure through the available means are subject to the capacity of the parents to allot part of the family holding or share the harvest of the coffee. Though the gathered data cannot

entirely validate it is assumed and suggested by some informants that the shortage of land has affected the number of marriages in the peninsula.

The generation disparity over land reallocation can be expounded by such circumstances where the land less youth are in constant demand for land, the currently endowed households desire to retain their plot they sustained for decades. It seems as a result of landlessness, these people resort to activities such as trade, daily labor work, and sale of fuel wood by purchasing standing trees from elderly members of the community who need the cash for living. This also have implication on the exasperation of the deforestation in the area.

Apart from the engagement of the youth in the deforestation the tenure insecurity instigated by the inconsistent manner of distribution and re-allocation of land and the euphoria of recent land re distribution had it's own share. The tenure insecurity observed can also expound the status of natural resources such as trees, land and coffee of the peninsula. In situations where land holders are not guaranteed of sustaining their holding people seem to have earn quick money from the trees that at times serve as shades for the coffee trees. Moreover, they have refrained from investing on their land by planting new coffee and tree seedlings.

The discussion on land also raised gender related issues in the society. Particularly in the manner of land allocation, which was characterized by inconsistencies of the application. Female headed households in this aspect have been marginalized and denied in some instances their rightful claims due to lack of know how and inability to manipulate opportunities to secure land.

As depicted in Chapter 2, sections 2.4 most of the discussions on land tenure reflected on the 1975 land distribution which have had long lasting impact on the lives of the people until present day. The incidents of inconsistent land allocation during the 1975 land distribution, has had a lasting effect on the different aspects of the lives of the people.

However, not only past experiences are of importance, but the current condition which is devoid of a mechanism to deal with the vagaries of past deeds, seems to exasperate the situation and yield unprecedented use of natural resources.

The bickering over small plots of holdings and coffee plants and trees is the common feature which can reflect on multitudes of issues. First, is the shortage of land due to the increasing population and absence of mechanism for addressing the issue of landlessness. Coupled with this is the absence, distortion and manipulation of the means of allocating land to secure more land. Second, pertains to the land holding system or arrangement whereby the creation of fragmented holdings which seemed to have entailed increase incidents of boundary based disputes. Likewise, the establishment of joint holding has resulted in more confusion and problem in sharing responsibilities and harvesting which curtailed people from investing on their land and indulge in frequent disputes over boundaries.

Third, is the issue of abuse of power, where the endowed attempt to grab land from the rightful users, as raised in Chapter 5, of the group of farmers and the KPA officials. Fourth, the disputes also reflects on the gender related issues whereby women often without supporters are liable to have their rights violated.

The land tenure issue also reflects on the issue of power relations. The *Deldays* who were the local authorities in land distribution, seem to have gained lasting privileges and power to influence land allocation. This has earned them an integral role in the land dispute settlement process. Such condition allowed them to enjoy various privileges in the society through this so called 'virtue' of differentiating boarders. Consequently, they seem to have created a sphere of dominance and ascertained their crucial position.

6.1.2. The Link With The Outer Areas :

Zege maintains close and regular relationship with it's surrounding. One of the conditions that link the peninsula with the neighboring areas is trade. The history of Zege is very much related with it's religious significance, coffee production, and trade and trade network. The role of women or perhaps their wide scale involvement however may not enjoy such rich historical background. It can be said that trade is also an example of the constant struggle for supporting the household. Such conditions also brought women to the sphere of trade, which presently can be identified as part and parcel of a woman's chores.

The coffee dominated production activity of the peninsula requires it to exchange it's produce with the other farming areas or grain cultivating areas to obtain the basic necessities for the household. Although this kind of exchange is not endemic to Zege, the role of the people as traders and farmers exemplifies some of the unique features of the people. The location of the peninsula facilitated it's vital role in the exchange activities whereby the produce of the farming areas and the commodities of the urban area seem to be facilitated through the *Zegegnas* particularly the women in the market of Zege.

The presence of an urban center in close proximity of the peninsula has had multitudes of effects. The major role of Bahir Dar as a host of some modern services has attracted most of the young generation in search of education facilities for their academic endeavors and employment opportunities. Moreover, it also serves as platform for trade and market services or in other words as exchange and consumption center. In this regard, as most evidences from testimonies revealed, the growth of the Bahir Dar created a favorable and constant market for fuel wood supply from Zege. In the case of Zege, sale of wood also provides swift and larger cash income for all the parties involved.

6.1.3. Religion

In viewing the socio cultural factors and issues of adaptation, the role of religion in natural resources was highlighted. Religion seems to play a significant role in the management and utilization of natural resources in Zege, the role of religious holidays, ban on animal breeding and it's implication on the coffee cultivation has been discussed on the previous sections. Yet, despite such religious teachings and the unavailability of crucial resources such as grazing area, people are willing to undertake such an activity.

6.1.4. New Development Interventions

The emergent new organizations and trends are also introducing new phenomena in the overall coffee production system. Whilst on the hand it seems that the instituted credit services and introduction of modern inputs have had some impacts yet seems to have more consequences in the future. Such occurrences will have a trickle down effect on the stratification of the society as it can alter affect the issue of access to resources.

6.2. Conclusion

From the outset, this research was dedicated to investigating the underlying factors that further elucidate the manner of natural resource utilization. In this regard, it was believed that, focusing on the livelihood of the people would capture the challenges people encounter and hence reflect on and shed light on issues of natural resource utilization. Further, by recognizing the truth as mentioned by Ahmed and Mlay [1994:1] that "environment does not exist as sphere separate from human actions, ambitions" or that people do not exist as tabula rasa devoid of the ability or capacity to shape their environment, attention was given to the process or issue of adaptation amidst the dynamic and uncertain surrounding of the people of Zege.

The focus on the livelihood situation as presented in the preceding section touches upon different systems or contexts that affect people and their living situation as they are part of the wider context. Accordingly, in the attempt to grasp a better understanding of the overall situation, the study disregarded a single factor based analysis of the problem or in other words did not attempt to analyze the problem in isolation.

In so doing, it has been the concern of the research to portray how these different contexts affect the issue of natural resources utilization. As reviewed in section 1.2. the ecosystem approach allows to regard a situation by portraying the various systems. It also allows to capture the feedback of the various systems on each other. However, the approach's fails to capture the changes outside the system, due emphasis on the population as opposed to the individual and ignoring wider regional links outside the issue of concern. As Ellen mentioned [1990:220], issues pertaining to trade links and exchange are excluded which decline the validity of the approach to be use in this analysis.

The conceptual framework of Vayda's progressive contextualisation [1990:267], captures and portray the complex interrelated issues surrounding the discussion on the natural resource utilization and livelihood situation of the people concerned. It permits the

unraveling of the systems or in the course of the study which helps to retain a holistic perspective in the analysis. As Manger mentioned, it allows to link and analyze the dynamics at the different levels and "to treat a human population as commensurate with other ecological units with which they interact." [Manger et al. 1996:34].

Further to this, in order to capture the human response to these systems, attempt has been made to focus on the issue of adaptation. The focus on the adaptation responses will also elucidate the process and the related decisions and mechanisms of change involved and on the whole the role of individuals in shaping their environment.

In order to comprehend the existing natural resource utilization in Zege different contexts or systems need to be understood. Not only the separate analysis yields a thorough understanding but the relation and effect of one system on the other is also of vital importance.

Land, coffee, and trees represent the vital resources on which most household depend upon. Land is scarce and degraded, it seems there is no sanctioned system in place to address the pressing land shortage issue. Such condition leads people to dispute over accessing it.

The overall government tenure and policies including regional and regional policies regarding land allocation and reallocation seem to circulate around the issue of land shortage and problem and absence of effective means of addressing the current problem. This clearly portrays the effect of macro policies on micro level realities. It has shown the trickledown effect on local situations particularly on the formation, development and sustainability of the household. The exasperation of land related disputes and it's implication on the destruction of trees and forests can also be seen in this terms.

The other is the utilization of trees or forests. Tree or fuel wood selling has been practiced as some disclosed, has been intense since the hail storm of the 1970. It has been shown

that despite the viability of the trees to the coffee plants for shading, people still resort to unprecedented use of these resources due to the need to earn complimentary income.

The influence of the outer world on Zege and the natural resources should also be considered in the discussion of deforestation. The growth and expansion of Bahir Dar town and it's demand for fuel wood has implication on the status of tree coverage of the peninsula. Bahir Dar offers an important and sustained market for the fuel wood of Zege and for the *Zegegnas* engaged in this activity it means a short term economic significance due to the swift cash income.

Hence, the situation of deforestation needs to be understood in such a perspective and solely accusing the people of Zege for the destruction of the forest does not seem to be validated. Rather, the situation needs to be perceived in conjunction with the demand of the rapidly developing urban center, which has equal responsibility. However, the dilemma of the situation is the willingness of the *Zegegnas* to put themselves under more vulnerable position in the future due to deforestation which is damaging for the coffee plants. This can be a result of the pressing need of the household to survive the currently pressing situation and also a reflection of the tenure insecurity. The uncertainty of keeping holding in the future and for the landless youth who undertake the cutting and selling it means a way of life.

Similar explanation si also forwarded by Ege, [1990] in his study of land tenure system.

He stated:

If a peasant misuses the land it may be lack of knowledge or due to socio-political structures which makes over exploitation a rational choice or to poverty which forces him to squeeze the land even through he realizes that he and his children will suffer the effects in the future... Teaching the use of trees will not have much effect on the peasants so long as they risk to lose any significant plot of land planted with trees. Understand the conditions of the peasant is a prerequisite for solving the problem [1990:226].

The role of religion has been depicted and raises the issue of adaptation. Living in such an uncertain conditions forces the household to search for income earning means to sustain it's life even if it seems to override certain religious prohibition. In such contexts, it seems such religious ban are ignored as the number breeders seems to be on the rise. This spells the changes occurring in the society where new modes of production threatening to the age old cultivation of coffee is on the rise. However, the recent practice of sheep breeding pertains to the issue of adaptation. The remark of informants "*buun alset ale, sewu beza, chegeru bitena, nurwen lemedegef lemoker belo new sewu bege marbat yejemerw*" , meaning, "the coffee would not yield, the number of people (population) is growing, the poverty is increasing so people needed to support their life, it is with such intention people resorted to sheep breeding." Such testimonies depict people's constant strife for survival, an attempt to adapt to some favorable condition in the face of the challenges and changes encountered.

Trade is also one of the mechanisms for mitigating the household income which is or supposed to be by enlarge dependant of the coffee harvest. But in a situation where the anticipated yield is not procured, the means to survival is in this regard involve in trade. Trade also widens the networks of the traders in this regard women and offers a wider market for the produce of Zege

Related to this the introduction of the new modern agricultural inputs instigated by the non governmental organization and the possible intervention of the governmental organizations in the same type of operation. Such initiatives view and attempt to address the problem from certain points of view. The acquaintance and the provision of such services though it is benefiting certain households , on the other hand it is also creating conditions that further widen the gap or social differentiation. On the other hand, the introduction of some fruit seedlings and vegetables in the program can provide families to diversify their economy and offer resources that facilitate generation of income form the sale. However, the future impact still remains to be seen.

On the whole the combined/overlapping effect of the policy on access to resources, market, and related urban pressure, jointly explain the state of the natural resource utilization in Zege. The problems related to the uncertainty or irregularity and declining yield has forced them to search for means of survival which can have important role in sustaining the household. It is vital to take in to account all the related contexts in which a problem is situated in, to grasp a better understanding or even in when anticipating possible intervention to mitigated the situation.

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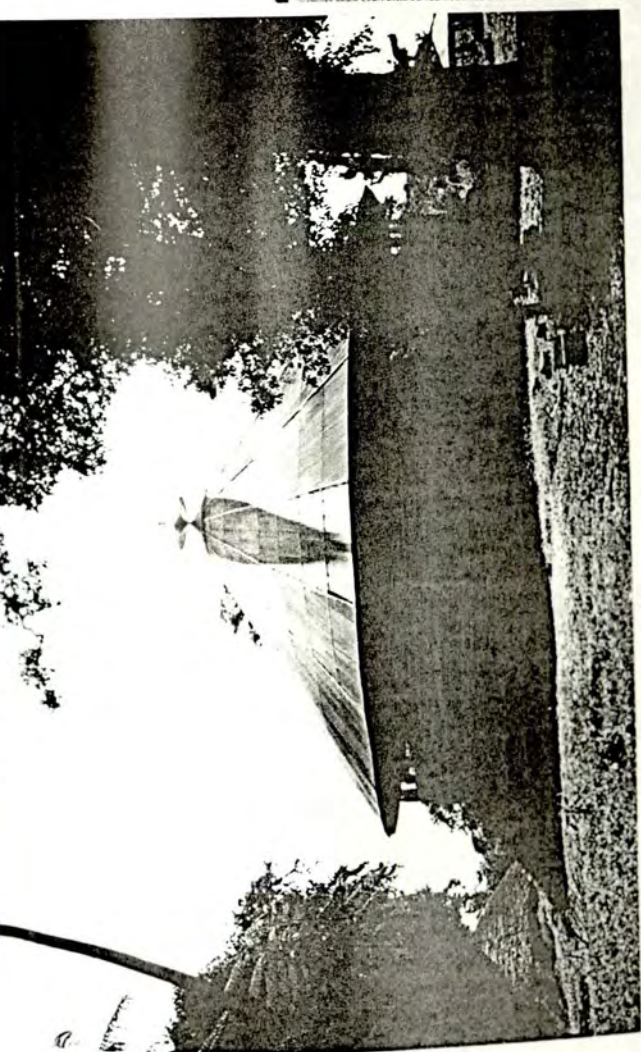
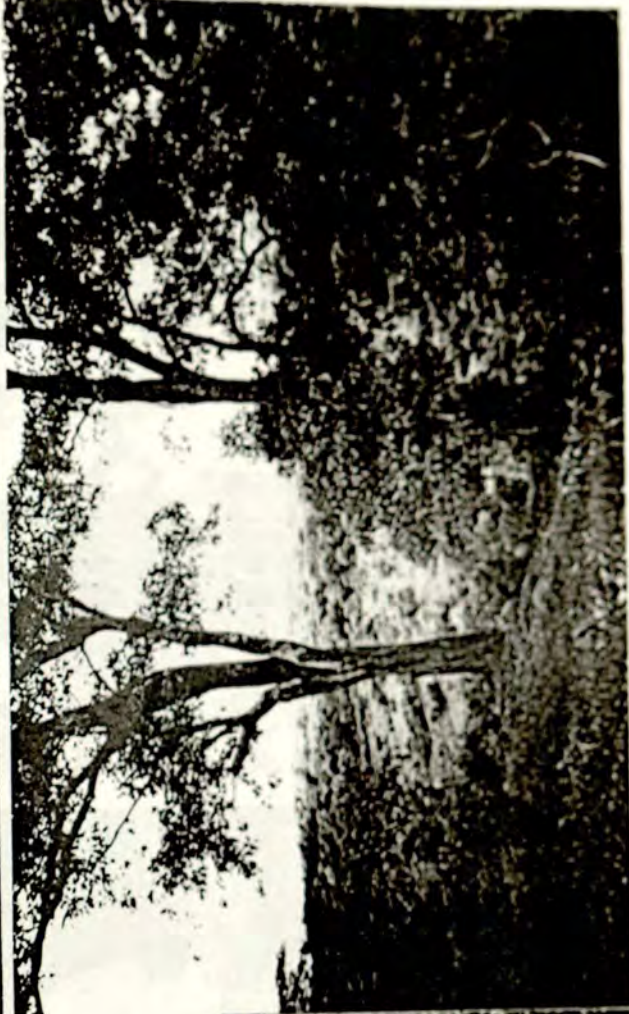
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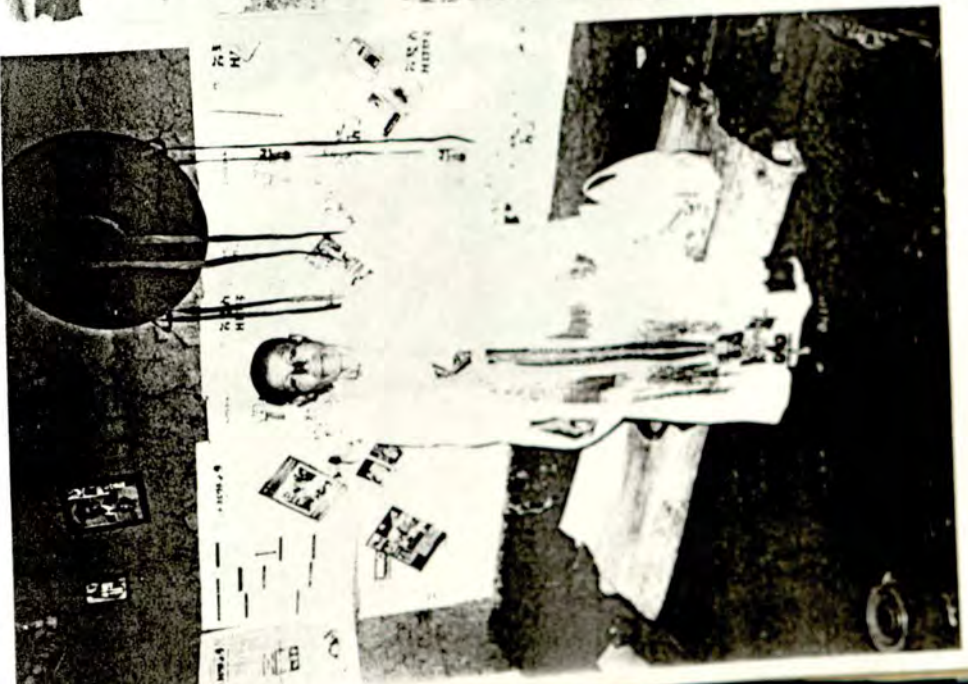
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Zegengans



Woman Sloughing Coffee

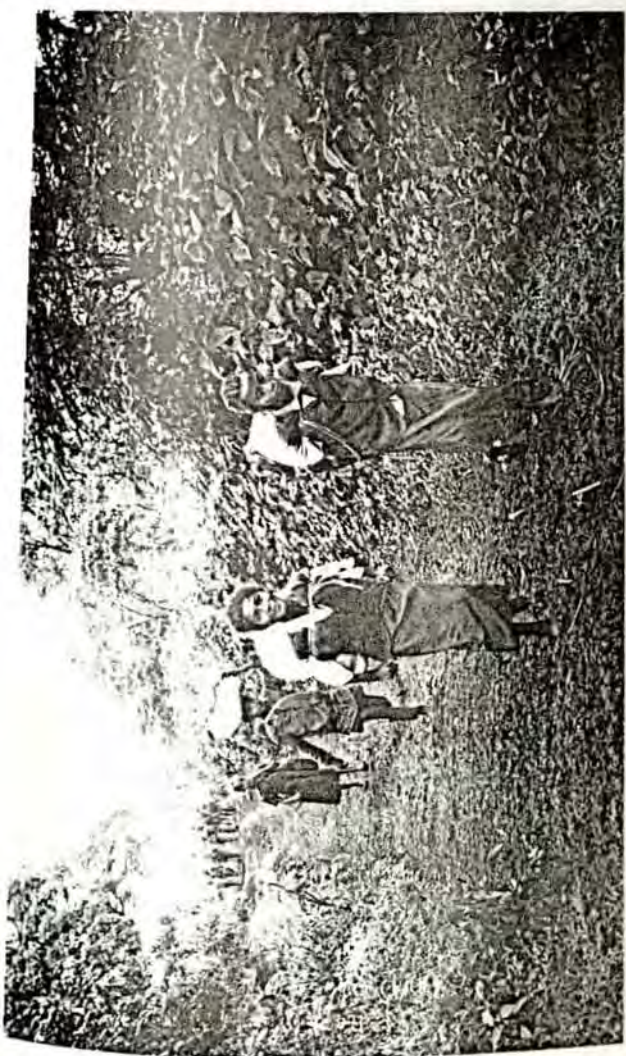


*Women On The Way To The
Market, Carrying Coffee*



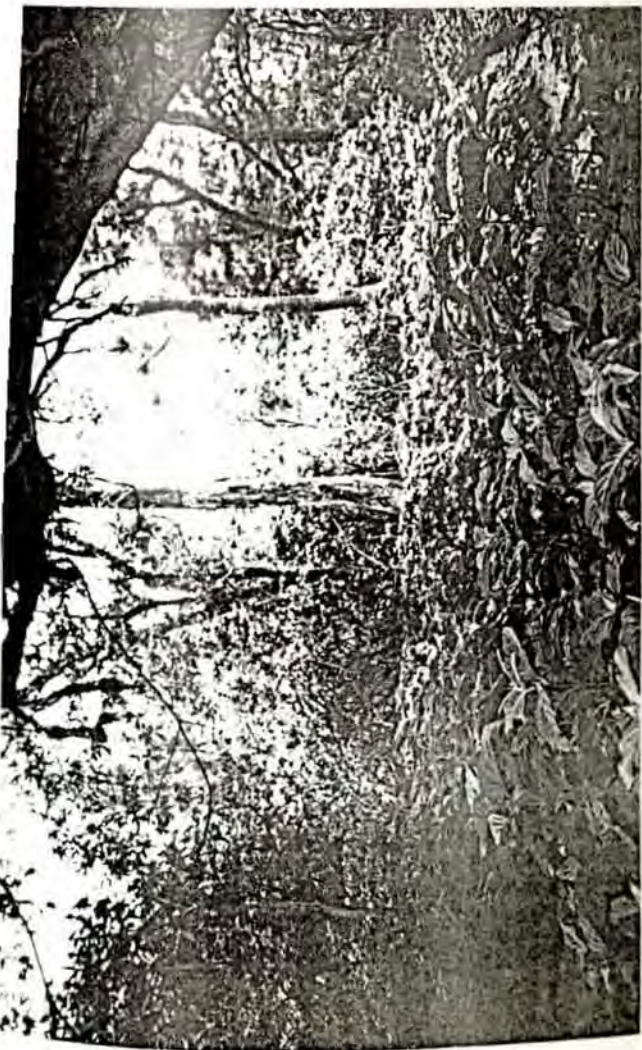


Community Members Clearing





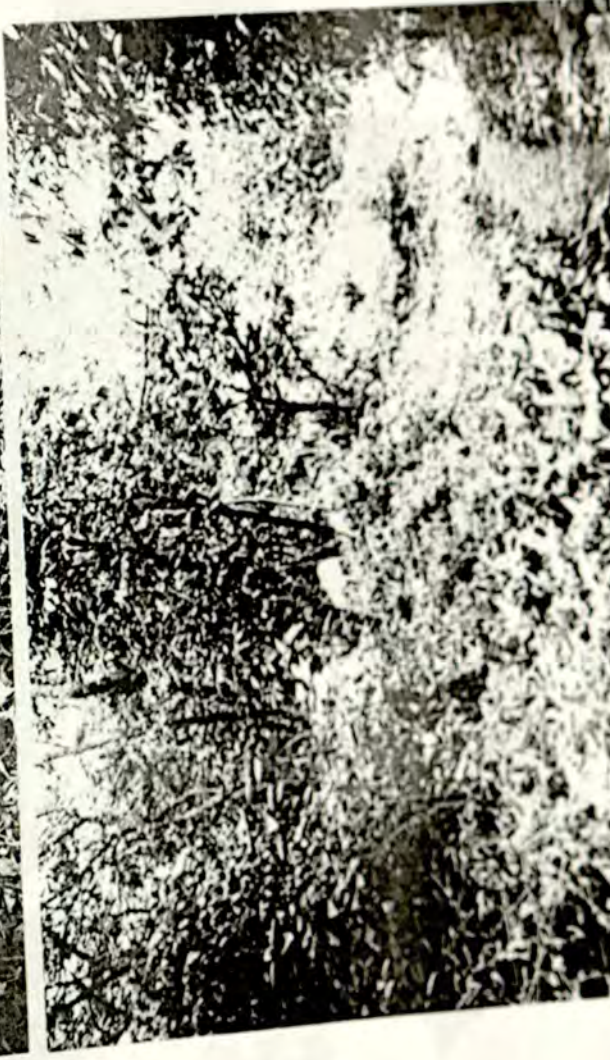




coffee trunk destroyed by sheep



Loose sheep in the field





*Madega - Used For
Dividing/Measuring Harvested
Coffee*





Wood Log To Be Transported



DECLARATION

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

Name: Rahel Mesfin Leikun

Signature: Rahel Mesfin

Place and date of submission: Sociology and Social Administration
Addis Ababa University
September , 1999