ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

PRODUCTION PRACTICES AMONG THE ALABA OF SOUTH ETHIOPIA

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Production Practices Among the Alaba of South Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an effort to describe agricultural production practices of Alaba society in the South Ethiopia from local perspective and comprehend the overall changes that the subsistence economy underwent over time.

Since land is a principal factor of production among Alaba, major land tenure systems were described from diachronic perspective and an attempt was made to explicate the changes that have been experienced under different political contexts starting from pre-incorporation period up to the current trends over land tenure issues. Simultaneously, the gradual shift of production system from agro-pastoral to mixed agriculture was explained as resulted from the inter-play of social, economic, natural, political and demographic factors which are attributed to be both internal and external to the study group. In this thesis it is argued that local land acquisition practices change with increasing population growth and the subsequent land scarcity as the response of households to the prevailing land shortage problem. An attempt was made to elucidate the responsiveness of land acquisition practices to population growth.

As discussed in this thesis, labor is crucial production factor among Alaba. Hence, both household and inter-household labor organizations are described. Here the way a household organizes its labor through age and gender based division of tasks in production process is discussed. Though households act as independent production units, there are different inter-household labor exchange practices used as a coping strategy to ease land, labor and farm ox scarcity by households in short of these production factors. Thus, diverse inter-household exchange practices were presented in line with changes experienced as a result of various socioeconomic reasons.

Seasonal crop production activities and aspects of livestock rearing are discussed with the view of assessing the way farmers organize factors of production and undertake agricultural activities to secure their subsistence. A socioeconomic importance of crop and livestock production is also elucidated to high light their diverse role in the livelihood of the study people. Besides, major production constraints related with demographic, ecological, socio-cultural and economic factors and aspects of local coping strategies to these problems were treated as way of analyzing the changing trends in the production system. As argued in this thesis though the people adopted different coping strategies to overcome production constraints, the subsistence economy is increasingly becoming susceptible to stress which calls for external intervention.

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GLOSSARY

Aboroso Household

Ajaba An event or ceremony whereby a bride accompanied with the song of her best friends appear in local market just few days before wedding ceremony

Balabat A person occupying local level administrative position under Imperial regime government structure(Amharic term)

Baddat Grazing land

Buluko Locally made cotton blanket

Boki Ogate Village or lineage level council

Boki moricho Lineage or village elder's council leader

Boku Lineage

Dawa Festive labor party (formed of 10-15 individuals)

Debbo Clan

Debbo Ogate Clan level council

Debbo moricho Clan level council leader

Dora Compartment within a hut prepared for new couple to spend honey moon period

Elfigna The largest festive labor party among Alaba

Erifo Gift giving or promising ceremony to a bride

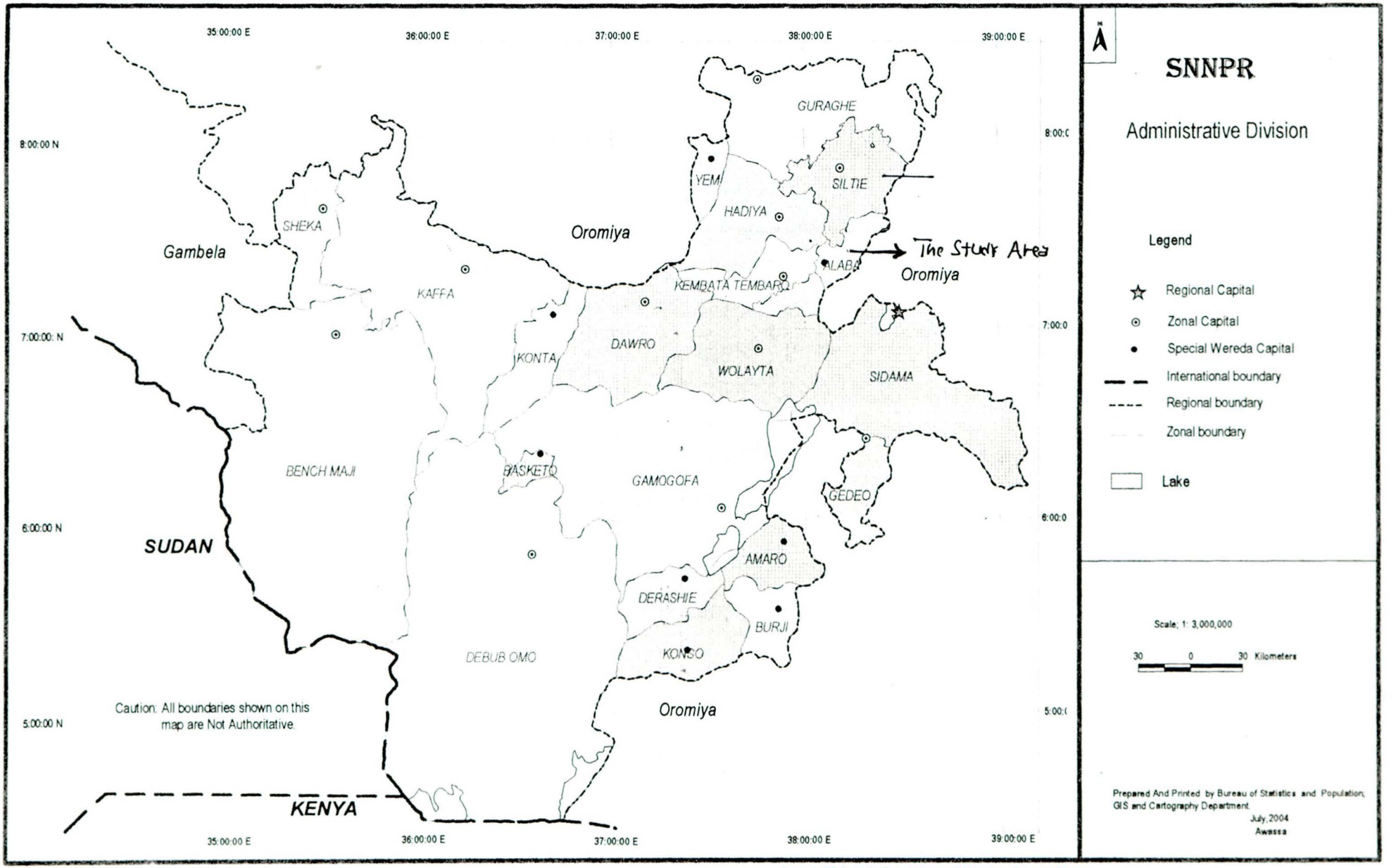
Furso Locally brewed alcoholic drink

Fuga	Pot makers (*migrant* marginalized groups)
Gebera	Bride wealth
Gegera	Machete usually used for harvesting maize and sorghum
Getit	Backyard
Goba assu	Teaming up farm ox usually practiced to overcome shortage of ox.
Goba hiru	Accessing farm ox on contract/cash basis for specific production period
Gossu	Abduction
Geza	Reciprocal labor exchange party
Herana	Elopement
Hongano	Vulnerable persons who are in need of assistance
Jalla	A best person or intimate friend
Kelta	A hoe with wooden handle and iron tip
Kabancho	Share cropper
Kabe	Share-cropping
Kafate	Foreyard
Karmet	Crop field
Kilancho	Witch
Maasisu	Arranged marriage
Mine	Hut
Ogate	Elders council
Rage	Widow inheritance type of marriage
Ragga	A person with special social and religious merit
Sera	Social rule defined by the local culture

Shameta	Local drink made of sorghum flour
Tebot	A cup locally made from clay to drink milk or *shameta*
Wolkata uchu	Begging labor service for production activities

ACRONYMS

A.M	Anti-Meridian
a.s.l	Above sea level
EPRDF	Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front
Ha	Hectare
KA	Kebele Administration
PA	Peasant Associations
P. M	Prime Meridian
SNNPRS	Southern, Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State
SP	Special Woreda



Source: CSA, 1994 Population and Housing Census Maps.



Sketch: The Location of the Study KA in Alaba Special Woreda

Source: Alaba Special Woreda Agriculture Department Office (2013)

CHAPTER ONE

I.NTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem

It is possible to say that Alaba is among the least studied group in the south. With regard to written history, little is known about Alaba except some works merely mentioning the group as they describe the history of the south in general and Sidama/Hadiya cluster in particular. The same is true of anthropological studies. According to Braukamper (1973:35) historians face handicap to reconstruct the history of Alaba. Only very few reliable materials are available for the past of this group.

The works of Braukamper (1973), Ernest Ceruli (1956) and Trimingham (1952) give scanty information on Alaba as they touch upon the history of south. Besides, oral traditions are the major sources for the past of the group.

It is very recently few studies appeared on Alaba. With regard to anthropological work. Seyoum Mengistu (2001) studied inter ethnic resource competition and conflict on the border area with Arsi Oromo focusing on the inter-group relation. But, it does not give sufficient information about the Alaba. Though not from anthropological perspective, Bahiru Shikure(2001) also studied state of girl's education among the Alaba.

Evidently, socio-cultural life of Alaba in general and production system in particular is the least studied so far and needs intense investigation from anthropological view point. Given such big gap, it is of great importance and justifiable to conduct a study of this kind among this group.

Like many other groups in the country, the people of Alaba are subsistence agricultural producers dependent on rain fed crop production and livestock farming for their livelihood. Maize, *teff*, finger millet and sorghum are major cereal crops produced in the area. Pepper as a major cash crop of the area is widely grown by farmers to secure additional income to supplement their subsistence economy. Side by side with crop production, animal husbandry is also important component of their subsistence.

In relative terms, the self supportive production system is not as it was before. Nowadays, the subsistent economy of Alaba is suffering a lot from complex and interrelated socioeconomic and natural

factors. During the last decade susceptibility of the production system to diverse problems is manifesting itself through recurrent food shortage. To cope with production problems, the people tend to develop and devise various strategies.

This study, therefore, attempts to investigate mainly crop production practices and aspects of livestock farming, the social organization of production and changes therein, aspects of the diverse production constraints encountered at grass root level and the coping strategies employed to ease the production constraints. Here, as anthropological contribution generally an effort was made to comprehend the subsistence economy from local perspective.

1.3 Objectives of the study

1.3.1 General Objective of the Study

Generally the study is envisaged to comprehend production system of Alaba and analyze changes it under went over time focusing on the following particular area.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives of the Study include:

- To provide basic information on local level production practices and dynamism with in it focusing mainly on crop production and aspects of livestock farming;
- To describe land tenure systems over time and traditional household's land use taxonomy;
- To examine inter-household scarce production resource acquisition practices i.e. land, labor and capital (farm ox);
- To discuss household level labor organization and different inter household cooperative work arrangements in production activities and changes there in and;
- To deal with aspects of production constraints and local coping mechanisms

1.4 Methodology

Following the tradition of anthropologists, the study was conducted at village level in Gedeba, one of the rural Kebele Administration of Alaba Special Woreda. The field work of the research was undertaken for a total of three months in the said locality. The first round field work was undertaken from Mid August up

to end of September, 2004. The second round field work was undertaken from mid February to the end of March, 2005.

This study is primarily of qualitative type and used mainly primary data sources. Major methods employed to gather pertinent data for the study were:

Observation: the researcher participated in general life of the study group and observed the day- to-day socio-cultural and economic activities of the people and the physical setting focusing in Gedeba. It is also worth mentioning that the researcher's prior acquaintance with the culture and competence in local language was additional advantage that contributed positively for smooth communication and better understanding of the study locality. This enabled to create ample opportunity for easy going interactive environment and informal discussions throughout the field work. Though the researcher is familiar with the study setting, an attempt is made to underplay a negative effect of doing research in ones' own society like taking some important issues for granted. Besides, competence in local language also helped to avoid any suspicion and expectation of community members through on spot clarification and discussion on the purpose of the study. Labor party, marriage and funeral ceremony, seasonal agricultural activities, market setting and elder's meetings were some of the socioeconomic events attended during the three month field work.

Key informants: Intensive and lengthy interview was conducted with a total of 30 key informants with valuable knowledge and experience to adequately comprehend the socioeconomic life of the people. Community members of different age, sex, economic and social category, Kebele Administration leaders, elders and clan leaders, Development Agents of Agriculture office were intensively consulted so as to obtain pertinent data. Crop cultivation practices including land preparation, ploughing, weeding, harvesting and threshing, livestock rearing, labor organization at household and village level, production constraints and local coping strategies and production resource acquisition practices including land, labor and farm ox were major areas of data collection and focus of in-depth interview. Most of the data on oral tradition and the past life of the study group, marriage, religion and beliefs, local governance etc were obtained from the senior elders of the land known for possessing pertinent information about Alaba society, culture and their past in general.

Focus Group Discussion: Small group discussion was conducted with men and women separately each consisting of six members. The discussion enabled to easily acquire information on issues that need group idea and consensus. A data obtained from the dialogue and hot discussion among the participants was used to supplement, validate, triangulate and refine the field data acquired with other tools.

Structured Interview: Structured interview was conducted with different Woreda Sector Office representatives to obtain important data about the study area and group. The interview was undertaken with Woreda Information, Agriculture Development and Administration Offices in order to grasp the socio-cultural and economic profile of the study area. Moreover, among the government bodies Woreda Information Office showed special interest in the research and facilitated data collection process at the specific study locality, Gedeba, through provision of transportation facility and facilitation of KA leaders' and informants' collaboration. The Kebele Administration Leaders also provided necessary assistance throughout my field work.

As part of secondary data sources, the study made use of historical materials, relevant books and studies, different government office reports and other literature related to the study.

1.5 The Choice of Research Site

The major reason to conduct this study on the target people is availability of very limited anthropological study as highlighted in the problem statement part above. Apart from this, with in the given time frame work and limited financial resource the researcher felt the inconvenience to conduct a study of this kind in unfamiliar culture and environment. Thus, the study area is chosen partly because the researcher's acquaintance with the people and prior knowledge of the culture and language as a resident in the area for long time.

Gedeba Kebele Administration is selected as a specific area of study for the following major reasons. Firstly, it well represents the study area in terms of the agro ecological situation and production practices for all of the Woreda falls with in mid high land. Secondly, the location is strategic and relatively central to meet with elders coming from different corners of the area. Thirdly, the Kebele Administration was one of the residential sites of the religious leader (*Sheckoch*) of Alaba. Moreover,

Alaba's traditional elders council head residence is also found with in the vicinity of the area and the PA is also partly inhabited by Sidde, the 'senior' clan of Alaba. Fourthly, Gedeba is situated near to the oldest and biggest market of Alaba land. Besides, in the KA there are two primary schools and water supplying borehole.

1.6 Specific Research Site Setting

Gedeba, a specific research Kebele Administration (KA), is one of the 73 rural KAs in Alaba Special Woreda(ASW) located in the southern part of the area.

Gedeba acquired its name following the border conflict with the neighboring Arsi Oromo during the time of early settlement in the area. Locally Gedeba means 'border' referring the demarcation of land to avoid sporadic conflict between the two groups. Following the historical incidence, the PA was named Gedeba in 1975 when the PAs were formed as the lowest government administrative unit throughout the country under military regime.

Gedeba shares boundary in the north with Lenda KA, in the south with Mekala KA, in the east with Kufe KA and in the west with Wanja and Kulito. Gedeba KA is consisted of five villages, namely, Sidde, Wushira, Negate, Denebe and Shagidira. The topography of the area is generally plain and susceptible to flood during the rainy season.

According to the data of Woreda Agriculture Development office, the KA is inhabited by 640 households of which 15 are female headed. The total land mass of the KA is estimated to be 790 hectares.

As a major source of subsistence cereals mainly maize, *teff*, millet and sorghum are grown by farmers in the area and Pepper as cash crop is produced by most farmers. Besides, livestock rearing is widely practiced economic activity side by side with crop production.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The study serves two purposes. The first one is its contribution to record and add knowledge on the study group on which there is critical shortage of anthropological study and it is also addition to limited peasant studies in the country. Secondly, it is believed to give a ground for practical actions aimed at

improving the living condition of the target people. Thus, the study gives an idea for those interested decision making bodies by surfacing out the socio-cultural organization of the society in general and local level production practices and constraints in particular.

CHAPTER TWO

2. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL LITRATURE REVIEW

This section gives a highlight on important concepts related to peasant economic organization. Thus concepts like production, consumption, household, factors and social organization of production are treated briefly. Following, the theoretical framework of the study is overviewed focusing on formalists, substantivists and Chayanov's arguments regarding economic behavior of peasants as they bear practical relevance for the study.

2.1 Conceptual Literature Review

2.1.1 Production Organization of Peasants

> *Economic institutions comprise the characteristic behavior that center upon production, the allocation and distribution, and the use and consumption of goods. Economic institutions include behavioral networks of food production and the manufacture of artifacts; gift exchange, trade, sale, preemption, and inheritance; utilization, hoarding, and consumption; and ownership, possession, and rights of use-everything which focuses upon production and utilization of goods and services (Hoebel in Kraft 1996: 181).*

Production as an aspect of economy is viewed as "human activity that procures or increases the value of resources" (Wilk and Netting 1984:6). It is also transformational process that organizes humans and tools in the process of procurement of resources to meet the society's need of subsistence.

According to Marx, the development of society is the result of the continual productive interaction between men and nature. The production and reproduction of life is both necessity directed by the biological needs of the human organism and, more importantly, the creative source of new needs and capabilities. Thus productive activity is "at the root of society in both an historical and an analytical sense. Production is the first historical act; and the production of material life is a fundamental condition of all history, which today, as thousands of years ago, must daily and hourly be fulfilled merely in order to sustain human life " (Giddens 1971: 35).

Describing constituent elements and relations in peasant production system, Baker (1989: 45) says that elements in peasant farm include a group of people, a living space, a set of tools, and some plots of

land. The key relationships are ties uniting the group, property rights giving access to land and tools, a work regime which organizes the group's labor on the land and using the tools, and a method for allocating the product of the work. In addition there is a set of more or less intensive exchanges with external markets and ties of control and participation with external powers. The productive resources or factors of production under the managerial control of small holder farmers can conveniently be classified under the headings of land, labor and capital -livestock, seed, farm implements and other required items of production (Barker 1989, Upton 1996).

A household is taken as the basic unit of production under peasant economy. According to Shanin (1971: 21) peasant households form the nuclei of peasant society. "The nature of the peasant household constitutes the most significant single characteristics of peasantry as a specific social phenomenon and gives rise to the generic features displayed by peasantries all over the world". A peasant household is characterized by the extent of integration of the peasant family's life with its farming enterprise. Similarly, household is viewed as productive, reproductive, consumptive and co-residential unit (Wilk and Netting 1984 7-22).

Explaining features of household in peasant society, Nakane (1967:1) said that in agrarian community a household has particularly important function as a distinct body for economic management. "A household is normally formed by, or around, the nucleus of an elementary family, and may include relatives and non-relatives other than these immediate family members". Its composition varies according to the specific situation, such as the stage in the cycle of the domestic family, and the economic situation of the household. In a peasant community it is the household, not family or kin group that forms the basic social organization.

Unlike in industrial society, in peasant farming there is a large over lap in three distinct functions of production, consumption, and reproduction. As producers, peasant farmers mix labor and other inputs with land to create goods for home consumption (use values) and for sale (exchange values). As consumers, peasant farmers make use of the food, housing, clothing, and other goods they themselves produce, and they purchase goods in local and long distance trade. As reproducers, peasant farming units, particularly their women members, create and rear children to take their place in the production system and in the society (Barker 1989:56).

2.1.2 Social Aspects of Production Organization

According to Marx, in production, men not only act on nature but also on one another. They produce only by cooperating in a certain way and mutually exchanging their activities. In order to produce they enter in to definite connections and relations with one another and only within these social connections and relations does their action on nature, does production takes place (Giddens 1971: 35).

Thus, besides material aspect, production has a social dimension. Common to all economic system is that economies make use of some forms of natural resources (land, water ways, minerals) human co-operation (division of labor) and technology (tools, and knowledge of production or acquisition processes). Each of these features is structured and has social rules specifying rights and obligations to use tools, natural resources and division of labour (Dalton 1969: 63). But these rules of social organizations of production are not static, rather they are dynamic. There is no question that the organization of production is affected by cultural rules, codes, and the division of labor with in society. It has to be recognized that these rules are flexible and changeable and that people will adopt their task-groups and social spheres of production to specific requirements of particular task (Wilk and Netting, 1984:7).

Economic activity derives its meaning from the norms of the society, and people engage in economic activity for rewards often extrinsic to economy itself. "In peasant and 'primitive' societies the norms and values used to define a resource, a commodity, a control over certain goods and services, the distributive process, and standards of economic behavior are norms governing most social interaction". The economy is not so structurally differentiated that one set of values holds there and other sets hold in other contexts. The economy is 'embedded' in other social system and does not exhibit an ethic counterpoised to the regnant value system (Nash, 1968: 359).

Thus, production is built around certain integrating principles. According to Kottack (1997: 75) in non-industrial societies, a kin based mode of production prevails, and production is personal. The relations of production are aspects of continuous social relations. One acquires rights to resources through membership in bands, descent groups, villages and other social units, not impersonally through purchase and sale. Labor is also recruited through personalities. Work is merely one aspect of social

relationships that expressed in a variety of social and ceremonial contexts. Similarly, it is argued that in production process peasants pull labor from a wide network of community and kin relations, spread risks through mutual support relations, and invest for security and prestige in cattle and in wider social commitments (Barker, 1989: 52).

The social organization of production might be built around other principles as well. Kinship is just one of the ways in which peasants structure interfamily ties within the production process. Some are formal, such as fictive kinship, cast, associations, and ties based upon common residence. Others are informal-friendship, neighborliness, and particularly the dyadic ties which are coming to be recognized as so important in many peasant communities-but no less effective in contributing to the functioning of village life. In some peasant societies, all these social patterns are utilized; in others only a few are stressed, to the neglect of others (Diaz, May and Potter, 1967: 156).

In sum, the web of interpersonal relations, values governing economic sphere and socio- economic rules that spell out access and use of resources, constitute important aspects of the social organization of production in peasant society.

2.2 Theoretical Literature Review

Different approaches have been developed to explain economic behavior of peasants. Among these the substantivists, formalist and Chayanov's peasant theory are presented for their particular importance in their focus on individual actor as maximizers, institutional and social factor and subsistence motivated peasant production respectively which bear practical relevance for the purpose of this study.

Formalists like Firth, Robbins, and Cook argued that any economic system can be seen as the result of market principle, reflecting the collective effects of maximization by individuals. Substantivists, on the other hand, following Polanyi, assumed that this axiom of neoclassical economics is applicable only to market economies, not to those dominated by redistribution or reciprocity (Prattis 1973, Seymour-Smith 1986)

Polanyi (1986-1964) argued that there were two different meanings of the word economics. "The formalist meaning was that which had become central to neoclassical economics-maximizing utility in

situation of resource scarcity". However, in its 'substantive' sense, "economics was simply the study of how society makes use of resources to secure its existence". According to him the latter meaning suites better for anthropologist's view of economics. He did not reject the importance of the formalist meaning. On the other hand, he stressed the appropriateness of the formalist sense more to the study of industrial society. Such societies, he thought, were organized by market principles and characterized by impersonal relations. With the beginning of the industrial period, economies had detached from the social and political contexts in which they had previously been 'embedded'. The formalists approach was appropriate to this kind of economy, but for pre industrial economics different tools would be needed. Polanyi suggested that reciprocity and redistribution were important mechanisms of economic integration in pre industrial societies (Hann 2000:55).

The formalist approach, on the other hand, generally insists the possibility of using microeconomic principles with slight modification to generalize about economic behavior of the entire range of human societies. The basic concepts in their approach are scarcity and utility maximizing. "The constraints within which economic actors make their decision obviously differ from case to case. However, at a certain level of generalization it is assumed that African peasants, Australian hunter gathers and European capitalist firms all make decisions in essentially similar manner, in order to maximize utilities based on information available to them". This universalistic tendency is considered as ethnocentric by anthropologists who believe importance of relativism (Ibid: 56).

According to Prattis (1973:47) the polemic in economic anthropology, between formalist and substantivists, can be seen as varying conceptualization and interpretation of the nature of rationality. Dalton and Polanyi argued that 'primitives' and peasants in their economic realm showed a rationality some what different from that found in western market contexts, where as formalists have been concerned to elevate the principles of maximization to a universal feature of rationality.

The two schools vary in the unit they analyze, the subject they focus, methodology and definition of economy. Formalists emphasized methodological individualism. Substantivist argued that cultural and social systems defined not only the possibilities among which individuals could choose but also the motivational structure in terms of which they could make choices. Individuals were functions of and defined by collective social and cultural forces. Thus, they give attention to institutional factors.

Cook (1966:323) summarized fundamental differences of formalists and substantivists

> *Formalists may be characterized as those who focus on abstractions unlimited by time and space, and who are prone to introspection or are synchronically oriented; they are scientific in out look and mathematical in inclination, favor the deductive mode of inquiry, and are basically analytic in methodology (i.e., lean toward the belief that parts determine the whole). The substantivists, on the other hand, may be characterized as those who focus on situations limited in time and space, and who are Prone to retrospection or are diachronically Oriented; they are humanistic in out look and non-mathematical in inclination, favour the inductive mode of inquiry, and are basically synthetic in methodology (i.e., lean toward the belief that the whole determines its parts)*

Despite their significant insight on peasant economic behavior, the two approaches were predisposed to criticism. Formalists were criticized for their ethnocentric tendency while substantivists were also blamed for romantic picture of pre industrial society and anti-market mentality. More over, the two sides are accused of misunderstanding each other.

Chayanov (1987), on the other hand, argues that peasants pursue an idea of rational decision, but in doing so make choices between decreasing increments of agricultural production with increased work and the desire for leisure time. In his view, rather than seeking to increasingly maximize out put, as in the case with capitalist production, peasants will cease to work ever harder when some amount of production, which is thought to secure survival, has been achieved. In other words, peasants are motivated to attain basic economic security rather than constant economic gain (Durrenberger 1996: 916).

Chayanov stated that "the idea that the peasant household should be viewed as if it were a business enterprise was not valid and it is regarded as disorienting. The major goal of the peasant farming is to feed itself and some how manage to make whatever, payments are due to the land lord, the money lender, the merchant, or the state". The members of the peasant family have to eat throughout the year,

wethere or not they work. The actual production activities which they carry out can not be measured in monetary terms by them. If the family's needs are not attained and the other usual requirements are not satisfied, the members of the household will work more, even if the additional product obtained is very small indeed. Similarly, the peasant family may rent or buy land at a very high price, which would not be justified, according to normal business standards by the value of output they could hope to obtain from it. The peasants do this in order to fully engage labor power of the family which is freely available without any additional cost (Thorner 1968:506).

Chayanov's theory focused on labor /consumer ratio in peasant households as important analytical tool even if it undermined inters household reciprocal exchange arrangements, quite common in peasant society viewing household as independent entity.

In conclusion, the three approaches vary in the way they explain peasant economic behavior. Formalists regard peasants as maximizers like any economic actors while substativists, on the other hand, focused on social factors surrounding economic behavior in peasant society as distinguishing features rather than focusing on individuals as their unit of analysis which they suggest appropriate for industrial society. Chayanov, on the other hand, starts with psychological assumption similar to formalists but clearly stated that primary objective of peasant households is satisfying the needs of its members unlike capitalist firms motivated for profit maximizing. Thus, according to him peasants should be understood differently from capitalist entrepreneurs.

The finding of this study generally hints importance of the three theory under different conditions and life aspects of the study group. The formalist's idea of market principle and individualism can be seen as an aspect of a recent trend among Alaba. The introduction of money, cash crop, development of market and increasing contact with the external environment, effect of urbanization, recent development of hired labor and the resulting relative decline of social ties and communal values can be explained better in terms of formalist's theory. How ever, this does not mean that the farmer's economic behavior is like that of capitalist society where individualism and profit maximization overrides the economic behavior of the society. But, there is a wind of individualism and decline of traditional social values resulting from over all socioeconomic changes experienced over time.

The idea of substantivists' reciprocity also explain well the diverse inter-household interactions reflected in exchange practices of labor, farm ox and land among the study group. This implies the significance of reciprocal exchange arrangements among the study group where by the influence of institutional and social factors over the production system manifest itself. How ever, there is evident change in importance of reciprocal exchange arrangements in production process. For instance labor party is declining recently and hired labor is becoming important. Now the social and institutional factors governing the production system are weakening and giving the way to more individualistic endeavors.

The view of Chayanov also seems worth to explain aspect of the production practices among the study group. In the study area households tend to give their plot to share croppers than optimal use of their labor and maximizing their benefit. In the area there is a tendency of reluctance once the farmers secure their subsistence need than vigorously working to obtain maximum gain out of their farm. They tend to spent in social and less productive activity than fully engaging in productive activity. Government is pushing farmers to work on their land than giving to share croppers and unwisely spending the cash they obtain from the sell of their produce. This tendency can be partly explained in terms of Chayanov's argument which states that primary objective of peasant households is satisfying the needs of its members unlike capitalist firms motivated for profit maximizing. If peasants ensure their survival, then they are not motivated to consistently maximize profit. What they maximize is survival and subsistence.

With regard to production studies, there are limited anthropological works on peasant production system in Ethiopia. The works of Alen (1973), Donham(1987), Gebre (1993) Teferi (1993) Seyoum (1995) and Birhanu (1995) on different parts of the country can be cited among the studies. These works generally focused on the social organization of production and analyzing the varying role of land, labor and capital in the form of farm oxen in the household economy. In addition to contributing to the existing limited literature on the peasant production, this study also attempted to shed some light on the multifaceted impact of population on production system and analyze the socioeconomic factors affecting the production system as an area less touched by other studies.

CHAPTER THREE

3. BACKGROUND: ALABA PEOPLE AND THEIR LOCALITY

3.1 Location and population

Alaba are one of the ethnic groups found in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Regional State owning their distinct land, culture and history. The administration capital of the area, Alaba Town (Kulito), is situated some 315 Kms away from Addis Ababa in the south along Addis Ababa- Shashamane-ArbaMinch highway.

Geographically, Alaba land shares boundary in the north with Silti Zone, in the south with Hadiya Zone, in the west with Kembatta (Bilate river), and in the east with the Oromia Region. Before 1991, Alaba constituted part of Alaba-Siraro Woreda in the then Haykochi and Butajera Awraja of Shewa. After the change of government in 1991, they were administratively organized under Kembatta-Alaba-Tambro (KAT) Zone owing their own Woreda. Currently, with the further restructure of 2002, they formed their own autonomous special Woreda that gives a status of direct accountability to the regional government.

Alaba special woreda encompasses 75 peasant Associations/*kebeles* out of which 4 are categorized as urban. Alaba Town is the only urban area comprised of 4 kebeles. The rest of the PAs are inhabited by rural people who are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood.

According to the 1994 CSA population and housing census report, the total population of the study group was estimated to be 125, 894. The Woreda is also inhabited by other groups as well. As per the same information source the total population of the Woreda is about 187,035. Of these, Alaba ethnic group accounts for 53.1% of the total. While Silti and Kambatta constitute 33 % and 7.4 % respectively. According to the 2002 report of Woreda Agriculture Development Office, an average household size of the area is estimated to be 6.

3.2 Origin and History of Alaba

Like many groups in the south, written historical sources on the past of Alaba is scanty and incomplete which makes reconstruction of their origin and subsequent development complex. In the absence of adequate written sources, reverting to oral tradition is indispensable alternative as most anthropologists rely in attempting to trace the origin and development of the groups they study.

As existing limited literature on the history of south Ethiopia in general and Hadiya cluster in particular suggests, Alaba people belong to the old Muslim state of Hadiya which consisted of 5 related groups who were historically believed to live together. These groups were said to exhibit heterogonous cultural stratum with many shared attributes. Though there is no clear consensus on the usage of the term and constituents of the old Hadiya state, careful analysis of the scanty literature, helps to identify the major ethnic groups in the south consistently referred as Hadiya block/cluster. Braukamper(1980), who is prominent in the ethnogenesis of Hadiya cluster said that:

> *From the 13th to the 16th centuries, the Hadiya constituted one of the most important political entities of Northeast Africa. Their coherent territorial block was often shattered by outside forces and its inhabitants were absorbed by peoples of heterogeneous ethnic stock. At present, descendants of the old Hadiya can be identified in five different linguistic clusters: Oromo (hosting Hadiya descendants),Hadiya proper, Sidama proper, Alaba and Kabena and the East Gurage.*

Beginning from thirteenth century, Hadiya (which includes Alaba) was listed among the dependencies of the Christian empire and was obliged to furnish auxiliaries (Tamrat 1972:106). In order to keep the conquered Hadiya people in check, Amdeseyon prohibited them from carrying offensive weapons and from riding bridled horses. In 1332, a rebellion was suppressed, and a military group was recruited from the Hadiya to join the Ethiopian Army in its campaigns against Muslim Yifat/Adal (Perruchun cited in Braukamper 2002:56)

The fact that Hadiya had indeed become a tributary of the Christian empire in the four teeth century is confirmed by the reports of Arab historians as well. Through out the entire fifteenth century, Hadiya struggled repeatedly to obtain its independence from Ethiopia (Braukamper 2002:57).

Ceruli, on the other hand, explained that there is some uncertainty about the exact political significance of the name Hadiya as used in the Ethiopia chronicles. In the Arab historians the position is clear; Al umari and Maqrizi claim the existence of states called Hadiya and Bali ruled by their own kings, with a Moslem organization. The evidence from the Ethiopian chronicles stated that in the reign of Amdesion (1312-42) the Hadiya king was tributary to the king of Ethiopia. It was also reported that the relation of Hadya and Ethiopia

was loose and characterized by consistent revolt against tributary status and Hadiya often tend to support Adal Muslims waging war against the Christian kingdom from northeast (Ceruli 1956: 85).

After Mahiko's(Hadiya cluster leader) failed rebellion on Ethiopian Christian Kingdom during the reign of Zarayakob (1434-68) Alaba became more independent from the Hadiya, but they remained under the suzerainty of the Christian Empire. When Fernandez set foot in Alaba country in 1613 and met the Muslim chief Alico there, the area enjoyed a nearly unrestricted independence from Ethiopia, whilst Kambata did not differ much in status from an Ethiopian province (Braukamper: 1973).

The Alaba lives between the River Billate and Awasa and their language belongs to the same group as the Kembata. They are mentioned as part of the kingdom of Hadiya in the chronicle of Zarayaqob (1434-68); and by P.Antonio Fernandez, who traveled in this region in 1613, as a little state, tributary to Ethiopia, adjoining the Kambata, governed by a Muslim who took Fernandez Prisoner (D'Almeda cited in Trimingham 1952)

The 16th Century began with an increasing rise of the Muslim-Christian struggle for domination in Northeast Africa, which culminated in the long-lasting "holy war" (gihad) waged by the Muslims of Adal under the leadership of Ahmad Ibrahim (nickanamed Gragn) against the Ethiopian empire. The Hadiya more or less voluntarily joined the Adalites in 1531, established marriage relations with their leaders and fought the Christian fiercefully until the final collapse of the Muslim offensive in the battle of Wayna Daga by the allied Ethiopian and Portuguese force in 1543(Braukamper 1980).

When the war with Ahmed Gragn broke out, Lebne Dengel ravaged Hadya for non -payment of tribute in 1532, however, the Hadiya chief was won over by Ahmed Gragn, after whose death Galawdewos, in 1544, re conquered Hadya. In 1568 the Hadiya leader (*garad*) refused to pay tribute, and Sarsa Dengle attacked him in 1569. The last Ethiopian expedition against Hadya was made by king Yakob in 1604. After this the Oromo occupation of the country north of the Gibe and Lake Zeway cut it off from the Ethiopian kingdom. (Ceruli 1956: 86).

During the turbulent Muslim Adal wars of the sixteenth century, Cushitic and Semitic-speaking populations of the Hadiya state were at first shifted to the northwest and southwest and then, some decades later, either

conquered and assimilated or pushed west ward by the expanding Oromo. This process of assimilation and dislocation did not come to an end until the Amhara occupation shortly before 1900 (Braukamper 2002: 68).

Mean while, the Oromo expansion which brought them into northern, north-western, and eastern Sidama territory, many Sidama/Hadiya groups were absorbed by them and their land was reduced to little more than the Omo and great Rift Valley regions (Trimingham 1952)

Towards the end of nineteenth century, the expanding Ethiopian empire incorporated all Hadiya groups including Alaba. According to Ceruli(1956:118) in a broader sense the Sidamo group may be said to include six groups speaking kindred languages and united by a certain racial and cultural homogeneity. These are, in addition to the Sidamo proper, the Hadiya, Kambatta, Tambaro, Alaba, and Darasa/Gedeo. The administrative division of the Ethiopian Empire after incorporation followed the same grouping, the Sidamo province, governed by a *dajjach*, comprising the territories inhabited by these six groups.

According to the oral tradition Alaba were in the north of the present Hadiya territory between the Omo and the upper Bilate for short period before they left for their present dwelling places east of the Bilate about 1800. The Alaba tradtions claim very intensive historical connections with Sidamo. They lived with in the vicinity of Sidama proper for a period of time following the abandonment of their former living-areas in Bali, south west of Harrar. By the middle of the 18th century they left Sidamo and began to move up stream of the Bilate to the north. Between 1800-1820 they finally established themselves in their present areas. Alaba began crop production during mid nineteenth century (Braukamper 1973:34-36).

According to traditions of movement from their original land of Harara Plateau, the Alaba and Qabena occupied as neighbor of the Shashogo the area between the Charcher range and the region of Shirka in what later become eastern Arsiland. After the Adalite leader Ahmed Gragn had conquered Dawaro, they welcomed his troops and joined them to fight against Christian supremacy, to which they had hither to been subject. The turbulence of the djihad provoked such far reaching migrations among the peoples of that area that the whole ethnic situation was radically affected (Braukamper 2002: 63)

A part of the Alaba and Qabena at first moved to southwest, where they left some of their clans in Gadab and the present Sidama country. The region at the source of the Wabi shabale, for instance, is still called

Alaba by the Arsi people. As can be seen from study of their genealogies and historical traditions some Alaba and Qabena segments again left Sidamaland in the eighteenth century and migrated up the Bilate to the vicinity of Tambaro and Kambata. Through intensive contact of a half century with these groups they are said to have changed their Semetic (East Gurage) language in favour of the cushetic Kambata idiom. From Kembata they preceded to the southern escarpment of the Gurage mountains, but they were driven from there by the invading Leemo at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The Qabena evacuated to the region north west of the Gibe head waters and pursued a policy of Islamization through military force among the surrounding Gurage (Ibid: 64).

The Alaba proper, after their defeat by the Lemo Hadiya, moved at first eastward to the country of the Ulbarage, where they stayed for a short period. About 1820 they finally reached their present dwelling area in the lowlands east of the Bilate. It seems to be true, however, that (certain Aaba groups, who had migrated along a shorter route from Shirka and Gadab to the region east of Kambata instead of taking the roundabout way through Sidamaland, were already established and the early immigrants are generally called '*ulla*' Alaba, the "old settlers" (derived from the word *ulla* = land) as compared to the new comers (Op cite).

3.3 Language

The study people call themselves Hallaba (hallabicho- singular) and their language is said Hallabisa. According to Bender (1976) the language of Alaba is classified under Afro-Asiatic family of south east highland Cushitic group of Ethiopia. It shares much lexical similarity with Kembatta and Tambaro languages. People from these three ethnic groups can communicate and understand each other easily without interpreter. Besides, the language of Alaba is also related with other historically and culturally related Cushitic groups of Hadiya, Sidama, Gedeo and Burji. Alaba elders claim that there are many remainant groups among these ethnic groups who are left behind during the course of early migratory movement from northeast to their current territorial limit.

As the elders of the area explain and other studies reveal, the language of Alaba people was Semitic like Adare's. It is believed by many elderly informants that Alaba people slowly gave up their original Semitic language in favor of Kembatta/Tambaro dialect during their stay in Tambaro area before coming to their present territory. Through interaction and close relation with Tambaro, they adopted the language of

Tambaro/Kembatta. Since Alaba people claim descent from northeast, Harar area, and further to Arab areas, their original Adare like language has also strengthens their argument of Semitic identity. It has to be noted that other Muslim dominated groups in the south also trace their origin to north east area.

Hallabisa language is widely spoken as mother tongue/first language by majority of Alaba. Though Amharic is the official language both in government offices and schools, only a small proportion of the people speak Amharic. As one moves away from Alaba Town, it becomes difficult to find people that speak Amharic. Alaba people in the border areas are bilingual as they speak Oromipha, Kembattissa, Hadiya and Silti language in areas where there is common boundary with them. Their interaction in the border area is not limited to language but also extends to marital relations as well. As many informants argue the marital tie is common with Kembatta as compared to others.

3.4 Religion and Beliefs

Alaba are predominantly Muslim society. According to CSA (1994) population and housing census report 99 % of the rural population is estimated to be adherents of Islam. On the other hand, Orthodox Christians are 46.3 % of the urban population. There is also significant number of Protestants in Alaba Town. Orthodox Christians and Protestants are concentrated mostly in Alaba Town. Alaba Town is inhabited by Amhara (19.6 %) and Kambatta (16.7%) who are predominantly adherents of Orthodox and protestant faith respectively. As a result there are large number of orthodox and Protestants in the Town. Similarly, as the rural area is predominantly inhabited by Alaba and Silti, the majority are Islam religion followers.

As oral tradition and some written sources hint, Alaba society is historically believed to be part of the old Hadiya which is said one of the Muslim states in the south. They were reported to be Islam as early as 14th Century (Braukamper 2002). During the sixteenth century, they joined the Ahmed Grangn (Adal) invasions in the south in the operation led to nominally Christian Kembatta. However, Islam religion slowly becomes muted when the Oromo expansion blocked the interaction of Alaba with Muslim center in the Northeast area between sixteenth and eighteenth century (Trimingham 1952). During this period in most old Hadiya groups the traditional/local beliefs revived and Islam as nominal religion significantly lost its importance. But, Islam once again revived among Alaba around 1830 with the teachings of Sheih-kana, who is said to be the descent of famous Sheik Hussen of Bali. Through time, Islam reawakened and spread among them (Ceruli 1956:129).

According to Trimingham (1952:480) the incorporation of Sidama groups in the south (which also includes Alaba) in to the Ethiopian Christian Empire towards the end of nineteenth Century has had two effects Firstly, the chiefs of the 'pagan' states had to accept a nominal Christianity, but those who claimed to be Muslims were left alone; Secondly, it opened up direct contact between them and other Muslim centers which were being affected by the reawakening of Islam in Ethiopia during the second half of the nineteenth century and apparently caused further dissolution of their 'paganism'.

Obviously, since Alaba were nominal Muslims, the Christian Kingdom tolerated them unlike the case of other groups in the south on whom Orthodox Christianity was imposed. However, Orthodox Christianity was introduced to the area with the coming of Northerners and others who came to Alaba land after incorporation and during subsequent periods. Today Alaba Town is inhabited by significant number of Orthodox Christians as people from different area come to the area for various socioeconomic and administrative reasons.

Protestants, on the other hand, came to Alaba land around early 1960s with people coming to the area from predominantly protestant kambatta and other adjacent groups. The earliest protestant church of *Kale Hiwot* was established in the area in 1960s though prior missionaries attempt was not successful. The advancement of both Orthodox Christianity and Protestantism has not stretched much beyond Alaba Town and its surrounding. Any attempt to introduce Christianity in the area receives collective opposition from Alaba people as Islam is historically deer rooted among them. Slight and periodic tension between Protestant inhabitants and Alaba people is not uncommon among the adherents of the two faiths in the study area.

Among Alaba it is difficult to distinguish religious values from their traditional practices. Often what people explain about their culture is some thing that is related with Islam teachings. Their worldview is highly shaped by their religious perception. Constructing small huts in front of their home as personal/ family prayer room is very common practice among them. During the filed work whenever it is the prayer (*solat*) hour, my informants conduct their prayer informing me to wait until they finish their periodic prayer. The people are generally kind and friendly to outsiders once they know the purpose and motives behind the new comers/outsiders.

Beside Islam religion, among Alaba there are some traditional religious practices and beliefs hosted in their religious world view. *Kilancho* (witch) is seen as a man possessed with evil spirit and has some spiritual power to bring either good or bad things on people. Alaba people view that *Kilancho* has a mysterious power that enables him to control on property/possessions, people's relationship and fate and natural factors like rain.

Among Alaba people consult *kilancho* with some gifts so that they get solutions for personal, family, social and natural problems. *Kilancho* usually spent his time around home and often attend regular religious meetings or prayer and entertain people coming for diverse problems. It is very usual for *Kilancho* to instruct, individuals in need of his assistance, to sacrifice specific color hen, goat and even bull depending on the weight of the problem and the capacity of the person in trouble. People perform what is instructed by the *kilancho* and believe that they would be relieved from their problems. Except religious and some social activities, the social interaction of *kilancho* is limited.

In Alaba there are very few individuals viewed as *Ragga*- personalities who are believed to be very near to Allah and their prayer is supposed to be more effective than others. Highly honored and respected religious leader of Alaba, Sheik Seid Mikie (*Sheckoch*), was a prominent figure respected through out Alaba land for the special religious merit he owes as the local people perceive. He was believed to be a religious man whose spiritual status gave him special position. *Sheckoch* was known among Alaba for their healing power, religious and cultural knowledge, effective conflict/dispute management and peace building (among Alaba or between Alaba and other ethnic groups).

Alaba society annually celebrates and shows their respect to *Shekoch* through gift provision and pilgrimage to one of the residence sites of *Shekoch* named *Badane* which is located some 12 Kms away from Alaba town in the north. The celebration that lasts for a week before Moulid(Prophet Mohamed's birth day) is attended by large number of people from all over the area. As my informants explained in a span of week the size of cattle presented as a gift reaches up to 150. Of these the largest proportion would be slaughtered to the hosted guests and the remaining is left for their honored politico-religious leader (*Shekoch*) as a gift.

Apart from his religious and social activities, Shekoch had played a prominent leadership role as a leader of Alaba society together with Side clan leader, who is traditional chair person of Alaba land Elders council. Because of his religious virtue, his voices and decisions are effective and respected among Alaba. Up on his death in 1996, his oldest son, Haji Merjan, took the responsibility to assume the role of his father as Shekoch took from his grand father. Presently, the annual celebration held in *Badane* is declining as the wind of urbanization blows in the area and some political and religious pressure discourages the event.

Among Alaba elders are highly honored and respected throughout their life time and even after death. Though there is less evidence of ancestral cult, they perform some kind of sacrifice around the graveyard of deceased elders annually. Family members organize a feast around the tomb of deceased elders and pray to them. Ceruli (1956:129), on his part, also tried to hint that the phallic monoliths which are to be found in their country may be connected with a solar cult. Barren women pray to these stones. Generally speaking, the traditional beliefs and practices hosted by Islam religion in the past tend to be gradually replaced by new Islamic customs among Alaba.

3.5 Aspects of Kinship and Clan Organization

Kinship relation and values are crucial in social, economic and political life of Alaba. Kinship provides a framework of defined and orderly pattern and forms of organization that enhances good relation, responsibilities, rights and obligations among different sub groups. Kinship manifests itself in all spheres of life among Alaba society.

At the center of kinship organization is household (*Aboroso*) composed of father (*Anna*), mother (*Ama*) and their children(*Osso*). Alaba are patrilineal groups where by descent is traced through male line. Hence, property inheritance also follows the male line. The father inherit resources (land, livestock etc) at his disposal to his sons either up on his death or their marriage. Generally women have no access to inherit property from their family. Traditionally the eldest son is favored in property inheritance and plays important role in family affairs in the absence of his father.

Among Alaba there are about 23 exogamous partilineal clans(*Debos*). All clans are supposed to marry from another clan. Marriage within clan is strictly prohibited and violation of the tradition results serious ostracization from the community. Unlike the adjacent ethnic groups such as Kembatta, there are no

indigenous marginalized groups among Alaba with whom marriage and other social relations are restricted. All clans are said to have equal status except the senior clan, *Side*, which is vested a right to chair elders council of Alaba land represented by all clan leaders. However, in respect to marriage, all clans are still of equal status.

Clan identity is pivotal in economic, social and political life of Alaba society. Clan members claim apical ancestor and have a sense of unity and cooperation. Usually, they distinguish themselves from others by calling *nimanna* (our member) and when they are from the same lineage (*boku*), the unity, cooperation and interaction would be closer and evident in various spheres of life. Any thing that happens to a lineage member is considered as the concern of every member in that ancestry group.

Though, they are not considered as part of Alaba society, there are two inhabitant clans in the study area called Awado and Rossi. Awadao are believed to be captives of war ('slaves') who came to the area over long time ago. Usually, they tend to call themselves after the name of a host clan (where they inhabit) than their own. They are endogamous and agriculturalists. Among Alaba marriage with them is traditionally not acceptable. While, Rossi are endogamous tanners hosted among Alaba.

Further more, there are migrant - marginalized groups called *fuga* who live on the out skirt of Alaba town and scantly in rural areas. They are specialists in pot making and provide services to the people in the area. They consider Kembatta as their place of origin.

Fugas marry with in themselves and tend to consume 'polluted' food. As their livelihood depends on pot making and casual daily labor work, they are not involved in farm activities. They are also not members of any religious groups in the area. Though, their social interaction with other people is very limited, the surrounding community buys pottery products from them and occasionally they accompany funeral ceremony with their songs and locally made one side drum. Generally, as they are socially despised by the people, they are neither allowed to enter into the home of others and nor to be served food at home. Their life is highly associated with locally made alcoholic drinks and prone to poor saving.

3.6 Household (*Aboroso*)

Like in any peasant societies, household is a basic unit of production among the Alaba. Household is primarily consisted of a husband, his wife/ wives, their children and other hosted relatives or persons. A household mostly act as an independent whole in carrying its production activities and meeting the needs of members. Among Alaba, tradition defines duties and responsibilities to be shared among household members. Accordingly, tasks are shared among members mainly based on sex and age. There are culturally depicted roles assigned to each member.

Like other patrilineal groups, in Alaba men are considered as managers of household affairs and responsible person for the economic security of households. A man, as a head of a household, has the right to decide authoritatively on social, economic and leadership issues within household or on the household members. In family affairs, a wife stands next to a husband and act on behalf of the household in his absence. But, when the first son is matured enough to manage family affair, he would act on behalf of his father than his mother. A wife is supposed to be submissive and obedient to her husband. Among Alaba a wife never calls her husband and his father by their names. As locally believed this is one of the ways where women show a respect to their husbands and family.

Children follow the foot steps of their parents based on their sex. Girls usually help their mother in routine domestic activities and tasks around home. Boys, on the other hand, assist their father in agricultural activities, both in crop production and livestock rearing. Marriage of children is traditionally desired and respectable goal looked by parents. Elders blessing to young persons is usually addressed in such terms.

3.7 Local Governance/Leadership

Local political organization of the Alaba people is basically egalitarian and it is based on the rule of elders council formed at different levels. Lewellen (1983) classified leadership based on elders council under uncentralized political system which is characterized by dispersion of power among groups than individuals.

At the top of Alaba tradition political structure is *Hallabi Ogate* which is composed of clan leaders of the land. It is supreme elder's council chaired by *Side* clan leader. Among Alaba *Side* clan is viewed as senior and 'administrator' of the supreme council. As a result they serve as leaders of supreme council. All clans are represented by their elderly leaders to deal with the concerns of the entire Alaba country.

Hallabi ogate is the final and highest decision making body vested a responsibility to settle dispute between clans, to issue or change local rules, to look cases that are not resolved at lower levels and regulate inter-ethnic relations. The name of the council is derived from the place it under takes its activity. Literally *ogate* means 'shade of tree'.

The second lower level under local administrative structure is *Debo Ogate*(clan level council) which is comprised of elders of a given clan. *Debo Ogate* is responsible for the administration of its own clan affairs. All clans among Alaba have their own council vested a duty to implement the *sera* (traditional code of conduct) of Alaba society. Specific issues treated by *debo ogate* includes handling problems created within the clan members, arbitering disputes among clansmen, mediating genocide and looking cases brought from *boki ogate/* lineage or village level council.

Village or lineage level council (*Boki Ogate*) is the lowest unit under the local administrative organization of Alaba. Village level council has a function of making decisions over matters of lineage members. Thus, its role is bounded by residential pattern for lineage members inhabit in the same locality. Problems that arise with in the specific locality are dealt by village level council. Inter-household quarrels and disputes with in lineage members are dealt at this level.

The local administrative system among Alaba is governed by *Sera*. The term *Sera* is used in similar senses by some groups in the south like Kembatta (Yakob 2002), Gurage (Bahiru 2002) and Sidama (Oyvind 2002). According to Oyvind (2002: 41) *Sera* is defined as "a set of local cultural norms or codes regulating the communal social structure and interaction"

Among Alaba *sera* refers to acceptable life style as defined by the local culture. Thus, *sera* governs socioeconomic and cultural life of Alaba at different level starting from individuals/households and lineages up to clan and entire group level.

Under Alaba local governance system, the role of women and children in leadership is almost insignificant. Their participation in decision making process at different level is very low. Men in general and elders in particular are the major actors in the local administrative endeavors.

As well articulated by elders of the land the traditional administrative structure under went substantial change since the incorporation of Alaba to Ethiopian kingdom during the end of 19th century. Though at initial period of incorporation the northerners attempted to use the existing local administrative structure, gradually a modern bureaucratic rule was put in operation.

As elderly informants revealed, the land of Alaba was divided among the appointed *Balabats* (land lords) who exploited the local people. Though the court system, the *balabats* and provincial governors were operating as installed by the central government, Alaba people did not totally give up their local administrative system. It was operating side by side with the new system whenever the concerned parties are in consensus. This is particularly true of disputes at individual, households, clan and even at ethnic group level.

The weakening of traditional government system continued up to the time of *Derg*/military regime. When Peasant Associations (PAs) are established as the lowest formal administrative unit of government, the local governance system was not looked in good terms. As a result, its role and function declined significantly though the people continue to depend on elder's council for many of their affairs. Generally, Alaba people prefer to bring their cases to elder's councils at different levels than the formal court at *kebele* or *woreda* level. The formal court is viewed as the last alternative or resort for cases that are beyond the elder's capacity.

However, after EPRDF took power in 1991, a sign of revival is evident in the local governance system as clan leaders and Alaba land council (*ogate*) are often consulted in different issues that affect their life. The government also showed an interest in participating clan leaders in different socio cultural, economic and political issues. For instance, in conferences and meetings aimed at against harmful traditional practices and other sensitive social issues, clan leaders and elders are seen as the leading figures than PA leaders. But, the influence of urbanization, scattered settlement of clans and lineages, modern individualistic thinking and formal education tend to contribute for the decline of the local leadership style.

3.8 Marriage

Marriage is an essential social institution that establishes permanent relationships between spouses and serves as a bridge to form family. There are different kinds of marriage among Alaba society. The major ones are discussed below.

3.8.1 Types of Marriage

3.8.1.1 *Maasisu*

This is widely practiced and socially acceptable type of marriage, which is usually arranged based on the interest of parents. Among Alaba when a young boy attains marriageable age after passing through the rite of circumcision (*turkamo*) and economically capable to manage his life, he shows his readiness for marriage by different symbolic acts rather than face to face discussion with his parents. When a young boy comes to home lately at night (compared to the normal times) and prepares a separate sleeping place or quarter with in his parent's house, it is an alert message to his parents so that they think over on mate selection. Once the parents realized the intention of their child, they start to search a girl for their son in consultation with their relatives. There is also an instance where the child initiates the mate selection when he has an opportunity to see a girl in different social gatherings in the locality. Since clans are exogamous, selection of mate is definitely supposed to be from other clans.

Once the girl is chosen up on the agreement of the young boy's parents, there is traditionally established way of testing whether the selection of the girl is appropriate or not. Checking the soundness of the choice starts with a sudden visit of girl's family by the young boy and his best friends (*jalla*).

Consequently, in one of the days a boy accompanied with his best friends (*jalla*) would go to the girl's parent home during early morning to test his 'luck' according to the local custom. When the girl's parents see a young boy and his jalla in their home, they realize that some one is looking for their daughter. The potential suit among the visiting boys is distinguished with his small javelin and a white scurve (*netella*) wear. A boy who enters the home first is also customarily identified as the lover of the girl. When the boy visits, if the girl is cleaning home, going out to fetch water etc it is regarded as the mate choice is not right or 'bad luck '. In the contrary, if the girl is coming back after fetching water, preparing coffee and the like, these things are taken as indicators of good luck and right mate selection. The boy together with his best friend undertakes similar visits until he is sure about the rightness of his mate selection.

Marriage among Alaba requires consensus of elders of the two clans or lineage of which the boy and the girl are members. Marriage needs the negotiation of the two sides. Between the period of consensus and wedding day, habitually the girl is supposed not to be seen by and interact with the boy and his parents though the boy visits the home of the girl's parent with some gifts up to the day of weeding.

After securing consent from elders of the girl side, the go-betweens give the feed back to the girl's parents. Hearing the positive reply of the elders of his group, the father of the girl sends the elders informing them to come back another time to formally announce acceptance of the request. When the elders come back to them for the second time, the girl's parent formally announce their agreement and invite the elders send by the parents of the boy.

Before the wedding ceremony, there is special arrangement that will be held in the home of the girl's parent where by elders send by boy's parents presents bride wealth (*gebera*) to the family of the girl. During the fixed day by the parents of the spouses, the bride wealth (*gebera*) would be handled out to the family of the girl. According to the tradition of the area, *gebera* can be in kind or cash. Accordingly, on the occasion of bride wealth handling, usually the parents of the girl will be given locally made blanket (*buluko*), some amount of money and a cow. Depending on the capacity of the boy's family, bride wealth can be extended to other close relatives of the girl as well. Up on completion of the ceremony, fresh grass will be given to all of the girl's family members and close relatives by sent elders to wish and symbolize blessed life for the suits. Likewise, the father of the girl promise to give heifer to their daughter and her lover, a gift which symbolizes full agreement and special engagement of the spouses. During the occasion the date of wedding will be fixed by both sides.

Prior to the wedding ceremony, the girl visits her relatives in the locality and collects money to purchase necessary items for the wedding day. Being accompanied by her friends (*ajaba*), the girl would buy items from one of the local markets. Alaba market hosts the largest numbers of ajeba where by several girls appear before their marriage.

A day before the wedding ceremony, the girl will invite all her friends for a whole night singing and dancing. This last day night party is locally called *ferito* and viewed as one of the times when friends of the girl

express their love to the girl and her family. It is also on this occasion that the girl drinks *kosso*, a sour juice made of local plant. The juice is believed to get ride of any stomach parasites and cleanse the whole internal organs of the girl. Since it is very sour, before the girl drinks it, her family, friends and relatives promise to give her a gift *(erifo)* so that she will feel easy to drink the juice. But, the said gifts may or may not be given as it was considered as one way of encouraging the girl to drink the juice.

During the wedding day, the bride groom will invite all his relatives and friends to the wedding party. Since Alaba society pursues patrilocal residence, his parents organize the marriage ceremony in their compound. Dancing and singing are important events during the wedding day that can help one easily distinguish the existence of a wedding ceremony in the locality.

The invited guests (*hammamota*) will be served with local ceremonial food called *Atakano* which is prepared from an *enset* product. After enjoying the local meal, the *hammamota* would march to the home of the bride with warm songs and dances. The bride groom and his best men (*jalla*) will not go with the *hammamota* to bring the bride but they rather stay at the home.

When the *hammamota,* send by the bride groom, reaches to the home of the bride, they will be warmly welcomed by the parents of the bride and invited guests form their side. As a ceremonial meal, members of *hammamota* will be given either a milk or *shameta*(local drink made of sorghum flour). A drink is provided with locally made big cup (*tebote*), which is to be drunk in rotation by the guests. All guests drink from the same *tebote* turn by turn. Among Alaba wedding feast originally takes a small-scale celebration. But, through time the size and the requirements of the feast has been increased with their contact with urban areas and surrounding groups.

After drinking the ceremonial milk or *shameta*, the parents of the bride would give their daughter to the *hammamota* together with gifts like cow, household utensils and other items. The guests accompany the bride mounted on horse and march back to the home of the bridegroom with great joy.

When they arrive at the bridegroom's home, the guests handle the bride and gifts send by her family to the bridegroom. In this way the official ceremony will end. Among Alaba during the wedding night usually the bride groom and his two best men *(jalla)* would spend with the bride and the bridegroom usually shares his

suit to his *jalla*. The act of the best men is considered as a sign of deep friendship and intimate relationship to the extent of sharing the new wife. The new wife is supposed to stay more than six months in a compartment (*dora*) prepared for the honey moon period. During this time of confinement, traditionally she is not supposed to meet with her parents and uncles. Among Alaba this act is believed to symbolize the respect of the bride to her family.

3.8.1.2 *Buren Assu*

This is one kind of customary marriage arrangement among Alaba which needs short period preparation and immediate engagement due to various pressurizing factors. It would be preferred when the bride's parents want to minimize expenses associated with elaborated wedding ceremony and to shorten the wedding date whenever the girl hesitates to accept the marriage proposal being influenced by other boys in the locality.

To avoid possible denial of the boy by the girl, parents of the girl and the boy would fix wedding date with out informing this to the girl. During the wedding day, only closer relatives and friends would be invited as this kind of marriage is agreed to be less costly and shorter period arrangement. The immediate engagement, minimum cost, and invitation of small number of guests during the wedding ceremony distinguish the *buren asu* marriage type from *maasisu*. Otherwise, the whole process for both marriage types is similar in many respects.

3.8.1.3 *Herana*

Among Alaba society there are occasions where more than one boy shows an interest to marry a girl though the family of the girl agreed to give their daughter to someone. Whenever there is rivalry among boys on a single girl, it requires lobbying and frequent agitation of the girl by the boys through her friends and close kinsmen.

If the girl decided to marry one of the boys, she would be given a gift by her lover that symbolizes her agreement without the notice of parents. Once she accepted the request of one of the boys, she would leave her parents home by stating acceptable reasons and join her lover in a place where they fixed ahead. When the girl is absent for over a day, the parents customarily understand what happened to their daughter. Beginning from the third day of absence, her parents expect some news from the surrounding about the

situation of their daughter. Usually during the third day when the sun sets, a messenger would be sent to the daughter's family to inform them the where about of the girl and her being eloped. When the family of the girl hears the voice of the sent man, they would run after him in order to catch and bit him. Since the man knows what will happen, he would flee immediately after telling the message. Biting a messenger is a mock act established as one way of showing parents concern to the girl. In this manner the parents know where their daughter is and start to negotiate on the issue.

Hearing what happened to their daughter, the parents and close relatives would go to the home of the boy's parents in small group unexpectedly. During the occasion the parents of the boy would ask excuse for the deeds of their son through local elders. To ritualize the reconciliation, they would slaughter heifer to invite the elders and girl's family members. In the mean time, the boy's parents provide bride wealth (*gebera*) in the form of either cash or in kind like cow or in both forms. Some times, if the family of the girl is not convinced by the marriage arrangement; they can take back their daughter. This is particularly true when the parents promised their daughter to some one else and received bride wealth.

Herana is becoming common form of marriage among Alaba. Urban influence and formal education tend to under play the influence of parents on mate selection and long and elaborated marriage arrangements. As a result young boys and girls started to view *herana* as acceptable form of marriage suited to their time.

3.8.1.4 *Gossu*

Gossu is a kind of forceful marriage that takes place without the consent of the girl and her family. It happens among Alaba for various reasons. Firstly, when the girl's parents fail to fix wedding date in shorter period. Secondly, when the girl refuses to voluntarily go to her lover in the form of *herana* marriage. Thirdly, when more than one boys show an interest on a girl and there is rivalry among boys. Fourthly, when some one's request is not accepted by the girl. When there are such kinds of pressurizing factors, *gossu* becomes an alternative form of marriage where by the boy and his friends forcefully take the girl. Since this kind of marriage is traditionally unacceptable, some times the girl's family might reject any kind of excuse and take back their daughter when there is some one already given to them bride wealth . If the prior lover insisted her return, the family can do so. But, if he is not interested to marry the girl, the bride wealth (*gebera*) would be returned back to the old mate. If the girl's family agrees on the marriage of the girl to the new partner, the local elders go to their home with a pot full honey and negotiate to smooth the relationship and bring peace

between the two families. In addition to bride wealth, the bride groom is supposed to provide a gift in cash or in kind as a way of apologizing for his misconduct. Among Alaba, clans and lineages play important role in mediating and handling marriage cases. Thus, marriage is not only the issue of concerned spouses and their families but also the affair of clan and lineage members.

3.8.1.5 *Rage*

Alaba people practice widow inheritance kind of engagement. When a wife dies, the husband marries the sister or close relative of his deceased wife. Similarly, when a husband dies, his wife merry a brother or close relative of her deceased husband. As many of the informants argue, the rationale behind such kind of marriage is to protect the property of the family.

Rage ensures property (land, livestock, hut etc) ownership or inheritance within the family or close relatives. Besides, a brother or a sister is believed to provide adequate care and proper treatment for the children of their deceased brother or sister. Conversely, if non-relative of the deceased person marries a widow, it is said that he/she would claim property of the deceased person and will not handle carefully the children of the deceased person.

3.8.1.6 Polygynous marriage

Among Alaba society polygynous marriage is widely practiced form of marriage. A man can marry as many wives as possible as far as his capacity allows him managing the new wives and their children. According to many informants both the religious teachings and the local values of the community supports marrying more than one wife. Based on my field work observation it is possible to safely estimate that out of ten households some four would have more than one wife. As extreme case informants reported the case of one man in the study KA who married about eight wives and have more than forty children.

Major reasons for polygynous marriage among Alaba include social, economic and individual factors. Socially, having more than one wife among the community is regarded as a symbol of social prestige. It also means establishing marital relation with many clans and forming wider social group that is socially valued status in the area. Customarily a man with multiple wives is respected among Alaba. As a result, every body wants to attain it.

In economic terms, a man with many wives would have more children who assist him in agricultural production activities and domestic services. More over, he also will have more women who care and assist him. As children are viewed as source of security upon old age, polygamous marriage would give opportunity for having more children and practiced as one way of maximizing social security. As religious persons in the study locality explained, Islam teachings allow marriage of more than one wife provided that the man has an economic capacity to manage his family. As a result polygynous marriage is practiced whenever the person has the means to do so.

There are individual factors that result polygynous marriage as mentioned by some informants. Incompatible relation between spouses often leads to look for additional wife. When there is recurrent dispute between spouses and the women is believed to be incompetent to manage her family affair, a man marries another woman who can treat him in better manner and manage the family properly. Divorce among Alaba is not common since men have options to marry additional wife. Divorce is the right of men than women among Alaba. Unless the man declares divorce officially, no one marry the woman though she is not living with her husband and her separation is known.

Some informants also argued that woman tend to get older earlier than man. Thus, the man has to look for young wife instead of living with his aged/senior wife. One of my informants who is around late adult hood stage said that "women are not good for marital relation after fifty but men continues with their strength up to sixty."

As the discussion with key informants hint, nowadays polygynous marriage among Alaba is slightly declining because of various economic and social reasons. As the people's contact with urban centers and access to formal education increased, the practice is gradually declining. This kind of tendency is increasingly becoming part of young Alaba boys' mentality. As many adult informants argued even if they want to marry more wives, economic conditions do not allow them to do so. Land and livestock size per household is declining as the population increases at a faster rate. Thus, such kind of economic pressures tend to discourage multiple marriage. Health education on family planning also is contributing to the decline of polygynous marriage.

3.9 Bride Wealth

Among Alaba almost all forms of marriage requires bride wealth (*gebera*) payment. The bride groom is expected to present a gift either in the form of cash or in kind as a bride wealth to the family of the girl. With the introduction of cash crop (pepper) the amount/ size of bride wealth increased drastically among Alaba. Traditionally a bride groom gives a cow and local blanket (*buluko*) to the bride's family. But, gradually the amount of bride wealth reached up to Birr 6,000. As many informants argue the bride wealth amount depends on marketing condition of pepper (cash crop), other cereals and livestock. When people sell what they have in better price, they tend to increase the amount of bride wealth and vice versa.

During the last decade the amount of bride wealth drastically increased and faced strong opposition from government side and local leaders. Bride wealth is considered as 'harmful traditional practice' and extravagant act by government officials as people spend a lot. As a result there is a tendency of decreasing bride wealth amount by the people. Elder's council decided that the bride wealth should not exceed more than 200 birr in 1997. As a result there is a tendency of decreasing bride wealth amount by the people. Besides, as people come in contact with the urban area, modern education and economically constrained, the amount of bride wealth is gradually declining.

3.10 Agro-Ecology, Climate and Land Cover

3.10.1 Agro-Ecology

Alaba is situated in the Great Rift Valley region that runs from north through central Ethiopia to south. Agro-ecologically, it is found in mid highland zone. The altitude of the Woreda is within the range of 1500 and 2200 meters above sea level. Though the area is said mid highland, it reflects many features of lowland areas. Generally, the topography of the area is plain and susceptible for water logging, flooding and erosion. Of the total land mass of the Woreda about 70% is plain and 27% is rugged. The remaining 3% is said to be mountainous.

3.10.2 Land Cover and Use

According to the data from Woreda Agriculture Development Desk, of the total 82,322 hectare land of the Woreda, 57,285.9(69.6%) ha is used for agriculture. About 5,234.8(6.4%) ha is wood land. Out of the total wood land, only 833.6 ha is natural. This seems to reflect the severe pressure on natural forest. The scanty wood lands are mainly the results of afforestation programs of NGOs.

The proportion of cultivable, uncultivable and urban areas is 4187.5(5%), 3399(4.1%) and 387(0.5%) hectares respectively. The remaining proportion is classified as settlement, water body (rivers and ponds), gorge etc. Mount Lakicho (2396 meteres a.s.l) is the highest peak while Bilate river valley is the lowest part of the area. Bilate and Dijo, the two major rivers of the area, drain to Lake Abaya and Lake Shala respectively.

3.10.3 Agro-Climate

Conventionally there are four major seasons among Alaba. The classification is mainly based on observation of periodic agricultural activities, the condition of rainfall and temperature. The area receives an average of t 750 mm rainfall annually and the mean annual temperature is about 25 ° C.

The four seasons are *lamuta (spring)*, *karmea(summer)*, *maharit(autumn)* and *hago* (winter). *Lamuta* is small rain receiving season where by the area experiences moderately hot temperature. This is a time when people plant root crops (potato) and vegetables (mainly cabbage) to cope with the upcoming food deficit season of *hago*. Land preparation, sowing and weeding are major production activities undertaken during this season. It is also relatively good period for livestock rearing since it is a time for the growth of fresh grass.

Karmea is the major rainy season among Alaba known for its cool weather and heavy rain. The major production activity of the season is *teff* sowing and weeding of *teff* and pepper. This is the peak season of food shortage in the area whereby stored food diminishes.

Maharit is the next season that follows *karmea*. It is characterized with moderate sunny whether and occasional small rains. Harvesting and threshing are major agricultural activities that take place during the period. This is a time where the farmers enjoy the fruit of their labor and known for food availability. Besides, livestock food is also 'plenty' as compared to other seasons and it is favorable time for animal pasture.

Hago is dry and sunny season in Alaba. It is slack period of agricultural production. During the period farmers enjoy the harvested crops. This is a period whereby farmers sell their produce in the local market. Alaba market would be flooded with large number of rural population during this time and it is peak market

period for both the rural people and urban merchants. Socially, it is a period of marriage and *neketa*(public singing and dancing ceremony of circumcised boys and girls).

3.11 Economy

Among Alaba the concept of economy is not comprised of a single term rather it is expressed in terms of activities. *Aburu* (cultivation) and *Giza Allalu* (animal husbandry) are viewed as principal means of survival. As most informants argued their economy has shifted from pastoral, to agro-pastoral and finally to mixed farming where by crop cultivation and livestock rearing simultaneously undertaken. The pastoral way of life is active in memories of elders and even adult people elders often say that "our way of life was not like it is today, our fathers lived as pastoralists". Since the advent of sedentary farming among Alaba people are practicing both economic activities side by side. Seasonal petty trade relatively as a recent development holds paramount importance as additional economic activity to supplement production activities. An introduction of the major cash crop, pepper, mainly after Italian occupation increased their involvement in the market.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. LAND AS A FACTOR OF PRODUCTION

4.1 Land Tenure: Historical Overview

According to Seymour-smith (1986:162) land tenure is defined as "a concept broader than that of 'ownership', referring to the rightful holding of land by a person or group, whether or not this holding involves ownership." It is clear that land tenure defines the kind of relation between the user and the land. It includes rules that spell out the rights, responsibilities and obligations associated with the land and describe status of relationships, access, use and ownership of land. Over the long period of their life, different type of land tenure systems has been experienced by Alaba. Thus, the following part attempts to present major land tenure systems marked with a change in political condition.

4.1.1 The Situation before Incorporation

Prior to their settlement in current territorial limit, ancestors of Alaba were leading pastoral way of life. According to prominent elders of the area, cattle herding was the major source of their livelihood supplemented by occasional gathering of wild plants and fruits. As the oral traditions of the area consistently show, throughout the course of their movement from their land of origin, Harar plateau, they were cattle herders until they inhabit in their present land and began crop production. During their long history of mobile life, they stay in certain area for a while and move another area. Whenever they stay in a given place they make sure that the land is suitable for their cattle and they establish smooth and peaceful relationship with the people they encounter throughout the course of south ward movement from northeast. Thus, the land tenure was characterized by temporary holding of a given land on a group basis and using the pasture, the water, plants and other resources on communal ground.

Once they reached the present area and permanently occupied the territory, Alaba people began to lead sedentary life mixed with incipient crop production practices. As explained by informants in the study locality, different factors contributed for significant change in their life style during the mid nineteenth century (five generation ago). Among others, demographic, social, economic and natural factors can be taken as major ones. Both internal and external influences resulted gradual change in their production system and settlement pattern. As most elderly informants agree the basic factor seems shortage of an open land as most area in the south during mid nineteenth century was permanently occupied by the surrounding ethnic groups like Kembatta, Hadiya, Siliti and Arsi Oromo. It is quite a fact that as the population grows in size,

the amount of needed land to support it also increases. As a result all groups began to claim a specific territory and expand along with population growth. A recurrent livestock epidemic that hit Alaba also necessitated looking other alternative means of subsistence as the people looses their animals at a time and faces with drought. With increasing exposure to crop producing adjacent groups and subsequent interaction, Alaba people started to adopt gradually crop production.

The reinforcing socioeconomic and natural factors pushed Alaba to start semi-sedentary life within the fluid territorial boundary as often encountering periodic conflict with adjacent groups over scarce resources and competing interests.

Though, they were relatively leading settled life, it was not before mid 19th century(five generation ago) that Alaba began adopting crop production practice from groups inhabited with in their vicinity. As argued by elders of the land, with the introduction of the first seeds of maize, potato and other root crops by prominent traditional leader of the land, Imam Nunade of Kolmine clan, from wolayita area, crop production began among Alaba around the mid nineteenth century. At initial stage, the adoption of crop production faced a challenge from the majority of local people though it was initiated by leaders.

Through a series of attempts made by clan leaders to convince the people, the idea started gaining gradual acceptance by majority. As some informants explained the opposition was based on the belief that 'land is viewed as sacred resource not to be touched /ploughed by people'. Touching a land that is a source of animal feed and water is seen as destructing the base of their existence. However, over time through practical demonstrations made by leaders and increasing interaction and contact with the adjacent peasant groups like Kembatta, Hadiya and Silti, gradually crop production became an increasingly important source of livelihood to Alaba people.

At the end of several years' movement from northeast to south ward, the ancestors of Alaba arrived to the current territorial limit and began relatively settled life as agro-pastoralists. According to oral traditions the newly occupied land was allocated by clan leaders to all groups of Alaba. As a result each clan owned its own territory with loose boundary usually marked by water way, trees, mountains, gorges etc. Since the people were moving seasonally with their herds, a given clan went to another's territory in search of pastor and water. The relationship between different clans was said smooth as they belong to the same group

Elders informed that movements to near by ethnic groups were also not uncommon. This was particularly true of border areas shared with Arsi Oromo in the north. During early times border conflicts were inevitable as two groups claim a right in a given grazing land.

When they move in groups, children and elders were left around their residential areas with milking cows so that they would be provided with milk and butter for their consumption. While, adults and young individuals move to distant area where pasture and water was available. Animal products like milk and butter and a variety of wild fruits, roots and leaves of plants were major sources of diets. Most elderly have active memory of their fathers' agro-pastoral mode of subsistence and list of wild plants used to be eaten before few decades ago, probably indicating the close relation of the fore fathers of Alaba with naturally grown edible plants. Animals were not only source of diet but Alaba people used to make dresses from it.

During the pastoral and subsequent agro-pastoral way of life, land was communally owned by clans while households had only a use right over the land they occupy. Commonality was evident in access to land, pasture, water resources and seasonal movements. At this stage household as independent entity was not evolved since clans and lineages were strong groupings determining the socio economic life of individual and households. Gradually, communal land ownership and use right tradition slowly shifted to household level as people started sedentary farming whereby household became independent production unit.

During the early settlement period in the area and agro-pastoral practices, land was plenty, population size was small, households owned abundant livestock up to 200 and animal products and wild plants were major food sources. Elderly informants were obsessed with 'the past golden days' whenever they compare their early life of abundance and the current life often explained in terms of "resource scarcity". They are also aware of constraints of early times. For instance, in some occasions groups seasonally moving with their herd to border areas return back loosing all their herds because of livestock epidemics.

As Alaba people periodically move around border areas, conflict with adjacent ethnic groups was prevalent. This was particularly true of sporadic dispute with Arsi Oromo who has similar interest with Alaba in border areas. As explained by Seyoum (2001) the major cause of conflict between Alaba and Arsi Oromo around Alage (Ziway area) during early settlement period was competition over scarce resources like water and grazing land.

According to many informants the adoption of crop production was more fueled and scaled up with the incorporation of Alaba to Ethiopian Empire towards the end of nineteenth century. But, it was not before 1960s that most of Alaba land was cultivated and put under use for agricultural production as well articulated by most informants.

Though, the early settlement was based on clan affiliation, gradually as people move from one locality to another for various social and economic reasons, the settlement pattern has been mixing slowly. But, still several villages were called after the name of their clan.

4.1.2 Land Tenure After Incorporation (1894)

As informants explained Alaba people attempted to resist the occupation of their land by expanding Ethiopia kingdom in the last decade of nineteenth century. They collaborated with famous Kabena leader, Hassan Anjamo, who fiercely struggled to unite some Muslim groups in the south to stop the control of central government. However, it was beyond their strength to check the military campaigns of Emperor Minilk. As a result, they gave up and became part of the Modern Ethiopian kingdom consolidated during the period. During post incorporation period Alaba people experienced substantial change in their socio economic and political conditions like many groups in the south. Changes brought in relation to land in particular and socio economic structure in general in the south (including Alaba) were explained by Markakis(1974:5-6) as follows:

> *In the provinces of south, the issue of land ownership has been resolved with ominous clarity. As a result of expropriation following their conquest, and continued alienation since then, a very large part of the land in these provinces has passed into the hands of landlords who now hold it in permanent, private ownership. A large section of the landlord class in this region represents northerners who were granted land in this area, while the rest represents indigenous elite groups that prospered under Ethiopian rule. The corollary of large scale land alienation is the appearance of a vast class of landless peasants who comprise tenant class in new provinces of Ethiopia. The superimposition of a northerner land lord group, the transformation of indigenous elite into a land owning class, and the concomitant reduction of a large section the southern peasantry to tenancy are the major changes wrought by this process.*

As most elder informants with active memory of the condition a bit latter than incorporation argued that the period was marked with a change of traditional land tenure system where by individuals/households have a use right over their specific land owned by their clan. The individual use right and clan ownership gave a way to increasing land control by representatives of central government at different levels of administrative structures installed by the Ethiopian Empire.

Elderly informants and focus group discussants maintain that the community was exploited by the appointed local officials (*Balabats*). The people were required to provide tributes to the officials in kind. The whole Alaba including open grazing land and forests was divided among *balabats* to secure effective control of the people, tribute collection and land control. As Alaba people had more cattle and they are early on crop production, they were paying tribute in the form of milk, butter, grass and so on to compensate low contribution of crops. What agonizing most informants of the then condition was in addition to the tribute in kind, they were supposed to provide services to local *balabats* on a regular basis. Men and women work in the houses of *balabats* different routine household activities like servants.

As a strategy of Ethiopian empire, during early periods of occupation, the local administration was based on the traditional clan based political organization of Alaba. Most of appointed *balabats* were clan leaders of Alaba land. However, over time the structure was partly replaced by persons appointed by central government.

According to my informants the prevailing situation was significantly changed during the short period occupation of Ethiopia by Italian attempt of the 1935-1939. It was a time where Alaba people relieved from exploitative administration of the Ethiopian Empire. Explaining what happened during the Italian occupation, my informants said that we saw a white men armed with modern guns and protective dress chasing the northerners from all over Alaba land. Though we were confused with what was going around us, we remained neutral in the opposition between Italians and Northerners. Though the Italians focus was evacuation of northerners, large number of Alaba people left their area and stayed in Bilate River side until they realize that Italians intent was not with the local people.

During the five year Italian occupation period, Alaba people enjoyed a right over their land and relieved from burdens and various requirements of local administrators. As initial phase of colonialism, Italians focus during their short stay in Alaba area was on infrastructure development including house, bridges and roads construction. Many of the buildings in Alaba town were constructed during this period. Since Italians maintained friendly relationship with the local people, they encountered less opposition from the people as they were viewed as humanistic compared to the northerners for they require land tax than other services in-kind tribute and denying a right over the land .

With the defeat of Italians around 1945, the improved situation was restored back with the reinstatement of imperial regime. Though the *gabber* system was abolished, the largest size of land was still controlled by land lords. The in-kind tribute was replaced with monitory land tax and this was viewed as the major change introduced during post-Italian occupation. According to most informants the period of post-Italian defeat was viewed as relatively better than before as the various requirements of local *balabats* was reduced and the in-kind tribute was replaced with cash. But, still most of Alaba people were devoid of full right over their land until the coming of military regime to power in 1974. In the course of time the open areas and forest lands were almost converted to agricultural land with increasing population pressure, interest of land lords in the area and introduction of mechanized farm towards the end of Imperial regime.

4.1.3 The 1975 Land Reform

The hostile relation between the disadvantaged majority tenants and the favored land lords by the imperial regime contributed significantly to the 1974 revolution, which brought the military regime to power with the ideology of socialism. Among major changes made by the government, the 1975 land reform can be cited as significant improvement which made land to the tiller and declared land as state property.

According to Desalegn (1985:37) the 1975 land reform proclamation declared that "all rural land to be the collective property of the Ethiopian people". As a result individuals are said to have a use or usufruct right over their land. Thus, land was said not to be sold, rented, leased etc. During this period Peasant Associations were established as the lowest level government administrative units and given the role of effecting the land reform in their respective locality. Among Alaba land which was previously registered by the name of *balabats* was given to the tenants working on that specific *balabat's* land. Land was given back to the tenants. As most informants argued that divorced women and many young individuals were given a

new land by PAs in areas where open areas and communal lands were available. Wives of polygynouse households also received land by their name. As a result, a husband with three or four wives had a land registered by the name of his wives.

Among Alaba as the result of the land reform the people were given the right to use their land without the interference of any intermediary structures that facilitate the exploitation of the local people as was before. Most of the land lords left the area in fear of the negative reaction of the people. While, others who came to the area during and after incorporation periods remained in the area as they were friendly and in good terms with the people.

Though, the early periods of the military regime was regarded as better in terms of destroying the exploitative system and giving the farmers a right over their land, gradually it came with a new kind of settlement and production organization which is new to Alaba people. The villagization, collectivization and the quota production system were imposed on the local people though it was new for them. The whole production system was reorganized under the principle of socialism. PAs and Cooperative offices were established at local level to facilitate the whole process. The attempt of *Derg* to re-organize peasant production along socialism principle was not looked in good terms by majority of farmers who were pressurized by various requirements. The whole course was reversed with the coming of EPRDF which took the peasant production system in capitalist path.

4.1.4 The Situation Under EPRDF

After EPRDF assumed power in 1991, the issue of land tenure was not clear until the government officially proclaim the land as public or state property in the 1995 constitution. EPRDF abandoned state command economic principle and took the path of market-led economy as the overall guiding framework.

During the field work, in the study KA the land holding of each household was on the process of measurement. The initiative was going to be conducted at Woreda level after completing the task in the model KA. Up on completion of the measurement, resident households would be provided with certificate, which contain the name of household head, his wife/wives and their picture, household size, the total land occupied in hectare. According to the information obtained from woreda administrators, the initiative was said to improve productivity by increasing the farmer's confidence over the land under their custody and

lower the insecurity feeling over the land. Though the program was started in one model KA in Alaba, the study KA, the plan is to scale up the initiative at regional level. As observed during the fieldwork it was common to see and hear about dispute on occasions of land measurement among neighbors and even between sons and their parents so that the land would be measured and registered by their name. This is true as sons among Alaba live with the same compound with their parents receiving part of their father's land up on their marriage.

Now, land is increasingly becoming scarce resource among Alaba and becoming an agenda of conflict even among parents and sons. It is not only the population boom that is making land scarce, but the decreasing soil fertility and subsequent reduction of land productivity also contributing its part to the felt constraint.

3.2 Land Acquisition Arrangements among Alaba

As Alaba production system shifted historically from pastoral and agro-pastoral mode to peasant farming several decades ago, land became principal factor of their economic system which is heavily dependent on crop production and cattle herding as integral activity. As a result, to secure their livelihood the people are supposed to have access to specific land. Among Alaba there are different ways of land acquisition arrangements practiced at local level. Households in short of land or landless farmers can have access to land in exchange with the resources at their disposal. Better-off farmers (with more land and livestock) also maximize their benefit in accessing more land in exchange with others. Thus, land flows among different farmers at different level of socioeconomic status in traditionally acceptable manner. The following arrangements can be presented as major forms of land acquisition among Alaba.

3.2.1 Inheritance

Alaba kinship organization is patrilineal whereby the male line is considered as important both in tracing the fore fathers and property inheritance. As a result, inheritance is the dominant form of land access among them. Up on their marriage, sons are provided with a plot of land by their parents as the source of their livelihood. Since post-marriage settlement is parti-local, sons live with their parents usually in the same or adjacent compound. In contrary, girls on their marriage leave their parent's home and join the family of their husbands and they traditionally have no right to inherit or access to land. Instead girls would be provided by their family with gifts (*erifo*) up on their marriage.

Among Alaba parents favor the eldest son in most aspects of life including house hold leadership, family affair management, property inheritance, representation etc and other provisions and treatment. Similarly, it is the begotten son that would be given a largest share of land as compared to his young brothers up on the death of their father and marriage of the son. Death of father and marriage of sons are the two major life events that lead to inheritance of land among Alaba. Thus, the eldest son will have a decision making power over his father's land and would allocate a plot of land up on marriage of his brothers in accordance to the local tradition.

When ever the issue of land inheritance or management is unresolved at family level, the case would be treated by lineage elders (*Boki Ogate*) who are vested a responsibility to manage any affair of their lineage (*Boku*). An individual also inherit the land up on the death of his brother and marry the widow. Though, land inheritance is the dominant form of land access among Alaba, in the last decades increasing shortage of land due to population pressure is leading young persons particularly to look for other alternatives to access land. As the land is divided among sons, it would be difficult for allocate and reallocate a plot of land over generations in similar trend. Nowadays, fragmentation of land is becoming an issue to large number of farmers among Alaba. The average land holding size has been shrinking significantly and presently reached up to 1.5 hectare/household.

3.2.2 Share Cropping (*Kabe*)

Kabe is increasingly becoming one of the most important form of land acquisition among Alaba where by land is exchanged for labor. Generally, as the young persons are inheriting small plot of land from their fathers, it is natural to them to look for other land to ensure access to sufficient food throughout the year. Thus, usually land-rich farmers in the area enter this kind of arrangement with labor-rich household. There are two types of *kabe* arrangement predominately known among the study area. The first one is practiced with *Kabancho*(share cropper) coming from adjacent ethnic groups where land shortage is a critical problem. There are large numbers of periodic migrants in the area coming from groups like Kambatta, Tambaro and Hadiya. The second form of share cropping is practiced among Alaba themselves (in-group *kabe*). There is evident shift from share cropping with outsiders to in-group sharecropping among Alaba themselves as development resulting from land shortage. Both forms are presented below.

3.2.2.1 *Kabe* with Outsiders (Migrant Workers)

It is well known fact that *enset* growing areas in the south are among the densely populated parts of the country in general and the south region in particular. According to the 2002 report of the population and Statistics Bureau of South Region, agricultural density/ km^2 for Kambatta, Hadiya and Tambaro is estimated to be 464, 433 and 464 persons respectively as compared to Alaba which is 255 persons. As a result large number of individuals seasonally migrates to different areas where land is relatively available. Alaba is one of the areas where several persons migrate to engage in agricultural activities periodically. Usually the migrants stay in the area during peak seasons of agricultural activities starting from land preparation and ploughing season up to harvesting time. As most informant share croppers/*kabancho* said they stay on average more than four months among Alaba performing various seasonal production activities.

Kabano (plural) from adjacent ethnic groups come to Alaba usually with or without hoe. Except this, what they posses is their labor power and skill required to perform the seasonal production task. *Kabano* are usually of young and early adult hood age persons. The agreement is usually based in conventionally accepted manner where the landowner negotiates with share cropper orally in the presence of few witnesses. After entering the agreement on the amount of crop share, list of tasks and activities to be undertaken, the period of stay, other terms and conditions being negotiated, the share cropper (*Kabancho*) involve in routine tasks of production including land preparation, ploughing, sowing/planting, weeding, harvesting and threshing. Beside the conventionally agreed responsibility, share croppers undertake different household activities. They collect fire wood, care for animals and perform other activities both at the home and on the field. Throughout their stay in the area, they live like any member of the household. They share the home and food, participate in any social concerns like funeral, marriage ceremony and attend periodic markets with in their vicinity. But, they are not allowed to be absent for significant days away from the locality unless there is critical problem in their place of origin.

A share cropper/*kabancho* who attempts to be outside the locality for various reasons is not looked in good terms by the land owner since he is considered as "agricultural activity manager". He should observe and safe guard the field as a major responsible person. The desired behavior of share cropper is that he is supposed to be obedient, diligent and disciplined during his stay. Up on fulfilling all his responsibility the share cropper would provides with the amount of crop agreed at the beginning. The acceptable rate of share is estimated to be equal production of the plot negotiated for the arrangement. Usually, share

cropping cereals are maize and sorghum. Whereas, pepper and *teff* are less likely to be produced for share as both are considered as cash crops.

Though, the share cropper enters to agreement to share from the yield of specific plot of the owner, he undertakes periodic production activities all over the land owned by the owner. Though, he has no share, he is expected to work on land on which he will not have share of the yield. Agonizing experience of such arrangement is incidence of crop failure that is unfortunate event for both parties.

Whenever the two parties agree, the share cropper can be paid on cash basis after the amount of crop that he takes is converted in to monitory terms based on the market price. As most informant sharecroppers and land owners believe, since the share of the production increases with the size of the yield, share croppers try to perform the best they can to increase the productivity of the land. On the other hand, the land owner-sharer would supply all necessary inputs including seed, fertilizer, and provide hoe, sickle, farm ox and plow.

The continuity of the arrangement after one year to the other largely depends on the agreement of the two parties. Performance of sharecropper, the level of obedience and his behavior are considered as desirable conditions of the sharecropper for renewal of the share-cropping arrangement. On the other hand, the kind of treatment and fairness of crop sharing by landowner are also important factors considered by share cropper.

More presently, the increasing land shortage is significantly decreasing sharecropping arrangement with outsiders more than any time. There is also an initiative from government side to discourage sharecropping arrangement with outsiders as it is viewed as one factor contributing for under employment of Alaba farmers and wastage of time in other less productive activity than agricultural activity. As the farmers keeps a distance from their field giving their land for others, their knowledge and skill is said to be deteriorating.

3.2.2.2 *Kabe* within Alaba

It is evident fact that in the last decade share cropping arrangement with other adjacent ethnic groups is declining. Presently the increasing trend is sharecropping arrangement with in Alaba themselves. Since land shortage is becoming felt problem among Alaba, large number of farmers are engaged in

sharecropping with their neighbors, relatives, and friends who are relatively land-rich. Though, the arrangement is predominantly a coping mechanism for landless and land short farmers, some entrepreneurial farmers also use it as one way of maximizing their earnings putting their household labor fully engaged. Besides, female headed households, old aged parents, disabled and other disadvantaged and vulnerable households also involve in such kind of arrangement as they own land and seek labor for agricultural activity. Usually, when the disadvantaged households fail to have close kin or neighbor/ friend, they would enter share cropping arrangement. In share cropping arrangement geographic proximity, kinship ties, neighborliness and friendship are important factors considered by the concerned parties.

Share cropping with in Alaba themselves vary from that of outsiders in many respects. Unlike the arrangement with outsiders/migrants, in insiders' share cropping the share cropper is supposed to undertake seasonal production activities on the land only he will have a share. He is not expected to carry out either extra-farm activities nor outside the plot he would not have a share. Since the arrangement is between persons in the same locality, the sharer stays at his home and performs the farm activities by traveling back and forth travel during the production season. Up on the end of the production season/harvest time, both parties receive equal share based on a locally acceptable measurement mechanism. When ever, there is disagreement throughout the production period and up to sharing of crop, the local elders interfere and resolve possible tension between parties. As land increasingly becomes scarce, young individuals are in trouble for they don not have adequate land that they inherit from their parents. As a result share cropping is becoming one of the major land acquisition arrangements among Alaba.

3.2.3 Contractual Acquisition of Land

Among different options, accessing land through cash payment is one of the recent phenomena in the study area. In this kind of arrangement any person who needs land enters in to agreement to take the land on contract basis for specific production period and pays cash for the land he uses. Though, the agreement is usually entered with oral agreement in the presence of witnesses from both parties, now farmers started to prepare written agreement. The practice is more common in areas near to urban areas like Alaba.

Farmers give their land on contract basis for various reasons. Many of the informants explained that when households are in need of money for various pressing social needs they tend to give their land on contract

basis for any one who affords the cost. Some of the reasons to rent land include lack of money to give as bride wealth, to cover medical expenses, to rent or buy farm ox, to cope with shortage of manpower among vulnerable and disadvantaged households, to fulfill the requirement for other urgent and unexpected social happenings. An estimate for renting one hectare land in the study area is about 250 birr/year.

3.3 Traditional Household's Land Classification

Among Alaba the land under custody of a household in particular and a village in general is traditionally classified based on the purpose it serves. The land of a given household can be conveniently classified as *Kafate*, *Mine*, *Getit*, and *Karmet*. The land based on its taxonomy serves various socio-cultural, economic, and administrative purposes. Though there is slight variation from one locality to another, generally the aforementioned classification can be taken as the dominant local land use pattern and design engineered by the society and transferring from generation to generation changing with dynamism related with the land shortage.

3.3.1 *Kafate*

Among Alaba *Kafate* is a foreyard situated in front of *mine* (hut). A person who stands on the gate of a *mine* (hut) can see the open area usually covered with grass and trees. The area is usually thinly fenced with thorny trees or eucalyptus for both security and demarcation purpose. Locally the size of *Kafate* is related with the socioeconomic status of a household. Better-off farmers owe usually large size *Kafate* and poor households have small plot of it. A man entering a compound of a household is stepping on *Kafate* to get in to *mine* (hut).

Kafate serves multi-purposes among Alaba. It is a plot of land where there are trees that serves as a shade for resting and entertainment. Among Alaba people spent their leisure time under tree and this is particularly true during sunny days and slack production periods. Whenever there is a need, the neighbor households also part take on such occasions. The function of *kafate* is not only limited for elders and adults but it also serves as a playground for children. Socially, *Kafate* is an area where marriage, funeral and religious activities are under taken by the community. The trees serve as place where elders carry out their leadership role and community affair management function. Traditional administrative council of Alaba (*ogate*) literally refers to a canopy of a tree where elders seat and treat different community members' cases. Thus, *Kafate* is distinguished as a place of multiple social activities. Among Alaba communal

mosques are very few. The people usually construct a small hut in front of their hut and perform their periodic prayer (*Solat*) regularly. *Chat* chewing, a common social activity/practice among Alaba, takes place here. Post harvest production activities also take place in *Kafate*. Threshing of *teff* and millet is carried out here and almost all crops after harvest are stored in a small hut (granary) situated in *Kafate*. After washing their clothes in the near by pond, river or other water source, the people also dry up their clothes in *kafate*. Besides, part of the woodland is also located in front yard.

When the land was not scarce as it is today, there were open grazing lands in a village where animals spent. However, with increasing population size and land shortage, Alaba society has been starting to herd cattle in *kafate*. Previously, *kafate* was only a place for short time stay of animals. But, presently because of grazing land shortage, animals stay in *kafate* throughout the day. In addition to land shortage, as children started attending formal education, taking animals to distant village area is also becoming a difficult task for some households among Alaba where open land exists.

3.3.2 Mine

Among Alaba *mine* (home) is situated next to *kafate* in central location. Until they adopt a hut from an adjacent group, Alaba people lived in a loosely constructed and temporarily built in houses. It was not far before Italian occupation that Alaba began constructing a grass thatched hut with wooden wall. Until recently, people coming from other adjacent area take hut construction as their income generating activity among Alaba. As informants said the design of a hut is similar with Kembatta and Silte area. Ecalyptus tree, bamboo, rope and grass are major materials used to construct a hut in the area.

Since hut construction requires more labor, it is usually done in cooperative group (*dawa*). Preparing a mud and plastering a wall is the role of women. Whereas men take the leading role in cutting trees, bringing to the area, making the roof and erecting pillar/*uttubo* and bringing grass. Up on completion of a hut construction, the people celebrate on the occasion calling villagers, relatives and friends. During the occasion the owner of the new hut organizes a feast. Hut construction among Alaba is part of preparation for a new or second marriage. As a tradition the size and the quality of a hut distinguishes the socioeconomic status of the owner among Alaba.

Though festive work group (*dawa*) is the dominant way of constructing a hut, the very poor and vulnerable households obtain free assistance from their kinsmen and neighbors. When a hut is fired for various reasons, it is an event where the victim receives cooperative assistance from the people as a strong tradition among Alaba.

A hut is divided in to three quarters. A partition is usually made of either with bamboo material or muddy wall. The first part is front part called *geta* (salon). Here there is a local bed made of mud (*medeba*). It is used for spending time during day time, payer (solat) and as a bed for quests. The backside of the partition is said *tato* (bed room). A hut also hosts animals during night and this part is called *gadura*. When the size of cattle is large, as it was early times, an open and wooden fence would be constructed being attached with the hut and it is called *bekerera*-separate cattle residing quarter attached with the hut at the back. The cattle enter through main gate of the hut and pass to the *bekerera*. Nowadays, since the size of cattle per household is small, people started to leave construction of *bekerera*.

3.3.3 *Getit*

Getit (backyard) is an area just behind the *mine*. Among Alaba there is a horizontal fence that separates *kafate* from *getit* in both sides of a *mine*. Here scanty fruit and other plants are found. It is also in this part of land that vegetables, spice and root crops are found. Farmers who involves in beekeeping also hang beehives at the back side of a *mine*. Among others cabbage and potato are the dominant in *gete*. Crops and trees in *gete* are major food source during food deficit months just before a harvest. In Alaba crops that mature during food deficient season are called *foli faesanu(life saviors)*.

3.3.4 *Karme*

Among Alaba *karma (field)* takes the largest share of land under custody of a house hold as it is part of the land where crops are grown on which a family is dependent for its livelihood. Starting from sowing or planting season up to harvest time, this part of land would be separated from *gete* with temporary fence to protect the entrance of animals and children to the field. Besides, after the harvest the fence will be removed so that animals feed on the residues of crops. *karme* (field) is the last part of a household land. Land rich farmers also have a plot of land called *baddat* which serves as a grazing land for animals. Usually it is located next to *karme* around border area at the back of *karme*. Because of land shortage a grazing land size is significantly shrinking and used mostly as crop growing area (*Karme*). Trees are planted

throughout the border areas and serve both as a wood land and demarcation of household's land. Eucalyptus is the widely grown and the dominant type of tree in Alaba land. The effect of explosive population growth in the past decades is evidently manifested through destruction of natural forest and increased land size used for crop production. Thus, the border areas used as grazing and wood land were gradually converted into *karme*.

Level of soil fertility varies across the type of land classification. Usually backyard (*getit*) is more fertile than the field (*Karmae*) because of its distance from the hut and the type of crops grown. Since backyard is found next to hut, household waste materials and residues that improve land fertility often are dumped around backyard. As a result the area has better soil fertility. Besides, in backyard there are fruit and coffee plants. These tree plants protect soil erosion and when their leaves fall on ground and decomposed, it also contributes for soil fertility. Though foreyard (*Kafate*) is not used for crop production, mostly it is more fertile than other parts of household's plot as it is not cultivated.

Further more, there is also variation in the level of soil fertility in the part of land classified as either field or backyard because of the type of soil, extent of susceptibility to soil erosion, slop of the area etc. Thus, households recognize variation in the level of soil fertility in different parts of their plot and its influence on crop production. As a result whenever they use organic or inorganic fertilizer, they do it in consideration of fertility difference. For instance, if a specific part of land is classified as less fertile, they use more fertilizer to improve its productivity as compared to other part of land regarded as better in terms of fertility.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. LABOR ORGANIZATION OF PRODUCTION AMONG ALABA

Labor is one of the principal factors of production among Alaba society. Agricultural activities are carried out by household members in accordance with conventionally acceptable rules based on division of task on certain attributes like sex, age and so on. There are activities to be performed by men, women, boys and girls. Every one contributes to sustainability of a household (*Aboroso*) by full filing traditionally prescribed roles and responsibilities. Besides, whenever the task is beyond the capacity of a household, there are traditional forms of labor organizations formed for mutual benefit among different families. Both household and inter-household labor organizations of Alaba are presented below.

5.1 Household Labor Organization

Like any agricultural society, Alaba society has its own way of organizing labor, division of tasks and responsibility sharing tradition.

Aboroso among Alaba is primarily consisted of a husband, his wife /wives, their children and relatives or adopted persons. Households act as independent production unit to sustain themselves. Even in the case of polygynous households where wives live on different huts located in the same compound, all members pull their labor as a social unit than in separation to carry out production activity. Among Alaba whenever a man wants to marry a second or additional wife, he is supposed to construct separate hut to his new wife. But, all wives cooperate in carrying out any task of their extended family. Usually, a young wife is said to assist the senior wife or wives. Generally, polygynous household units act as a socioeconomic unit in all respect of household affairs unless there is serious tension among wives and their children.

In Alaba society women perform a range of household activities. They are overloaded throughout the year as compared to men whose workload varies depending on production season. Some of the domestic chores carried out by women include preparing food, caring for children, collecting firewood, fetching water, cleaning cattle pen and house, feeding and milking cows, attending market etc. Women are occupied by these daily routine activities starting from early morning up to mid night. Besides the domestic service they also participate in seasonal crop production activities during land preparation and harvesting.

Men, on the other hand, undertake mainly field activities and play managerial role in over all life of their family. Major periodic production activities undertaken by men include land preparation, ploughing, weeding, harvesting and threshing. They are primarily responsible to sell their produce in market and buy major items for household consumptive purpose. Children are socialized following the role model of their parents. Hence, girls assist their mothers at home. Where as boys are socialized and trained to pursue their father's foot step and involve mainly in field activities.

Among Alaba traditionally boys are favored or preferred than girls for various socioeconomic reasons. According to my informants boys live with their parents and assist them in many respects even after marriage. While girls leave their home after marriage and their contribution to their parent is not significant as compared to boys. As a result boys are valued and treated well than girls. But, before marriage girls' contribution to their family welfare is substantial for they assist their mother in household chore.

5.2 Inter-Household Labor Organization

Erasmus (1954) and Donham (1987) discussed two major forms of inter-household labor organizations as common features among peasant societies. These two forms of organization are termed as "festive" and "reciprocal exchange". On the first kind of arrangement a needy household organizes a labor party by requesting voluntary farmers to work for him. He prepares feast for participants who join him in carrying out seasonal agricultural activities. According to this arrangement, the organizer is not required to reciprocate for the service he obtained. In "reciprocal exchange", on the other hand, farmers take part in each others' work party which is organized in rotation. Every one is expected to give in return for the service provided to him in a similar manner. As far as the number of participants in the work group is concerned, festive labor party is usually bigger than that of reciprocal exchange.

Likewise among Alaba there are different forms of arrangement where labor flows among households. Major inter-household forms of labor organization and forms of labor access are discussed below.

5.2.1 *Geza*

Geza is small work group formed to carryout production activities when a household is in short of labor power during ploughing and harvesting season. Since a single household is not in a position to manage the periodic activities independently, it participates in such kind of labor party. *Geza* is popular labor

arrangement among Alaba where by needy households exchange labor with one another in the form of rotation. Thus, it is need based voluntary arrangement that represents perfect cooperation and self help initiative among Alaba to exchange labor in reciprocal manner.

Geza usually consists of 3-6 individuals voluntarily agreed to help each other. It normally lasts for a half day. It starts in the morning (at 9 a.m., after coffee) and ends at 1:00 P.M. Conventionally participants are householdheads though occasionally they can be represented by their young sons whenever there is justifiable reason for absence. Since *geza* is a balanced labor exchange based on common understanding and consensus between partakers, the farmers have moral obligation to reciprocate. Failure to reciprocate will result in social disapproval and complaint. Apart from such simple grievances, members are not liable to any kind of punishment. Since individuals want to maintain peaceful relation, build good image and maximize social acceptance, everyone wants to ensure the return of what he received.

Location (neighborliness), blood or marriage ties and friendship are important factors considered to enter into *Geza* arrangement. Usually, people like to form the work group with individuals in their locality to ease travel, save time and for performing some activities in their own farms after the labor party is over. The more the persons are closer either in terms of location or kinship ties, there would be a wide range of social interaction and the lesser violation of the agreed arrangements. As a result *geza* is formed by individuals with close relation. The land of participants is also said of equal size to ensure balanced labor return.

Geza can be initiated by an individual who would like to form such a group. Up on the agreement of informed farmers, members plan when to work on each others field. Once the days are fixed, every body is supposed to come to the field of the hosting person. To avoid possible lateness or absence, children would be sent to each home so that they recall participants. If the season is of ploughing, participants are supposed to come with oxen and plow. While, during a harvest season for *teff* and millet participants come with their *zezera* (sickle). But, maize and sorghum harvesting necessitates having *gegera* (machete).

During the working day of the labor party, participants perform the seasonal production task jointly in the field. Whenever individuals carry out production activities, local songs and plays are common to keep them fresh and energized.

Up on completion of the field work, the wife/wives of *geza* organizer bring coffee and roasted grain to the field around 1:00 PM. Children assist their mothers when they prepare and bring it to the field. Then, farmers take a rest and enjoy what is brought to them. While drinking coffee, *geza* participants discuss different personal and social issues. Finally, the group work ends with best wish and blessings of participants to the hosting farmer.

Geza has been used by Woreda Agriculture development desk to introduce water harvesting schemes in the study locality. Thus, farmers form *geza* and dug small ponds around their farmstead in rotation.

5.2.2 *Dawa*

Dawa is another important group work arrangement in the study area which is expensive in terms of the feast preparation to many of the average and poor households. In *dawa* the number of participants ranges from 10-15 persons depending on the land size and the work type. In *dawa* the farmer who needs additional labor, spread a word to his closer neighbors, friends and kinsmen. After securing their consent, he informs the day he wants their assistance.

Based on the request of the hosting farmer, the labor party would undertake production activities for the whole day. *Dawa* partakers start the field work at 9:00 A.M and cease at 6:00 P.M. Thus, participants of the labor party come to the field of organizer in the morning and spend the whole day working with him.

The organizer's wife, on her part, prepares lunch and serves the participants with the food in the field. Commonly prepared food items for *dawa* include *injera*, *Shiro wot* (grain sauce) and local beverage (*farso*). Participants would be served with the food at 1:00 P.M and take a rest as well. After the feast, again participants work until the sunsets. During the field work of *dawa* jokes and songs are important energizers used to keep the partakers fresh by preventing sense of fatigue. Usually, on such kind of labor party one person would be assigned to mobilize and supervise the progress of the work.

After completing the periodic production task, the participants again would be served with dinner at the home of the organizer. Finally, participants and organizer of the work party would be blessed by elderly person as a closing event for *dawa*. Further more, *dawa* serves as an important occasion to discuss on a

range of social issues among the study locality. It is a social event whereby a lot of information is exchanged among participants.

Dawa necessitates preparation of adequate feast for the participants. As a result it is only those who afford the feast can benefit out of the arrangement. Usually, land-rich and better-off farmers organize *dawa* and obtain the labor service. But, poor and average households tend to participate in *geza* than *dawa* for it is costly to them. In *dawa* work party, labor service flows to one direction for the organizer is not expected to reciprocate for the service he obtained. But, in *geza* work party the labor service flows to both direction as participants reciprocate for the labor service they receive.

Participants in *dawa* carry out production activities to the organizer as a social commitment. The organizer in turn is conventionally required to prepare the feast. The arrangement is not based on cost-benefit analysis, rather it is the social drive that guides participants. As the field work observation and discussion with *dawa* participant's support, social image, kinship affiliation, religious perceptions and locality are important to secure labor assistance in the form of *dawa*. Participants usually come with their oxen and plow if it is ploughing season. During harvest season, they either come with *zezera*/sickle or *gejera*/machate depending on the type of crop.

Part of the field work of this study was conducted during land preparation and ploughing season. As a result it enabled to observe group work arrangement where by households exchange labor with one another in different forms and gave the researcher a good opportunity to participate in different group work and discuss with the farmers in the field.

Though, *dawa* is primarily men's arrangement, women and children participate in some of the activities. During harvesting season, women play significant role in transporting the harvested crops/bundle. There is also women's *dawa* where they assist each other during hut construction. Women's group prepares the mud and plasters the wooden wall as their major role in hut construction. The remaining activities would be responsibility of men's *dawa*.

5.2.3 *Elfigna*

Elfigna is the most elaborated form of labor party among Alaba society. Both the number of participant and the scale of feast is of high level. *Elfigna* is usually organized by very rich farmers in terms of land size and livestock ownership. The number of participants in such kind of labor party reaches up to hundred and beyond. *Elfigna* shares similarity with *dawa* in many respects except the size of individuals, the scale of feast and labor mobilizing mechanism.

In *elfigna* arrangement the labor needy person first consults his closest kens, friends and neighbors to convince them that he is in need of large size of labor. His closest men in turn consult and secure the willingness of their nearby kens, friends and neighbors. Through the mediation of his closest men, the organizer will have access to the labor of several people in the locality. Thus, *elfigna* involves two steps of mobilizing labor. Firstly, the organizer initiates his best friends and close kens. Secondly, organizer's best friends and closest kens in turn mobilize their closest men so that they extend their assistance to the organizer. Among Alaba, *elfigna* is the most prestigious and expensive form of labor organization. It proves the commitment of kens and friends to the mediating persons and the work party hosting persons. Mediating persons are 'evaluated' by the number of participant they bring to the field or the work group. In the process of labor mobilization, there is social competition among mediating persons.

In line with the consent made with mediating persons, all requested persons would come to the field of the organizer with necessary farm tools and oxen depending on the type of production activities. Since the number of participants in *elfigna* labor party is significant, mediating persons serve as leader of their men in the field work when they carry out seasonal production activities. Throughout the time of field work entertaining jokes and local songs are common as used to stir up the partakers. Since the number of participants in *Elfigna* work party is large, usually all persons does not involve in the production activity at the same time. When certain group works, the other takes a rest.

During lunch time (1:00 P.M) it would be a break hour where participants enjoy the elaborated feast. The wife of the hosting person prepares the feast at home and brings to the field. During feast preparation the neighbors assist her and also accompany when she brings to the field and serve the participants. *Elfigna* is very expensive type of labor party in terms of the feast requirement. It involves slaughtering of bull, making *injera* and coffee, roasting grain (bean, peas), preparing butter for the heads of participants, brewing local

liquor(*farso*) and availing *chat (stimulant plant)*. Among Alaba *elfigna* serves other social purposes as well. It is also an occasion where individuals exchange ideas and deal with several local issues and concerns on informal basis.

Like *dawa* the field work of *elfigna* comes to an end before the sunsets. Then, the participants would be served with the feast at the home of the organizer. Before participants of work party go to their home, there is a ceremony whereby the wife of organizer put a piece of fresh butter on partakers' head as symbol of blessing for their tireless contribution. Lastly, elders bless participants and the family of organizer by wishing good future and prosperity.

Apart from its economic importance, *elfigna* demonstrates the better status of the organizer among the community. It is one way of proving the wealth of some one in socially acceptable form. Presently, the number of individuals organizing *elfigna* is sharply declining in the study locality. During the field work in the study KA, Gedeba, informants reported that only two farmers organized *elfigna* during the production season. The decreasing land size per household, costly feast and availability of hired labor can be cited as some of the socioeconomic factors contributing for decline of *elfigna* in the study locality.

5.2.4 *Wolkata uchu*

Like in any peasant society there are different groups of people who are disadvantaged and vulnerable because of natural or man made factors and accommodated by local community in the study area. Among Alaba they are generally called *hongano* (literally means the weak). Persons in this category include aged individuals, persons with disability, female headed households, child headed families, divorced women, families affected by occasional accident or problems like death, sickness etc. Customarily, people within the same locality help each other. *Hongano* are provided with free labor service by their kens, friends and neighbors. Among Alaba *hongano* are assisted by others in carrying out their production activities. People give them their hands to undertake the periodic tasks without expecting material gain for needy persons. Both the religion and their tradition value the importance of helping the *hongano*. Still, kinship ties, locality and friendship are important considerations in helping some one. Vulnerable Persons access labor through begging (in local terms it is said *Wolkat uchu)*.Lineage members are supposed to help each other in every respect including production activities. In some occasions people started to solicit some kind of gain from *hongano* as they are starting to be alert for the return of their contribution. For instance, one of female

headed informant said that she is involved in share cropping arrangement to access labor than getting free service as was during the time of early times.

5.2.5 Hired Labor

The weakening of customary group work arrangement among Alaba is gradually converting labor into monetized form. It is not uncommon to see hired labor in the study area. Previously, the migrant workers from the adjacent groups come to the area for share cropping. In course of time, they started to involve in periodic cash work on production activities like ploughing/hoeing, harvesting, threshing and hut construction. They carry out specific task and receive cash for their services. Recently, hiring labor for specific production activities is becoming one of important forms of labor access. This is particularly true in areas near to urban areas.

A wind of individualism is blowing over the traditional forms of labor arrangement as witnessed by weakening of the inter-household labor exchange practices and gradual uplifting of hired labor as important mechanism to access labor. Nowadays, not only migrant workers, but large number of Alaba young boys started to engage in cash earning labor services in the production activities. As the data obtained from the field indicates, an average price for one day labor service is about 4 birr.

Declining land size per household, 'economically unfeasible' feast preparation for festive labor party and the weakening of social ties and communal values, mounting individualistic thinking and life can be cited as important factors contributing for declining of the local self-help labor arrangement. More over, the feast is also viewed by government body as extravagant practice and discouraged. As careful analysis of the field data hints, the people tend to explain the web of changes in the labor organization as something associated with increasing interaction with the external environment and as evil brought with the course of time. The introduction of cash crop, expansion of rural markets, urbanization and subsequent exposure to external influence tend to under play the local values or organizations in interrelated and reinforcing fashion. When an elderly informant explains the changing situation he said that "people are thinking in terms of personal gain than kinship or other social ties that governs the interpersonal relation and cooperation in previous time". Generally, as the result of the aforementioned various social, an economic and political reason, festive labor party is declining among Alaba. Consequently, hired labor is becoming not uncommon in the study area.

CHAPTER SIX

6. PRODUCTION PRACTICES AMONG THE ALABA

6.1 Crop Production

6.1.1 Seasonal Crop Production Activities

Among Alaba the major crops produced in order of importance include maize, *teff*, pepper (capsicum annuum), sorghum and finger millet. Maize, sorghum and finger millet are viewed as subsistence crops produced largely for household consumption. Pepper and *teff*, on the other hand, are produced mainly for the market. Pepper is a cash crop widely grown by most farmers. As opposed to *teff* which is occasionally used for consumption purpose, pepper is entirely produced for the market.

The Seasonal agricultural activities start among Alaba in February when small rains begin and end in late November with a harvest and threshing activities. The production cycle along with major seasonal activities of the study area is discussed below.

6.1.1.1 Land preparation and Ploughing

Before ploughing land has to be cleared and prepared. Except kids all family members participate in land preparation activities. Clearing land is usually carried out with hand, hoe/*kelta* and machete/*gegera*. Dried weeds and wild plants, crop residues of last harvest, stones and other foreign things in the farm plot would be removed during/ prior days of ploughing.

Once the land is cleared, the next activity is ploughing. Ploughing usually begins in February for maize, sorghum and finger millet. Whereas ploughing of *teff* and pepper takes place in May and April respectively. Like in most part of the country oxen-drawn wooden plow with iron tip is used for ploughing land in Alaba. As most elders of the land argue oxen-drawn plow was adopted after incorporation. Some of the elders believe that it was introduced by northerners after incorporation while others argue that it was said to be adopted from adjacent ethnic groups like Kembatta and Hadiya who used to be plow cultivators long ago. However, it is undeniable fact that crop production is accelerated and scaled up with the incorporation of Alaba to Ethiopian empire. Though the plow is said adopted from adjacent ethnic groups, the wide adoption can be attributed to the effect of the incorporation.

The frequency of ploughing land largely depends on the level of soil fertility, availability of man power and oxen for different cereal crops. Farmers in the study area argue that the number of ploughing significantly influences the amount of yield.

Before sowing, a plot of land allocated for maize would be ploughed for 3-4 times both vertically and horizontally. *Teff* usually requires ploughing the land more times than maize since it needs more soften and well prepared plot. As mot informants explained a land is ploughed 4-6 times before sowing *teff*. Finger millet and sorghum need ploughing the land 3-5 times before sowing. Pepper needs seedling raising in a virgin plot or seed bed in a separate land. Front yard is usually used as seedling raising area if there is no virgin land in garden or field of the farmer. Since the seedlings require more water, availability of water sources like pond and river within the vicinity is imperative. It is also common to see people raising pepper seedling in the riverside and selling it to farmers. Once the seedling is raised, it would be transplanted after a month to the major farm plot on May. A farm plot of pepper would be cultivated with hoe for about 3-5 times before transplanting.

Proper ploughing is important to soften the soil, mix top fertile soil with the underneath soil and opening the ground for air and water. As most informants argue clearing land and ploughing are the most laborious tasks of crop production activities. It is not only a matter of physical power but skill is also important to properly plough a land and make it ready for sowing.

Inter-household labor and oxen exchange arrangements are common during ploughing season for the task requires more than the labor available in ones' home. Teaming Oxen (*goba assu*) is an arrangement usually practiced by households in short of farm ox. Those who do not have an ox at all, usually exchange their labor for an ox or access on contract/cash basis. The ratio of human labor service and farm oxen exchange is 1 to 1 i.e. a pair of ox would be given for one day to labor service of one day. Similarly, in the study area a farm ox contract payment for one production season is about 200 birr. During the contract period the recipient is said to take care and properly manage the farm ox under his custody.

Vulnerable and disadvantaged households usually will have access to farm oxen with the assistance of close relatives or friends. As regards to labor, *geza* is very common form of balanced labor exchange rampant during ploughing season. *Dawa* is also organized by better off farmers. *Elfigna*, on the other hand,

is exceptionally organized by land-rich and well to do households in the area. As a recent development hired labor is also used as one of important ways of access to labor during ploughing period.

6.1.1.2 Sowing/Planting

The production activity that follows land preparation and ploughing is sowing/planting which begins in April for maize, sorghum, and finger millet and in May for pepper and *teff*. Exact Sowing/planting time largely depends on the pattern and distribution of the rainfall. During the sowing/planting season the level of soil moisture is an important condition for the seeds to get out of buried state and come to the upper ground. As a result the farmers try to be sure the condition of rain in order to sow/plant on the right time and they are often flexible as they observe the pattern of rainfall. This is a period where every one prays to the rain and engages in hot discussion about the lateness, timeliness or early rain reception. Any deviation of rainfall from the normal condition irritates farmers as their life is totally dependent on rain fed agriculture.

Sowing of maize, *teff*, and sorghum is done by broad casting with hands and usually it is carried out by men. Since the distribution of the seed on the farm plot is supposed to be even, it requires some sort of skill to evenly broadcast with hands. As a result adults are primarily responsible for broadcasting seeds. Women and children assist adults in transportation of seed to the field from home and carrying the seed following the adults on the farm plot/field. After broadcasting, the farm plot would be ploughed to cover seeds on the surface with soil and protect it from birds.

Planting of pepper is done with hand. A seedling raised in other plot would be transplanted after a month to the field during May. A farmer plants pepper seedling on a row keeping equal distance between the seedlings to avoid food competition and increase productivity. After holding a seedling with their hand, the farmers put the root on hole like structure prepared and deepen the root in the soil and cover the root with more soil.

6.1.1.3 Weeding

Weeding takes place in May and June for maize, sorghum and finger millet. The weeding period of *teff* and pepper is August to September and July to August respectively. Weeding is carried out in order to clear the crops from weeds that compete for food and to up root unwanted crops and give sufficient space between

crops so that water and air easily reaches to all parts of the plot and the root of crops. As most informants discuss proper weeding facilitates early maturity of crops and improves the yield of crops.

Weeding of maize and sorghum takes a form of cultivating the farm with hoe (*kelta*) whereby weeds would be up rooted with hoe after a week from sowing. After two weeks again the whole field would be ploughed two times. The last and third round of weeding would be carried out after a month by ploughing the farm. During this time thin and unproductive maize and sorghum plants would be avoided from the plot. Though most farmers have plough and yoke, they do not have oxen. As a result farmers access farm oxen through different exchange arrangements. Weeding of *teff* is done after a month sawn by uprooting weeds with hand. Since weeding is laborious task, it requires working in group. Nowadays, farmers started to use herbicide than weeding *teff* with hand. As a result weeding *teff* is becoming more of household's task than group work. Farmers borrow sprayer from Kebele agriculture development station agent and buy the chemical from market. Since spraying does not require much skill, the farmers can do it by themselves once they are oriented with it. Weeding of finger millet is done with hand after a month it is sawn. Usually for *teff* and finger millet farmers exert maximum effort at land preparation and ploughing and sowing period to avoid possible overwhelming of the farm with weeds. Since both crops are densely sawn, weeding becomes difficult. Thus, farmers take care to minimize weeds at early periods.

Weeding of pepper is carried out by cultivating the plot with hoe and uprooting weeds with hand after 2 weeks of planting. With an interval of two weeks, it would be weeded for two times. If there is still weed and the pepper is not growing as expected, weeding would be undertaken for the fourth time to facilitate the growth of the plant.

61.1.4 Harvesting and Threshing

Harvesting and threshing are the last activities in agricultural cycle of crop production among Alaba. Maize, Sorghum and pepper are harvested and threshed between November and December. While, *teff* and finger millet are harvested and threshed in December and November respectively.

Harvesting of Maize and Sorghum is done by cutting of the stalk around the bottom with machete *Igejera*. The lower part of maize and sorghum usually would be left on the field as livestock feed when it is fresh and to be used as a fire wood when it dries up. In terms of labor division, men are primarily responsible to

harvest and thresh. While, women and children play significant role in transporting the harvest from the field to storage often located in *Kafate* (foreyard).

Once the crops are harvested, the bundle would be transported to home. If the field is located in distance place pack animals (particularly donkey) would be used to transport the harvest. Otherwise, transportation of harvested crop is normally carried out by women and children when the field is near to home.

Threshing of *teff* and finger-millet involves plastering of ground with animal dug and spreading the bundle on it so that animals walk on it to separate the seed from hay. To halt animals form feeding on the harvest while they are walking on it, their mouth would be tied. After threshing, the *teff* would be stored in granary built in front of hut/*mine*.Threshing of *teff* and finger-millet can be done by using man power in the form of hitting the *teff* harvest with stick. Threshing with hand is preferred when the size of the harvest is small. But, farmers hinted that using man power is more productive than using animals though it is tire some.

Since harvesting is a laborious activity, it requires the involvement of more people than household members only. As a result, harvesting is a peak time where inter-household work party is rampant among Alaba. In addition to *geza* and *dawa*, hired labor becomes importance form of labor access depending on the needs of households.

Threshing of maize takes a form of hitting it with stick and separating the seed from its holder. Similarly, sorghum is threshed by using hand and hitting with stick after spreading on the prepared ground. Among Alaba harvested crops are stored in circular granary constructed of stalks/wooden wall and grass roof. The granary is usually located in foreyard/*kafate*. Storage is usually under the control of men. Thus, women and children are not allowed to take a harvest from storage without the knowledge and permission of a husband.

The following table summarizes crop calendar of the study Locality.

Table 1: Crop Calendar of the study KA

No.	Type of Crop	Land Preparation and Ploughing	Sowing/Planting	Weeding	Harvesting and Threshing
1	Maize	February	April	May and June	November and December
2	*Teff*	May	May	August and September	December
3	Sorghum	February	April	May and June	November and December
4	Pepper	April	May	July and August	November and December
5	Finger-Millet	February	April	May and June	November

Source: My Field Work

6.1.2 Socioeconomic Importance of Crops

In broader terms the crops produced in the study area can be categorized as either cash or subsistence crops. Of the major crops, maize, finger-millet and sorghum are produced predominantly for household consumption purpose. On the other hand, pepper and *teff* are produced mainly for market purpose. Pepper is purely cash crop as compared to *teff* which is to some extent also produced for household consumption. The farmers view *teff* as more of cash source cereal than consumptive one for it is not usually used to make food.

Maize is the major food source of Alaba. The consumption of maize begins in the field prior to harvest. Maize is consumed in different forms and type. When it is fresh fried (*hamamuta*), baked (*torosho*), bread (*buko*), porridge (*makra*), roasted (*busho*), and as fried grain (*hatut*).

Apart from these, the stalk and leaf of maize plant is also important source of animal feed and it also serve as fire wood when it dries after harvest. The stalk of maize also used as in the area for construction of fence and granary particularly when there is shortage of eucalyptus tree which is widely used for construction purpose in the study area.

Socially, maize is important as it is served on different forms on mass events like funeral, marriage and other social gatherings. Among Alaba maize covers the largest share of agricultural land. A farmer without a maize plot is not considered to have food security as it is viewed as major source of food. As a result, sowing maize is socially indispensable.

Similarly, finger-millet (*zoke*) is the next crop common in the day to day food menu of Alaba people. It is consumed in a variety of forms like baked (*torosho*), *injera*, brewed (*farso*), porridge (*merka*).

Sorghum is also the next common food source of Alaba. It can be consumed in variety forms like baked (*buko*), *injeria*, *torosho (baked without yeast)* and porridge (*marka*). Sorghum Porridge is the major diet of pregnant and lactating women as it is believed to strengthen them during recovery period. Similarly, circumcised boys and girls also are served with porridge during their confinement period.

Among Alaba food preparation by mixing flour of maize, sorghum, finger-millet and *teff* is common practice for consumption purpose. Since *teff* is expensive, usually it is consumed in different forms being mixed with other crops' flour. Mixing flour of different crops is a coping strategy when a household is in short of one of the cereals. It is also said important to improve color and taste of the diet in the study area.

Unlike other cereals, *teff* is produced for cash earning purpose as well. Besides, occasionally it is consumed in the form of *injera* particularly by better-off households. Usually its flour is mixed with other cereals than used alone for it is expensive. *Teff* is a prestigious food source among Alaba. Apart from these, the hay of *teff* is important for animal feed and for preparing a mud for plastering the wall of a hut.

Though pepper is the major source of cash for households, it is also used for consumption purpose. Pepper is known for coloring and adding taste (hotness) for different kinds of food like grain and meat sauce, roasted cabbage, porridge, cheese etc. It is consumed freshly when it is in the field and its flour is also consumed either in dried form or mixed with butter and eaten with bread (*buko*), *injera*, *torosho*. Pepper is additive to most foods in the area.

Cash earned from the sell of pepper (mainly) and *teff* is used for different socioeconomic purposes and fulfillment of various obligations. These include purchasing cloth, schooling of children, covering medical

expense, investing on household consumable items like coffee, salt, kerosene, farm tools, land tax payment, repayment of improved seed and fertilizer loan ,to buy animals etc. The cash is used to satisfy diverse needs of a household. A bride wealth is also important area of investment for young and adult individuals out of the cash they obtain from the sell of their produce.

6.2 Livestock Production

6.2.1 Livestock Rearing

Side by side with crop production, livestock rearing is a major economic activity among Alaba. Actually livestock production is their sole production activity prior to crop adoption around mid nineteenth century or before five generation ago. Thus, Alaba society was pastoralists for several centuries. As a result their life is strongly associated with livestock historically and contemporarily as well.

As explained by many informants a household to be viewed as self-contained/supportive, it needs to involve in both crop and livestock production. Otherwise, in one way or another it would be dependent on other households to secure its livelihood. It is for this reason that among Alaba land and livestock are considered as indicators of wealth status or ones' socioeconomic level in his community.

In Alaba society women and children play a leading role in livestock rearing with in a household. They care for both in home and grazing areas. Generally women manage livestock around the homestead. They clean the pen, feed, milk cows, make sure they are out and in timely. Children, on the other hand, are mainly responsible for grazing livestock with in the vicinity where pasture and water is available.

In most cases animals reside in the same hut with people in a separate compartment prepared to them. When the size of livestock is relatively large, a separate room would be prepared being attached with the living hut.

6.2.2 Type and Socioeconomic Importance of Livestock

Among Alaba different livestock types are reared by households for various purposes. Animals generally are called *giza,* a word which is used also to say money. The term used for money and animals is the same which probably shows the pivotal role of livestock in the life of Alaba community. Cow, ox, sheep, goat, poultry and donkey are widely reared animals in the area. Horse and mule are reared in small numbers as

compared to other livestock type. The table below presents the total size and type of livestock found in the study KA, Gedeba.

Table 2: Type and Size of Livestock in the Study KA

No.	Type of Livestock	Size of Livestock in the KA	Average Livestock holding / household
1	Cows	984	1.5
2	Oxen	1667	2.6
3	Goats	674	1.1
4	Sheep	430	0.7
5	Donkey	579	0.9
6	Horse	15	-
7	Mule	6	-

Source: Woreda Agriculture Development Office

A cow is an important source of milk, butter and cheese for households in the study area. Among Alaba it is indispensable to have at least a cow or to have access through share breeding. As the above table indicates the number of cows in the study KA is significant as compared to other type of livestock. Apart from household consumptive purpose, selling animal products in a local market is one of the income sources for households. Poor households normally will have access to milking cows through share breeding arrangement. If some one has extra cow, he will give one to a needy household. A person who receives a cow will take the responsibility of managing and caring for the cow and equally share the animal products like cheese, milk, and butter. When the cow gives birth the recipient/breeder household will have equal share of the offspring. Households entering such kind of arrangement are said to be close relatives or friends, which creates supportive relation. Among Alaba when a woman gets pregnant, the husband is supposed to ensure access to milking cow (through buying, share breeding etc) to care for the new infant and lactating mother. Besides, circumcised boys and girls and elders must to be provided with animal products like milk, cheese, butter and meat so that they recover and stay strong. More over, butter soaked clothes and hair is socially desirable among Alaba during different social events like marriage, circumcision etc as practiced by circumcised young persons and brides.

To maximize access to animal product at a time women involve in group arrangement. There is a women's local association called *wiggo* where by 5-10 women pool animal products (particularly butter) and take turn by turn. A woman who is in turn would collect the product contributed by members and make use of it for her household need. In such manner all will take and maximize the amount of animal product they will have at a time.

Among Alaba ox is the traction power source for ploughing land. As a result an ox is very crucial to perform production activities. Like cow, an ox is also important to secure the survival of a household. As presented in table 1, the number of oxen found in the study KA is larger than other livestock types. This shows the extent of its importance in the life of farmers.

The following table shows the number of oxen owned by households in the study KA.

Table 3: Oxen ownership by Households in the Study KA

No.	No. of Households	No. of oxen owned
1	290	1
2	195	2
3	111	3
4	44	More than 3
Total	640	

Source: Woreda Agriculture Development Office

As presented in the table 2, out of the total 640 households, 290 (45.3 %) households own only one ox. Since access to a pair of farm ox is imperative, farmers in short of ox engage in different inter-household arrangement with households having more than one ox to plough their land.

There are different inter- household exchange arrangements practiced to overcome shortage of farm ox. Households in short of traction power of ox either buy or engage in different kinds of arrangements to have access to it. These exchange arrangements include teaming up (*goba asu*), contract (*goba hiru*), begging

(goba uchu) and exchange for labor service. Households in short of traction power and needy involve in various forms of farm ox acquisition arrangements as a coping strategy to overcome farm ox shortage

In the study area small animals like sheep, goats and poultry are usually reared for market purpose than household consumption. Livestock in general and small animals in particular are generally viewed as 'bank' where they save their extra- money/cash. As shown in table 1, the number of goat and sheep reared in the study KA is significant showing the relative importance to households. Usually farmers buy these animals from market when the price is low and keep in their home until the market condition improves. When the price is better, they sell it in local market. Holidays are important occasions where farmers sell their small animal. Sheep and goats are reared predominantly for market purpose while eggs laid by hens are partly consumed by households. Among Alaba meat is rarely found in their food menu except in some special occasions like holidays, marriage (recently), circumcision, *elfigna(large size festive labor party)* compensation for misdeeds(abduction, genocide etc) and other celebrations.

Pack animals like horse, donkey and mule are important transportation means in the study area. They are also essential in defining a household wealth status. Mule and horse are used for human transport mostly by better-off households. As indicated in table 1, in comparison to other livestock type, only 5 mules and 15 horses are found in the study KA. This hints that mule and horse are owned by few better-off households. As shown in table 1, the significant size of donkey in the study KA implies the relative importance of donkey in the life of households. Donkey is mainly used to transport materials and agricultural produce to the local markets and other areas. In areas where potable water is absent, donkey is the dominant means to transport water from distant places. Donkey is usually owned by petty traders while horse and mule are owned by people with good socioeconomic status to attend different social and economic events like marriage, funeral, and market, to visit to relatives etc.

Apart from the aforementioned socioeconomic significance, livestock among Alaba is important to improve the fertility level of the soil. Animal dug is traditionally used to fertilize the soil and improve the deteriorating soil condition. Farmers usually scatter animal dug over their crop land. Thus, ownership of livestock is significant contributor to improve land productivity.

6.3 Factors Affecting Crop and Livestock Production

6.3.1 Factors Affecting Crop Production

A relatively self-supportive production system some few decades ago is now suffering from diverse socioeconomic and natural constraints. Problems contributing for food deficit operate in such a manner one aggravates the other in inter related fashion in the study locality.

A deriving force behind the complex problem can be mainly attributed to population growth. The drastic population boom is viewed by many informants as the major factor that puts the traditional production system under stress. As the size of population increases, the unit land under a household custody is sharply declining. As a result, people are suffering from food shortage for their land is small to support them as was before. Now days, farmers are not in a position to absorb a slight shock that affect their food stock. This can be seen from consistent food distribution done by government to assist people who failed to feed themselves. Though the degree varies, for the last seven years there was relief assistance in the study area.

In addition to decreasing the size of plot per household, population growth has an adverse effect on the natural resource. Among Alaba there is substantial depletion of forest as increase in population is raising the demand for wood consumption for various reasons. Shortages of forest in turn contributing for irregularity and inadequacy of rain fall which is a critical problem over which farmers have no control and encounter consistent challenge. The irregularity of rainfall has a devastating effect on production system. Thus, the size of population is affecting negatively the carrying capacity of the land in many respects. Declining soil fertility and the resulting low productivity can be mentioned as significant contributors for poor quality of the soil in comparison to the past. Since the land is put under intensive cultivation, the productive capacity has been deteriorating from time to time.

The plain topography of the study area is also exposing the crop land to water logging problem and flood. During the field work, it was known that death of people due to seasonal flood is becoming common where the problem is critical as was during the last two years. In the study Kebele Association, Gedeba, significant size of crop land was flooded with heavy rainfall and converted in to marshy area during my field work.

Further more, the study area is one of the Woredas with low literacy rate in the south region. As a result the number of persons involved in non-farm activities is very low. This is increasing pressure over the land as more individuals are still in agriculture sector. Because of low opportunity in off-farm sector, agriculture is the dominant activity where most households depend to secure their livelihood.

Apart from the above challenges, poor market and transportation facility is also one of the prevailing problems among Alaba. Mostly farmers sell their produce immediately after harvest season when the market price of cereals is low. Usually the intermediary merchants buy cereals with cheap price and sell it back when there is shortage of cereals in the market during the summer season just before a harvest. For instance the price of 20 kg pepper immediately after harvest season is around 80 Birr. But, during summer season where there is less market supply of pepper, the price of the same amount reaches more than 300 Birr when the farmers have no or small amount at their hand. As a result farmers benefit less from their produce. Though pepper and *teff* are predominantly produced for market, the prime beneficiaries are intermediary traders than farmers due to their low capacity to store their produce for longer period.

Besides these, fluctuation of cereal's market price is another problem which makes the market condition less predictable. Absence of adequate transportation facility is also a major obstacle that contributes for failure to take their produce to markets where market price is better. Lack of adequate rural road and transportation facility hampered easy access to market in the study locality. More over, though the area is known for its national supply of pepper, the farmers tend to unwisely invest their income on different social affairs than more productive purpose. This can be seen during post-harvest period where farmers in the study locality expend their earning excessively in market days. Most households in the area tend to be prone to poor saving. Some women informants complain their husbands for spending the cash obtained from the sell of pepper for personal luxury than household needs.

As regards to crop pest and disease, more than any crop the major cash crop of Alaba, pepper, is frequently hit by root rot at its early stage of maturity. The disease usually affects first the root part and dries the whole plant. Farmers maintain that it is affecting significantly the pepper production and result in immense loss. The problem is aggravating recently. As timely response farmers up root a plant that shows the sign of the disease to stop its spread to others since it is a contagious disease. Apart from this, some of

regulatory pest types affecting crops include stock borer, termites, cut worms etc. Migratory pest like army worm also affect the crop production in the area.

6.3.2 Factors Affecting Livestock Production

In relation to livestock production the major constraints cited by most informants is shortage of grazing land. As the population increases, grazing areas are put under crop production. The problem of animal feed shortage gets worse during dry season. Women are complaining about the declining productivity of their cattle as compared to the past. The amount of milk that a cow usually gives is shirking from time to time. As one of my women informant explained during old times we milk a cow easily since they have abundant milk but now milking has become difficult task since animals are in short of milk and they give small amount as compared to the past. Not only the yield, but also the physical condition of animals is deteriorating as a result of food shortage.

Animal disease is also common in the study locality. Major ones include anthrax, pastoralisis and black leg. The problem is more aggravated because of shortage of veterinary service in the area. In the Woreda there are only 3 vet service providing stations. As a result the livestock disease affects large number of animals.

6.5 Local Crop and Livestock Production Constraints' Coping Practices

6.5.1 Crop Production Constraints' Coping Strategies

Households in the study area respond to diverse problems they encounter in crop production in different ways. In doing so they attempt to cope with the constraints and sustain themselves.

Land shortage is one of the pressing problems of farmers in the study locality. To ease the problem households involve in different land acquisition arrangement whereby farmers in short of land have access to farmland from land-rich farmers. Share-cropping, and contractual/cash based access are major coping mechanisms used to have access to land for a specific production season.

Diversifying income source is also one way of coping with land shortage problem. Since the land is under pressure, there must be a way to shift the number of individuals dependent on crop production. As a result a significant number of individuals (particularly young persons) are increasingly engaging in petty trade. Livestock, grain and cereal trade are major economic activities pursued by farmers in the study locality. Besides, young individuals are also involved in periodic daily labor activity in the nearby urban areas and

construction sites to supplement their earnings. Petty traders usually undertake their business in periodic local markets. Men are usually involved in cereal (*teff*, maize and sorghum), pepper and livestock (mainly sheep, goat, cattle) trade. While, women, in contrast, participate mainly in petty trade of animal products (butter and cheese), vegetable (cabbage), coffee, grass etc.

Realizing mounting pressure on land, presently people have started sending their children to school more than any time. As available information indicates the study area is one of the Woredas in the region with low school enrollment rate. Now there is a significant improvement as more children are attending school as compared to the past. As most informants argue educating children is viewed as one way out to secure job in non-agricultural sector. Besides, limiting the size of children is also viewed as a mechanism to minimize the population pressure. As a result several women started to participate in family planning initiatives in the study area. This is particularly true for young women and individuals who are primarily suffering from the land shortage problem resulting from population pressure.

In response to increasing land scarcity and crop failure problems resulting from rainfall shortage, households in Gedeba started adopting drought resistant *enset* plant from the adjacent areas and planting fruit and coffee trees. Hence, it is becoming common to see such plants in their farmlands. Since fruits and coffee plants can be grown in scattered manner in crop production plot, no need to allocate separate land for growing them. This significantly contributes to efficient use of the land. Besides, the plants minimize the soil erosion problem which is severe in the area.

The problem becomes challenging to farmers when they encounter with crop failure that put them in a situation of helplessness. Under such condition when the food stock is nearly nil, to sustain their life, they revert to selling productive resources including livestock. This is the last resort that households use to cope with serious food shortage problem. People also migrate to urban areas and rural parts where the problem prevails in lesser degree to escape from periodic food shortage.

Among the crops grown in the area pepper, which is a major cash source of the majority of farmers, is frequently hit by root rot disease. Since the problem is beyond their control households usually up root a plant affected by the pest and stop its further spread. Since it results in a significant loss of harvest farmers are very conscious to it and they attempt to respond timely.

6.5.2 Livestock Production Constraint Coping Mechanisms

Among Alaba ownership of livestock is very important since it is an essential component of livelihood. Access to a milking cow and farm ox is particularly viewed as a necessity. As a result those who do not own cattle involve in different arrangement to have access. Share breeding is a very common practice used to cope with shortage of milk cows. Farm ox is accessed by households in short of it through teaming up (*goba assu*), cash/contractual basis (*goba hiru*) and exchanging for labor service.

As explained by most informants shortage of grazing land is among the top problems affecting livestock production. In response to this, households are attempting to ease the constraint by maximum use of any open land with in their vicinity. Areas formerly not used as a grazing place are now becoming where livestock is kept. Fore yard (*kafate*), road side, bush and thorny land, gorges and hill sides are becoming grazing places.

Households in the study area also tend to reduce the number of cattle they own as one way of easing problems associated with livestock rearing. The existing situation is also forcing them to reduce the number of livestock they own. Besides, rearing small animals like sheep, goat and poultry is preferred than cattle rearing by some farmers as a way out though they like to rear cattle in terms of its economic use.

Generally there are diverse constraint coping strategies practiced locally by households in the study area. The wealth of indigenous knowledge accumulated over generations demonstrates farmers attempt to respond to multifaceted production crises and problems than simply giving up. They always tend to design the way out to their pressing concerns and manage challenges in production process as far as it is with in their limit. In a situation where the problem is beyond their control, they need external assistance to overcome the periodic problems.

CHAPTER SEVEN

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Summary

Ancestors of Alaba settled in the current territorial limit before seven generation ago (late eighteenth century) in wave of two groups moving from their claimed original area situated in North east Ethiopia, Harar plateau. They moved through the route of Bali, Sidama, Tambaro, Guna (escarpment of Gurage mountains), Ulbarage and arrived to the present location situated with in the vicinity of Bilate River. During the long course of movement Alaba ancestors were pastoralists.

Up on occupation of the present area, the land was divided among the clans by elders of the land. Though, the land was divided among clans, the people continued to move with their herds in search of water and pasture seasonally within the territorial limit. Sporadic conflicts around border areas over scarce resources with adjacent groups were evident during this period.

It was not before five generation ago (around mid nineteenth century) that Alaba started to adopt crop production from the neighboring peasant groups like Kembatta and Wolayita. The first seeds of maize and some root crops were brought to the area by wise leader of Alaba, Imam Nunade, from Wolayita vicinity. During the early periods of adoption, there was resistance from the local people as the land was believed to be sacred and consequently not to be touched or ploughed. Through series of attempt by clan leaders to convince the people, the issue was resolved and the people began trial of crop production in very small plot around their homestead. Livestock epidemic and the resulting drought and food shortage, contact with adjacent peasant groups, increasing population and relative shortage of open grazing lands and the need to permanently occupy the border areas facilitated the need to adopt crop production among Alaba.

Towards the end of nineteenth century, like other groups in the south, the Alaba people were incorporated to the expanding Ethiopian empire under Minilik II. The process of incorporation brought significant change in socioeconomic and political organization of Alaba. The majority of the people were reduced to the level of tenants/*gebbars* and the land was put under the control of land lords (*Balabats*) representing the central government. The local people were deprived of their right on the land and required to render services and pay tribute in kind to the central government through local *balabats*. After incorporation crop production was accelerated and substantial open and forest areas were converted to crop lands.

The situation was improved during the short Italian occupation period which resulted in the evacuation of control government representatives among Alaba and abandoning the exploitative *gabar* system by introducing land tax system. During the Italian occupation period, the local people were subject to tax on the land they own and not required to render services. As the result they were looked as better than the exploitative central government administrative apparatus.

Though, post Italian occupation period was regarded as relatively better with the restoration of the imperial regime, it was not before 1975 land reform that people were positioned to claim right over their land. The military regime organized the rural production under socialist ideology through establishment of Peasant Associations as the lower administrative unit to implement both the land reform and collectivization of peasant production. When EPRDF took power in 1991, the land policy remained the same as was before and land was declared as the property of the public or government though the government pursue market oriented policy as over all governing framework of the economy. Presently in the study locality land measurement initiative of households was enacted and farmers were provided with identification card with the hope of ensuring land security and consequently increase productivity.

As land is a principal factor of production, there are different local arrangements and practices pursued by households to access it. Land inheritance is the major forms of land transfer mechanism where by parents inherit part of their land to their sons. Since the society is patrilineal the land passes through male line only. Share-cropping is also important means to access land in the study area. With increasing population pressure and decreasing land size per household, share-cropping (*kabe*) with other adjacent ethnic group seasonal migrant laborers is declining and giving the way to in-group share grouping where by young individuals in short of land engage in share-cropping with in their locality to cope with land scarcity problem. More recently, access to land through contractual or cash basis for specific production season is becoming one way. As land is principal factor of production, households engage in diverse arrangement to access land and secure their survival.

Like in any peasant society, household is the basic production unit among Alaba. In order to ensure their existence and carry out production activities, households organize the labor of members through shared responsibilities usually based on sex and age. Households act as self-supportive unit with clearly defined roles and responsibilities among members. Men are viewed as a head/manager of the over all affairs of a household and responsible mainly to undertake field activities/ production tasks. Women, in contrast, are primarily responsible to under take routine domestic chores and care for children. Children are socialized to pursue the foot step of their parents based on their sex. Boys follow the model of their father and girls assume the role of their mother. All household members contribute to the sustainability of the unit as production, social and co-residential unit. Though, households are self-supportive unit, there are times when they need the assistance of others to carry out specific production activities.

Accordingly, there are inter-household labor exchange practices among Alaba in which labor flows among different families in time of need. *Geza* is balanced reciprocal labor exchange party where by households assist each other in rotation to carry out ploughing and harvesting activities. *Dawa*, on the other hand, is festive labor party where by a needy household will have access to the labor of 10-15 households. Unlike *geza*, in *dawa* the labor flows in one direction, only to the organizer who is not required to reciprocate for the service he obtains from his fellows. Similarly, *elfigna* is the most elaborated and large scale festive labor party where by up to 100 households join to render labor service to a household in need and also able to prepare feast to the participants. Thus, *elfigna* is organized by better off households in terms of land and livestock size. It is also one way of showing ones' status among the community.

Presently inter household labor organizations are declining as the result of diverse factors. Among others, decreasing land size per household, economically unfeasible feast preparation, development

of hired labor, weakening of traditional social ties and increase in individualistic value etc are some of the socioeconomic factors attributed for the weakening of traditional labor parties among Alaba.

In line with the substantivists argument, labor parties can be viewed as an institutional arrangement where by different households engage to under take production activities with in the social frame work. It is one way where production activities are embedded in the social institution and manifest itself through labor exchange practices. On the other hand, the formalist view of individualism as a methodological tool and economic behavior of peasant society, explain better the recent development among Alaba where by introduction of cash crop, market development, increasing contact with external environment, urbanization and the resulting weakening of social ties and traditional communal values as marked by declining of labor party, inter household self-help practices, declining importance of kinship ties and increasing individualistic values, etc.

However, some of households' practices among Alaba are not in line with the formalist view as households fail to fully put their effort to maximize output from the production activities. Among Alaba households tend to give their land to sharecroppers and involve in less productive social activities as clearly shown in their efficiency and argued by themselves. It is common to see unwise expenditure of households during post-harvest season that is resulting poor saving tradition. Though, households obtain cash from the sell of pepper, they are not investing on more productive and profit making endeavors. This behavior can be partly explained by Chayanov's theory which argues that peasants tend to decrease their effort once they attain their subsistence need unlike the capitalist firm consistently work to maximize profit out of his farm business. As can be seen from the local reality, the three perspectives explain different aspect of their life.

As far as crop production is concerned, major crops produced in the study locality in order of importance include maize, *teff*, pepper, finger-millet and sorghum. Maize, finger-millet and sorghum are considered as subsistence crops mainly grown for household consumption purpose. Though, *teff* is subsistence crop occasionally used for consumption, households view it as a cash crop primarily produced for market. Pepper is a cash crop grown by most formers in the area. Since Alaba area is known for its supply of pepper, households earn cash mainly through marketing this product.

Among Alaba crop production activities begin around February with land preparation and ploughing. And harvesting and threshing activities of crops ends in December. Though men are major actors in land preparation, ploughing, harvesting and threshing activities, women and children also significantly contribute to land preparation, weeding and harvesting activities.

With regard to the consumptive value of crops, maize is the major source of food followed by finger-millet and sorghum. *Teff*, on the other hand, is mainly produced for the market purpose although it is occasionally consumed at home. Since *teff* is expensive, households mix its flour with flours of other cereals and uses to make the food they like. Pepper as the major cash crop is predominantly produced for the market. However, pepper is additive for most food types among Alaba and commonly used to make tasty (hot) and colorful food.

Parallel with crop production, livestock rearing is an important component of the livelihood of Alaba. The life of households in Alaba is highly associated with livestock. As Alaba were pastoralists before six generation ago, still they attach special value to livestock production. Thus, livestock ownership is one of the important ingredients that define the wealth status of households. Animal products like milk and its by-products are part of the diet of Alaba though currently shortage of grazing land is significantly affecting the productivity of animals. Butter is used as additive to most diet and is also a

major make up used during different ceremonies like circumcision and marriage. Butter soaked clothes and hair symbolizes the extent of ones' economic status among Alaba. With regard to division of labor, women and children play the leading role in managing the livestock owned by a given household.

Among the livestock types, cattle is commonly reared as it is the major source of milk, butter and cheese. Farm ox is found in significant size as compared to other animal types in the study area as it is a traction power source for ploughing crop land. Small animals like sheep, goat and poultry are usually kept for market purpose. Pack animals, on the other hand, are the major transport means in the locality. Horse and mule are found in small number and usually owned by better off households for human transport. Donkey, in contrast, is the major material transport means and often owned by petty traders. Livestock dug is traditionally used to improve land fertility.

Unlike few decades ago, the production system is exhibiting a predicament as a result of various changes experienced. Both crop and livestock production activities are suffering from diverse constraints. Increasing population pressure, land shortage, declining soil fertility, flood and water logging, unreliable climate condition and resulting crop failure, scarcity of grazing land, deforestation, shortage of livestock, crop pests and diseases and animal diseases are some of the major problems affecting production system. The problems are interrelated and operate in such a way one aggravates the other and worsen the situation.

In response to these complex problems, households attempt to employ different local coping mechanisms. To ease land shortage, households involve in share-cropping, access land through periodic contract or cash basis, participate in petty trade and send their children to school so that they secure job in non-agricultural sector. When the food shortage problem becomes severe,

households resort to selling their productive resources like livestock and also migrate to relatively better areas. Several household also started adopting drought resistant *enset* plant and growing coffee and fruit plants in their crop plot to effectively utilize their land. Nowadays, households are a ware of the importance of limiting the number of children unlike the past where children are viewed as resources and source of security. The stress of population pressure on land is alerting community members. This is particularly becoming part of young Alaba mentality who are primarily suffering from the problem. As a result polygynous marriage seems to be significantly declining among Alaba.

To cope with problems related with livestock production, households are engaged in share-breeding, different inter-household farm ox exchange arrangements and started using unusual land like, hill sides, gorges, road side etc as grazing area. There is also an increasing interest on rearing small animals like sheep, goat and poultry than cattle as a way out. Generally the people tend to device diverse local strategies to ease constraints in production system.

7.2 Conclusions

As discussed in this thesis, households among Alaba are experiencing varied problems and becoming more susceptible to crisis more than any time in the past.

Though, the households are attempting to cope with complex constraint in production process, the extent of the problem is deepening from time to time than improving. It is imperative to undertake comprehensive development intervention integrally to improve land productivity, conserve natural resource, and improve livestock productivity. It is also crucial to promote formal education, enhance family planning services and improve market and transportation facilities to ease the multifaceted socioeconomic problems among the rural households.

If the current trend in both crop and livestock production are left to follow the natural course of change, the situation would be Problematic. Thus, there is a need to introduce new agricultural techniques and inputs to improve the productivity and ensure sustainable food security.

All efforts aimed to improve the living condition of the community has to be based on the needs and interests of the local community so as to smooth reception of new ideas and technologies and enhance both the sustainability and ownership sense of any external undertakings believed to ameliorate the problem in production system in particular and the living condition in general.

Finally, as the findings of this study suggest, there is a need to devise a way to decrease the number of households who depend on the agricultural sector and promote off-farm activities to relieve the stress on rural land and facilitate conditions to keep balance and foster a harmonious relation between the increasing population and the limited natural resource base.

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Appendix 1: List of Informants

S/N	Name	Sex	Age	Clan	Village	Remark
1	Abage Ebrahim Atara	M	35	Wushira	Wushira	
2	Abdurhman Debancho Jemal	M	20	Wushira	Denebe	
3	Abirham Buge Lolise	M	50	Side	Side	
4	Ahmed Bateno Wate	M	55	Side	Side	
5	Ahmed Sedebo kake	M	45	Wushira	Wushira	
6	Amina Abdela Helore	F	25	Torombora	Nejate	
7	Asamo Mugoro Girba	M	70	Wushira	Nejate	
8	Asamo Ussen Seide	M	30	Shegdera	Shegdera	
9	Babiso Ahmed Bade	M	45	Wushira	Wushira	
10	Bargicho Umar Mehamed	M	20	Side	Side	
11	Bezabish Beshir Malore	F	50	Side	Wushira	
12	Kasise ururo Workicho	F	42	Torombora	Side	
13	Keyiru Anujo Abile	M	24	Shegdera	Shegdera	
14	Lalete Bamud Jeware	F	40	Side	Wushira	
15	Mancha Forago Hassen	M	20	Side	Side	
16	Meche Malika Loliso	M	38	Side	Side	
17	Nassiru Nuriye Surage	M	20	Side	Side	
18	Nurie Ahmed Hibamo	M	40	Side	Denebe	
19	RajebaEdam Hassen	F	30	Wushira	Wushira	
20	Ramato Ribato Hashim	M	25	Side	Side	
21	Ramato Ussen Fatamo	M	45	Shegdera	Shegdera	
22	Rejabu Edamo Hassen	M	35	Safato	Nejate	
23	SefiaMamush Jemal	F	40	Torombora	Wushira	
24	Seid Mekango Gerera	M	55	Wushira	Wushira	
25	Sirgaga Hassan Mohamed	M	30	Side	Side	
26	Ussen Nuramo Miramo	M	50	Side	Denebe	
27	Zeinaba Ahmed Erango	F	40	Wushira	Wushira	
28	Mosa Abdulkadir Anshicho	M	50	Genza	Nejate	

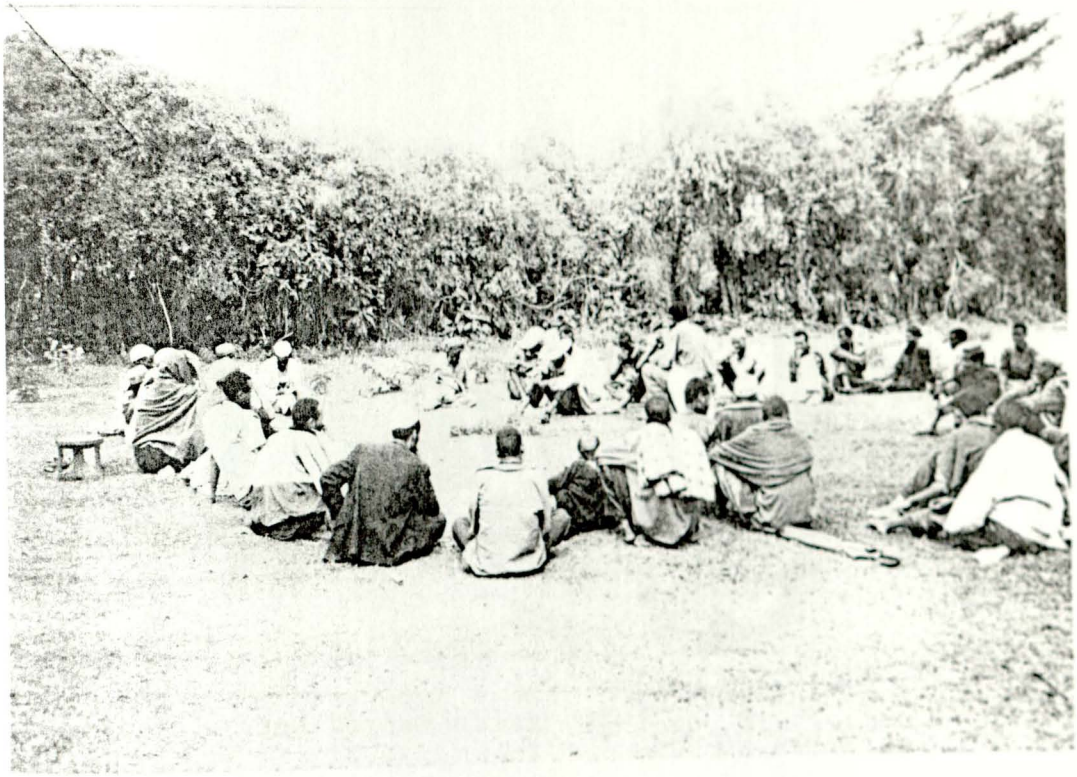
S/N	Name	Sex	Age	Clan	Village	Remark
29	Abdela Muhe Aliye	M	50	Torombora	Denebe	
30	Adame Mehamed Sikoro	F	70	Sefato	Shagdira	
31	Amad Kawuye Higso	M	70	Wushira	Nejate	
32	Asiya Handino Shifa	F	45	Kuke	Side	
33	Bamud Negash Aman	M	30	Kanasa	Shagdira	
34	Befata Mehamed Wayiso	M	30	Wushira	Nejate	
35	Bergena Berassa Busgira	M	40	Darimo	Denebe	
36	Bergena Ussen Alito	M	35	Wushira	Nejate	
37	DielboUmar Badele	M	32	Torombora	Nejate	
38	Gelato Beme Hedaro	M	25	Sefato	Denebe	
39	Haji Mundino Nurie	M	30	Kolmine	Side	
40	Kedir Somano Ibrahim	M	40	Aja	Nejato	
41	Mehamed Adem Hasiso	M	38	Weshermine	Shagdira	
42	Mehamed Ahmed Higso	M	50	Wushira	Nejato	
43	Nurie Mundino Issa	M	35	Wushira	Nejate	
44	Shemsia Musa Abdulkadir	F	32	Azobada	Wushira	
45	Taju Aman Ussen	M	30	Korijo	Wushira	
46	Wosela Ahmed Bergena	F	25	Toroda	Side	

Appendix 2: List of Alaba Clans

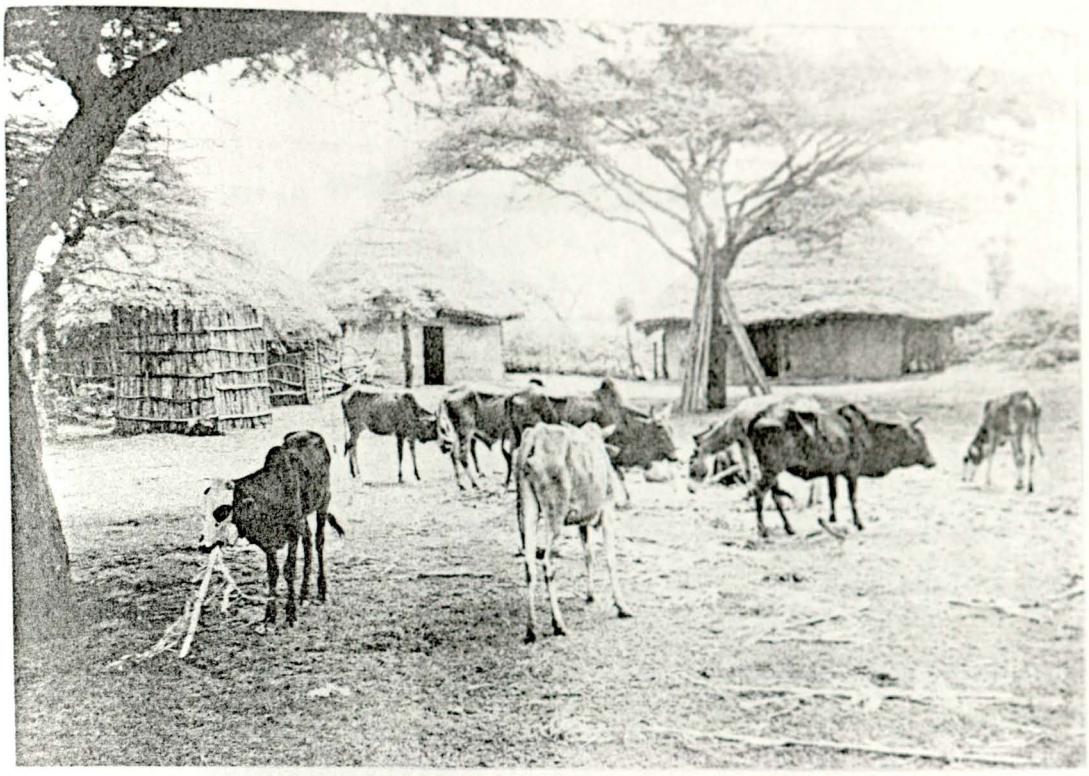
1) Aja
2) Ansheqo
3) Azobada
4) Chelmine
5) Darimo
6) Genza
7) Gumbe
8) Guzube
9) Kenasa
10) Kolmine
11) Korjo
12) Kuche
13) Kuka
14) Melga
15) Safato
16) Shagidera
17) Side
18) Toqo
19) Toroda
20) Torombora
21) Wehermine
22) Wushira
23) Zebada



Appendix 3: One of the key Informants



Appendix 4: Community discussion on local affairs



Appendix 5: Cattle at front yard (*Kafate*)



Appendix 6: Petty trade activities in a local market



Appendix 7: Crop field (*Karme*)

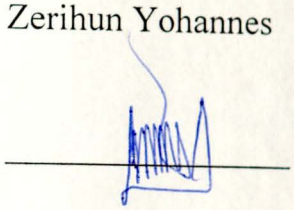


Appendix 8: Mosque of *Shekoch* (religious leader of Alaba) in Badane locality

DECLARATION

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

Name: Zerihun Yohannes

Signature: 

Date : June, 2005