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# Diversification of livelihood strategies and the transformation of pastoralist life among Afar women in Baadu - Ethiopia

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## Summary

The Afar society is undergoing a rapid socio-economic and environmental transformation process that is influencing the dominant livelihood in the region: pastoralism. A case study in Baadu, in the Afar Regional State in Ethiopia, was conducted to study the transformation process, its impacts on Afar women living in Baadu, and the options and constraints of social practices of Afar women deriving from the transformation process. A focus was led on livelihood pathways as an individual response to the transformation.

The transformation process of the Afar society in Baadu needs to be seen within the wider perspective of external and internal factors that have led to the transformation. While a bloody conflict with the neighboring Issa-Somali pastoralists, together with the spread of the invasive plant *Prosopis juliflora* causes an intensive loss of grazing land, the pastoral society of the Afar is also transformed due to internal clan changes. The concept of political ecology allows understanding and explains the transformation process in its greater dimension. The divergent interests on the local, regional and especially national level are intensifying the transformation process. The Ethiopian government is promoting sedentarization of the Afars, claiming that the pastoral life is backward and unworthy of living.

The transformation process adds new work tasks to the already high work burden of Afar women as they are traditionally in charge of the well-being of the household. Afar women follow new livelihood strategies as a response to the transformation process which is threatening their livelihood basis. Afar women have begun to engage in economic activities to access financial capital and ameliorate the overall situation of the household. While the new income earning activities increase the work burden of women, it also opens up new options for agency when the power relations between Afar men and women change and women enter into new social fields. The engagement in economic activities is correlated to new livelihood pathways.

Generally, an empowerment of Afar women was identified. This empowerment is promoted by local institutions such as the women's affairs office and NGO's who teach women about their rights. Together with their newly gained (financial) independence, women are more often determining their own destinies and taking active roles in decision-making processes. For example, Afar women refuse to marry their absuma when necessary and desire to decide for themselves their future and their marriage.

The engagement in economic activities is closely linked to a process of sedentarization where markets and basic infrastructure can be accessed. Settled households have access to institutions like the women's affairs office that support women in their rights. The afore described changes cannot be transferred to Afar women who live in remote areas far away from urban centers, who do not face the possibility to become (economically) independent from their husband through the

engagement in income-earning activities, and who do not have the support of institutions.

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## Acronyms

CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere, humanitarian agency
ETB	Ethiopian Birr (1€ = 25,40 ETB, 25 <sup>th</sup> September 2014)
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GIZ	Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit, development agency of the German government
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
NGO	Non-governmental organization
Rohi Weddu	Rohi Weddu Pastoralist Women's Development Association
shoats	sheep and goat

## Glossary of local words (Affarigna)

Absuma	Traditional marriage system, patrilateral cross-cousin marriage
Afar ari	Afar traditional hut
Alta	Rainy season grazing area
Bokolo	Maize
Derg Harar	Local name for the invasive species <i>Prosopis juliflora</i> , referring to the time of plantation during the Derg regime
Deta Harar	Local name for the invasive species <i>Prosopis juliflora</i> , referring to the dark color of the plant
Gadage	Thank you
Gedayta	Reed
Harmaku	Animal disease caused by the pods of <i>Prosopis juliflora</i>
Hashera	Drink made from hot water and some milk, the taste is given to the drink by adding the shell of coffee beans
Kebele	Smallest administrative unit in Ethiopia
Kedo-Abba	Clan leader
Konchera	Machete used to cut <i>Prosopis juliflora</i>
Matalea	Famine in 1984/85
Mufe	Traditional bread
Wolayta	Ethnic group of migrants from the Ethiopian highlands
Woreda	Administrative unit, referring to the county level
Woyane Harar	Local name for the invasive species <i>Prosopis juliflora</i> , referring the Tigrayan Liberation movement which took place during the time of plantation

## 1 Introduction - Problem Statement and Research Questions

*“Back then, there was milk, women were mostly working in the household and men were tending the animals. Today, everything is different; women more often have to do the work of the men.” (Fatuma, agro-pastoralist, Leas)*

Fatuma, an Afar agro-pastoralist woman living in Leas, a small settlement near the urban town of Gewane in the Afar Regional State in Ethiopia (see map 1), describes changes which she observed among the Afar women. She herself diversified her livelihood from a purely pastoral life based on the production of cattle towards an agro-pastoral livelihood. This could be an individual choice taken by Fatuma. Or, her decisions could also be linked to a greater process of social change in the region. Some questions lie at hand when looking into the case of Fatuma. Why did she decide to diversify her livelihood? Is her choice an individual choice? Is her decision linked to a broader societal phenomenon? Which factors led to her decision to drop out of pastoralism? These questions seem to be especially important with the knowledge that pastoralism is thought of (by the Afars themselves) as the most valuable form of living. When travelling through Baadu (see map 1), the diversification of livelihoods can be observed especially in the settlements along the Addis Ababa - Djibouti road. Apparently, the livelihood situations of the pastoralists in the Afar Region of Ethiopia are changing under the general conditions of a transformations process that the Afar society is undergoing.

Geographical transformation research was for many years linked to the research on political changes after the fall of the Soviet Union at the end of the 1980s. The aim was to analyze and understand the spatial consequences which derive from political change that also influence the social, economical and ecological dimensions. Transformation is understood as the active moment of the compilation, it stands for a remodeling and a conversion. The process of transformation is actively formed by society (FASSMANN 2007: 672). Today, the term transformation is often discussed in relation to sustainability, where it is argued that sustainability can only be reached through a process of socio-ecological transformation (LEACH et. al. 2012: n.pag.). In this case study, transformation is understood as the process which leads to the societal change. Transformation thus asks for the conditions, options and constraints which lead to societal change.<sup>1</sup>

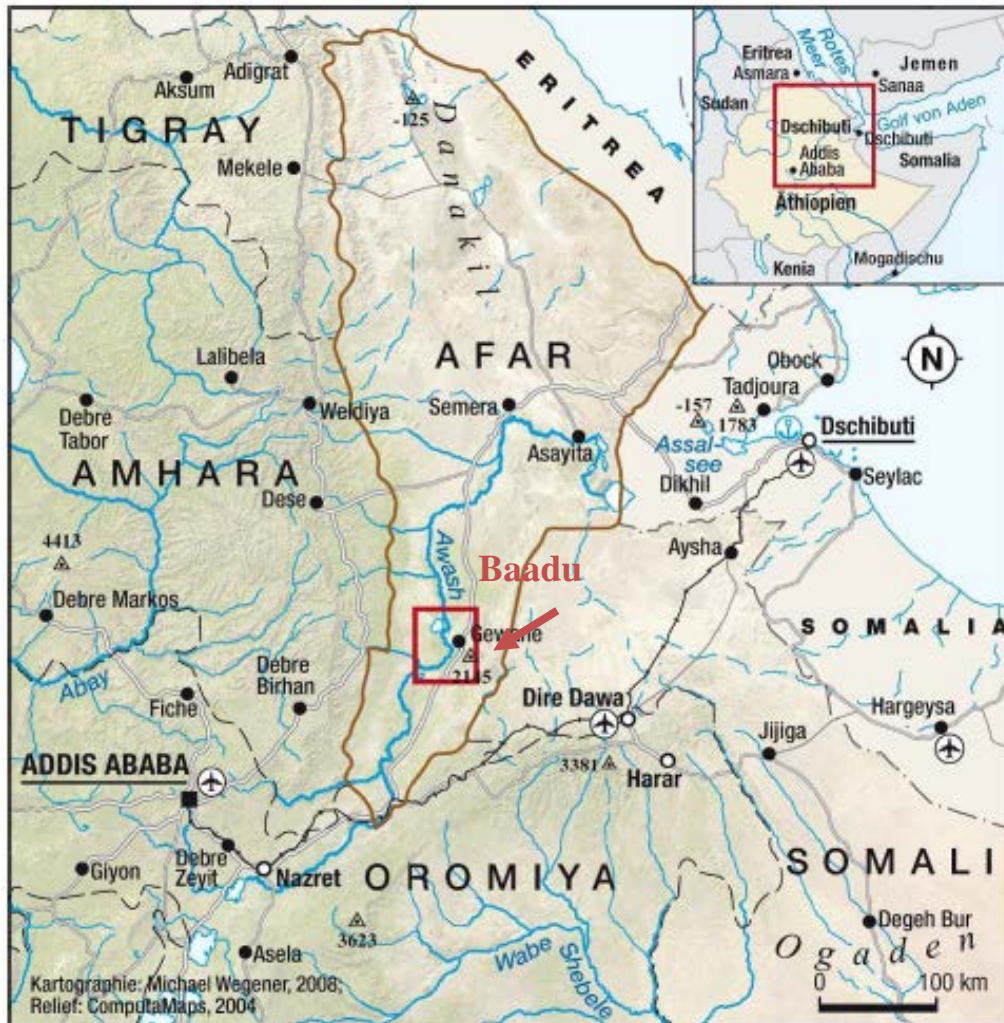
RETTBERG (2009) analyzed some of the aspects of the transformation of the Afar society in Baadu in her research. She argues that the problems the pastoralists are facing in Baadu today need to be seen in a wider range of problematic changes.

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<sup>1</sup> The term transformation cannot further be discussed at this point. For more information on transformation research in geography see: BECKER 2001, LEACH et al. 2012, ROCKSTRÖM et. al. 2009, SCHIPPER & PELLING 2006.

RETTBERG focused on the situation of the Maheisara Clan in Baadu, outlining that the loss of land due to conflicts with the neighboring Issa-Somali pastoralists, the spread of *Prosopis juliflora* (see also box 1, page 29) and changing flood regimes of the Awash River, threaten the livelihoods of the Afar pastoralists. In her research, RETTBERG emphasizes that the recurrent droughts and famines in the region are not solely made responsible for the deterioration of the livelihoods of the Afar. In this sense RETTBERG does not only include local developments but also looks into processes on the regional, national and international scale (2009: 4ff.).

These problematic challenges are not only observed among the Afars, but in many pastoral societies in Africa. They lead to an increased number of people who drop out of pastoralism since the livestock-keeping system is no longer able to provide livelihoods for the majority of people making a living from animals. Modern pastoral systems often depend on other income resources to secure their livelihoods. The production of livestock no longer suffices to nurture all persons in the household since the number of livestock is rapidly declining in comparison to the still increasing number of pastoralists (LIVINGSTONE & RUHINDI 2013: 231f.). This development was also observed in Baadu.



Map 1: Location of the case study area Baadu (modified after Rettberg 2009: 5)

Many studies on the diversification of livelihood pathways as a survival strategy in the rural areas of developing countries have been conducted. Even though some incorporate the dimension of gender, they are often focused on (male) farmers in rural areas. Most of them solely specify on the economic aspects of the diversification strategies (e.g. BARRETT et al. 2001; ABDULAI & CROLE REES 2001; KHATUN & ROY 2012) omitting social, especially gender, aspects of livelihood diversification. Traditional roles between men and women and existing power relations are often absent from these studies.

From my research for the *Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ) the development agency of the German government<sup>2</sup>, which exclusively focused on the

<sup>2</sup> GIZ assigned a research project with the title *Woody Encroachment in Afar Region, Ethiopia: Impact Assessment of Prosopis Invasion and Participative Management Approaches* to the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-University Bonn, the University of Hohenheim and the University of Mekele. The project aimed to assess the impacts of the spread of the invasive species *Prosopis juliflora* from its social, economic and ecological dimension. The question of how these impacts differ between Afar men and women was the main interest of my research for GIZ.

gender aspects of *Prosopis juliflora* (see also box 1, page 29), I developed a broader research interest with a special focus on the transformation process of the Afar society in Baadu itself and its impacts and influences on Afar women in particular. It is therefore the goal of this master thesis to analyze the transformation of the Afar society in Baadu from a historical perspective, including the research of RETTBERG (2009), but also extend her results with a focus on recent developments. The dimension of gender includes asking on one hand for specific impacts of the transformation process on Afar women and on the other hand the role of women in the transformation process. Based on the afore described problem statement and goals of this master thesis the following research question was developed:

*What are factors of the transformations process observed in Baadu and how does the transformation process affect the livelihoods of Afar women?*

This research question relies on a twofold approach which guides the investigation of the overall research question, and then narrows in on the specific interest of the gender dimension of the transformation process. The first research interest is led by the following research question:

- a. *Which factors can be identified leading to a social, ecological and economic transformation in Baadu?*

This research question focuses on the transformation process of the Afar pastoral society in Baadu in general. This master thesis will give an overview of the present ecological, economic, social and political situation of the Afars. It is meant to analyze the factors which influence the transformation process. Taking into account the results of the study of RETTBERG (2009) this master thesis will add the present trends of the transformation process and ask for recent changes in the region. The focus will not only be on the change itself, also the causes of change and their historical development.

- b. *How does the transformation process of the Afar pastoralist society affect gender relations and the livelihood pathways of Afar women in particular?*

The second research question aims to analyze the transformation process of the pastoral society in Baadu with a focus on gender relations. The study will focus on the question of how the tasks and the workload of women and men are affected differently by the process of social, ecological and economic transformation. This section will explore how the changing role of women is affecting the power relations

between men and women. Changing traditions will also be analyzed. The second research question will explore the opportunities and constraints, which derive from the transformation process for the agency of Afar women, asking for positive and negative impacts the transformation process has on women.

This master thesis is structured into seven chapters. The following chapter, chapter two, specifies the theoretical framing of my master thesis which will be used to analyze the empirical data collected in the field. BOURDIEU's *Theory of Practice* is discussed in the first part of the chapter, while the second focuses on livelihood pathways, gender and vulnerability and the last on (feminist) political ecology. The concepts are described in their relevance for development geography in general and finally narrowed to their importance for my personal research interest.

Chapter three describes the methodical conception of this master thesis. The chapter gives an overview of the methodical approach used in the field to collect the data. The process of data collection is described; disadvantages and problems of the methodical approach and the process of data collection are discussed.

An overview of the case study area Baadu is given in chapter four. The case study area is localized and the ethnic group of the Afar is characterized. The political, ecological and economic situations of the Afars are discussed. In the third section, population characteristics based on the Ethiopian census of 2007 are described and critically discussed. The final section of chapter four focused on the role of women in the pastoral society of the Afar.

In chapter five and six the results of the empirical data are discussed. Chapter five analyzes the transformation process of the Afar pastoral society in Baadu; external as well as internal factors of the transformation process are discussed. Chapter six focuses on the gender aspects of the transformation process and refers to the second part of the research interest. In this chapter, general influence of the transformation process on Afar women is shown. In addition, the role of women in livelihood diversification strategies as well as the power relations between Afar men and women is discussed. Different livelihood pathways are identified.

In the final chapter, chapter seven, a conclusion is drawn and future research perspectives are discussed.



## 2 Theoretical and Conceptual Framing

It is the aim of the following chapter to outline the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study which will be used for the analysis of the empirical data collected in the field. The theories and concepts were chosen based on the problem statement and research questions described in the previous chapter. Overall, the data is analyzed and interpreted on the basis of five theories and concepts; namely BOURDIEU's *Theory of Practice*, livelihood pathways, gender, vulnerability, and (feminist) political ecology. It is the combination of these concepts (see figure 1) which gives a profound basis for data analysis. All of them deal with the question of power relations, access, and decision-making processes. The concepts complement each other well, giving a basis to analyze the ecological, social, economic and political transformation process of the Afar pastoralists in Baadu on one side, and focusing on specific livelihood pathways of Afar women and the changes in their agency on the other. Also, the question of endowment with capital is consistent throughout most of the concepts as a basis for agency, reason for different stages for vulnerability, and choices taken concerning livelihood pathways.

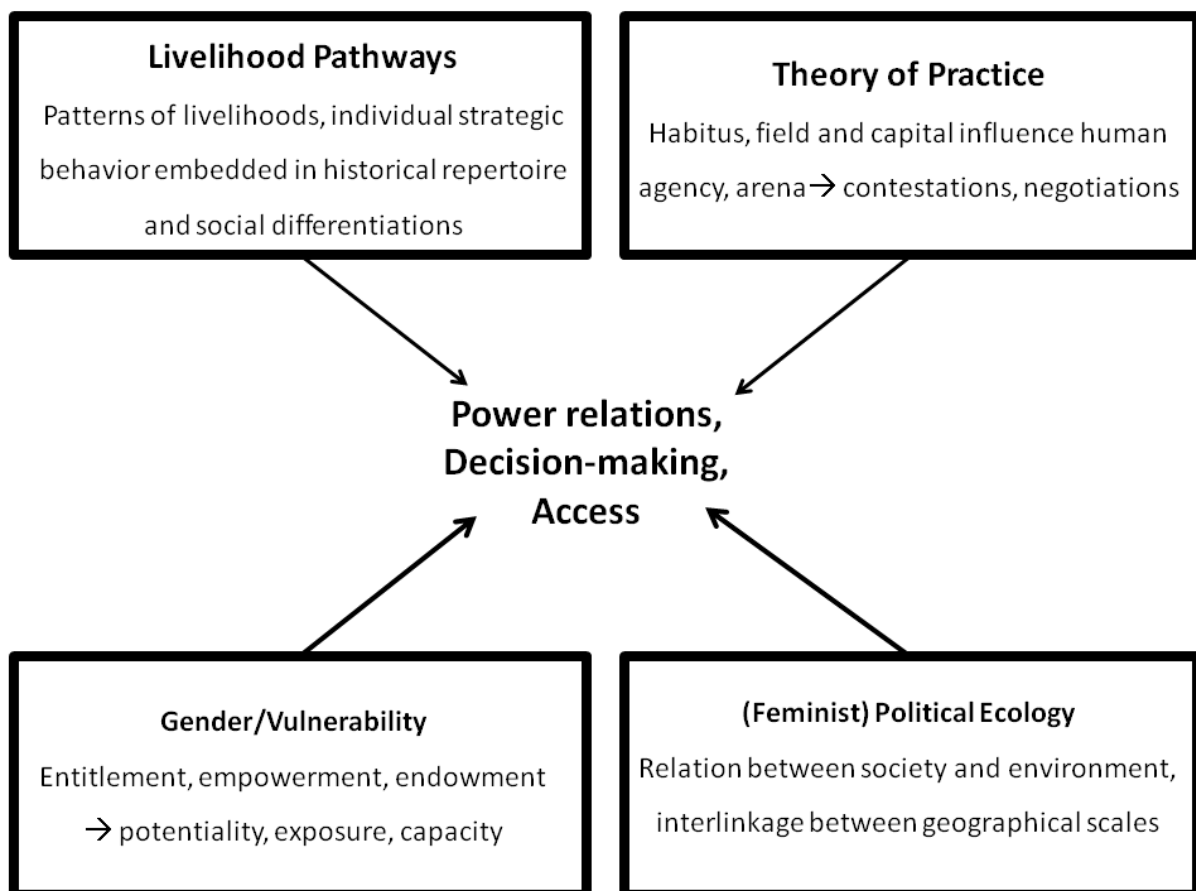


Figure 1: Composition of the theoretical and conceptual framing (own illustration)

## 2.1 Understanding Social Agents: BOURDIEU's *Theory of Practice*

The transformation processes of the pastoral society in Baadu influence the agency of the Afars. It is one of the primary aims of this case study to explain why and how social practices are changing. The interest lies in these questions: what determines the agency of social (female) agents? How are decisions taken? Why are they taken at specific times? Why do social practices of the same social group differ? What are specific differences of the agency of men and women and how can the differences be explained? BOURDIEU's *Theory of Practice* will be used as a theoretical foundation to investigate the changing social practices of (female) agents in Baadu.

It is a basic interest of development geography to understand social practices of individual human beings in countries of the Global South (DÖRFLER et al. 2003: 12). BOURDIEU's *Theory of Practice* gained attention in social geography in the 1990s. His theory points to the main goals of social geography: to discover hidden mechanisms of power in society. For a long time, the work of geographical development researchers pointed to the uncovering of (in-) capabilities of vulnerable actors (ETZOLD 2013: 12). DÖRFLER et al. (2003) criticized this approach, asking instead for a more structural approach focusing on power relations and dependencies historically developed in society. Ever since this writing, the number of German geographers referring to BOURDIEU's *Theory of Practice* to explain phenomena observed in their own empirical research (in countries of the Global South) is increasing. In his theory, BOURDIEU attempts to overcome the one-sided focus of subjectivism and objectivism which had been applied before. "Social practices are structured through acquired dispositions (*habitus*), and structures, for instance institutions, are in turn constructed and negotiated in and through social practices. [...] [BOURDIEU'S] theory is thus neither a structural nor an actor-centered social theory, but can best be described as a *Theory of Practice* in the sense that it focuses on social practices that are aligned to the logic of social fields in which 'agents' are positioned," (ETZOLD 2013: 15).

BOURDIEU's *Theory of Practice* is grounded on three basic concepts: the *habitus*, the *field* and the *capital*. These concepts will be further discussed in the following.

The *habitus* concept is the key concept of BOURDIEU's *Theory of Practice*. The position of an agent in the field depends among others on the habitus of the agent. The habitus refers to a system of dispositions purchased in relation to the social field, originating from socialization. Thus, it is a product of history shaped by education and social experiences (FUCHS-HEINRITZ & KÖNIG 2005: 114ff.). Habitus means a "system of dispositions, that is of permanent manners of being, seeing, acting and thinking, or a system of long-lasting (rather than permanent) schemes or schemata or structures of perception, conception and action," (ETZOLD 2013: 20 after BOURDIEU 2002: 43, emphasis in original). Habitus does not solely derive from agency or structures, it is rather an intermediary instance between the two (BARLÖS 2006: 47). The habitus reflects patterns of thinking, perception and practice which have been socially generated. These patterns are mostly followed unconsciously and appear automatically (ROTHFUß 2006: 33). One could argue that the concept of habitus

determines all actions and perceptions of social agents. On one hand, the habitus does point to a certain determination of the actions taken by social agents. On the other hand, the habitus leaves chances for new developments since the habitus is relative to objective social fields which run through a constant change (BARLÖS 2006: 84ff.). The concept of habitus therefore has two aspects. First, is a conceptualization of the social agent, the agent is embedded in social structures which are the basis of his socialization. Still, the agent possesses the option to take action in his own sense, which constitutes new structures. The other side of the habitus concept leads away from the focus of the agent himself. The habitus produces social characteristics, meaning social group-specific ways to act, think and percept, which differ from other social groups. Thus, social differences within society can be traced back to the habitus (SAKDAPOLRAK 2010: 53ff., BONß et al. 2013:240f.; DÖRFLER et al. 2003: 17f.; FUCHS-HEINRITZ & KÖNIG 2005: 115ff.). BOURDIEU (2005: 31) himself describes the habitus as the connecting piece between the position of an agent in the field and specific ways of acting, thinking, and others. The habitus is thus, a “system of boundaries” (Bourdieu 2005: 33 translated to AE). In the following the concept of *field*, which must be seen in direct relation to the concept of habitus, will be discussed.

In the sense of BOURDIEU, the *field* describes a multidimensional matrix of all social relations. Power relations and hierarchical structures between social agents derive from the endowment with *capital* and structure the position of the agents in the field (ROTHFUß 2006: 34). Referring to his metaphor of a game to visualize his thinking, BOURDIEU compares the social field with a playing field. The structure of this playing field is given by the positions of the subjects on the play field, their relations between each other, and their possible input (see figure 2). Within the social field, actors take position according to their endowment with capital. This position is relative to the position of other agents within the social field and goes back to the uneven distribution of capital among the agents (BOURDIEU 2005: 38f.). There are many different fields existing next to each other, and sometimes they overlap. Each field has its own logic; overlapping fields partly share the same logic (see figure 2). The logic of the field structures the relational positions of the agents within the field. It is important to understand that this logic does not determine but rather serves to structure the position of the agent in the field (DÖRFLER et al. 2003: 16ff., ETZOLD 2013: 16f.). The affiliation of agents to a certain field and his position within the field is structured by the habitus and his endowment with capital. Entering a new social field leads to changes of the habitus of an agent. The field does not eradicate the habitus generated through socialization but changes it in relation to field-specific characteristics (BARLÖS 2006: 90f.). In the following, the concept of capital, which determines the position of an agent in the field, will be discussed.

BOURDIEU describes *capital* as “social energy” (1987: 193). The endowment with capital needs to be analyzed in a historical context. Capital is crucial for the agency of social agents, and thus, for their position in the field (see figure 2). The more capital an agent possesses, the less constrained is his agency. Capital can be

accumulated, inherited or transmitted (FUCHS-HEINRITZ & KÖNIG 2005: 157). Returning to the metaphor of the game, the capital can be described as chips of different colors that can be invested in the game and determine the success of the player. The chips mark the position of the player in the playing field, hence, the capital appoints the position of the social agent within the field (BOURDIEU 2005: 38f.; BONß et al. 2013: 240; ETZOLD 2013: 15ff.; DÖRFLER et al. 2003: 16f.) There are four basic types of capital:

- *Economic capital* means all material goods which can be transferred into money. It is the basis of all other forms of capital.
- *Cultural capital* is everything that can be acquired through education and social experience, namely incorporated knowledge, skills and other qualifications<sup>3</sup>.
- *Social capital* describes relations between individuals within the field. It is a social resource which is produced through networks of agents. These social networks give security and credibility and they rely on trust and reciprocity. Through the network, it is possible to gain access to other people's resources or establish corporations.
- *Symbolic capital* relies on recognition and prestige. It differs from all other forms of capital in the way that the possession of any kind of capital only gains its value through the acknowledgement of others, thus, the other forms of capital are legitimized through symbolic capital (BOURDIEU 2005: 49ff., ETZOLD 2013: 21ff.; SAKDAPOLRAK 2010: 57ff., FUCHS-HEINRITZ & KÖNIG 2005: 161ff.).

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<sup>3</sup> For more information on the different forms of cultural capital see: Bourdieu 2005: 53ff.

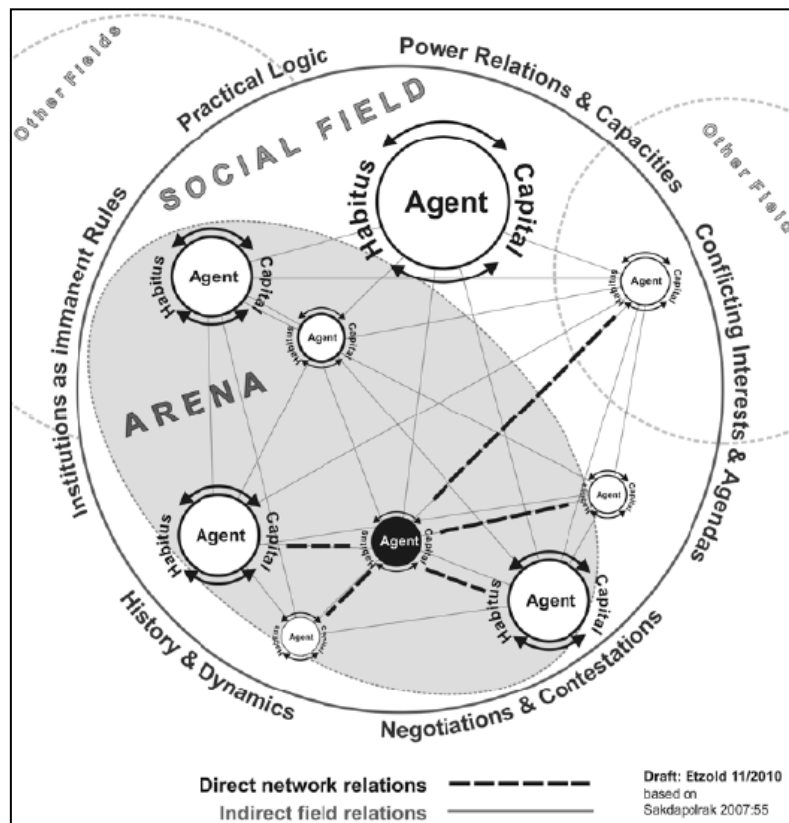


Figure 2: Schematic sketch of key components of BOURDIEU's Theory of Practice (ETZOLD 2013: 30)

Figure two summarizes the key aspects of BOURDIEU's theory. Each field has its own logic and needs to be understood in its relation to other fields. The position of agents within the field is structured, but not determined, by the endowment with capital and habitus, which is field specific. A constant social change leads to changes in the agency. The endowment with capital is displayed by the size of the circles in figure two. Agents can be positions in more than one field depending on their configurations with different sets of capital. More capital, symbolically accepted, means more power within the social field (ETZOLD 2013: 29ff.). ETZOLD adds the dimension of the *arena* to the concepts of BOURDIEU. In his thinking, arena refers to a space of interaction where a constant process of negotiation between the agents is taking place. "Moreover, it is the contest over physical space as such that fundamentally shapes the practical logic in the arena. In contrast to the space-less notion of a field, the actual physical presence of (space based and non-space based) agents, the spatial distance or proximity between them, their own spatial practices, and the visible material manifestations (products), are crucial aspects of the arena concepts," (ETZOLD 2013: 30). Within the arena, agents struggle over and fight for their rights in a constant process of negotiation.

Against the background of the transformation process observed in Baadu, BOURDIEU's *Theory of Practice* will be used to inquire into the changes of the habitus

of Afar women when their endowment with capital changes and they enter into new social fields relative to their livelihood pathways. The theory will thus be closely related to the question of livelihood diversification strategies. Research approaches on livelihood pathways are discussed in the following section.

## 2.2 Research Approaches on Livelihood Pathways

Livelihood research emerged out of the more pessimistic household studies, which focused on the incapacities of individuals, and then developed into a more optimistic perspective which focused on discovering how people manage to survive under situations of shocks and stresses (DE HAAN & ZOOMERS 2005: 29). The following section focuses on the conceptual understanding of livelihood perspectives and pathways. The chapter does not aim to give a full overview on livelihood research, but to outline milestones which are important to understand the livelihood diversifications and the changes in livelihood pathways which were observed in Baadu. The concept of livelihood pathways will be linked to gender and vulnerability, to be able to understand the overall reasons for changes of livelihood pathways of Afar women.

Generally speaking, “livelihoods perspectives start with how different people in different places live” (SCOONES 2009: n.pag.). This study follows the definition of livelihoods after CHAMBERS:

*“A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resource base,”* (Scoones 2009: n.pgn. after Chambers).

Livelihoods approaches do not belong to any single discipline, but are applied in social as well as natural science. The first thoughts on livelihoods are strongly connected to the work of ROBERT CHAMBERS and GORDON CONWAY and their paper on sustainable rural livelihoods in 1992. Even though the term livelihoods had been applied before, it is now seen as the starting point of today’s sustainable livelihoods approach. In the following years, many multi-disciplinary researches on livelihoods were done, with the *Sustainable Livelihoods Framework* (SLF) usually accepted as its most famous analytical tool. “The epistemological and practical strength of livelihood approaches undoubtedly lies in their focus on diversity within complex local realities, their attempt to apply a holistic and people-centered view of specific combinations of livelihood activities, and their commitment to action and ‘development thinking’” (MÜLLER-MAHN et al. 2010: 661). However, the livelihood approach was criticized for its narrow focus on a fairly economic view of input-output-relations, not incorporating questions of power, politics and the social dimension. Compared to the 1990s, the livelihood approaches today seem not to be as

prominent as before. SCOONES relates this to four recurrent failures of these approaches: first, the “lack of engagement with processes of economic globalization,” second, the “lack of attention to power and politics and the failure to link livelihoods and governance debates in development,” third, the “lack of [...] attempts to deal with long-term secular change in environmental conditions,” and fourth, “livelihood studies failed to grapple with [...] debates about long-term shifts in rural economies and wider questions about agrarian change,” (2009: n.pag.). Livelihood approaches thus need to focus on cross-scale dynamics and incorporate questions of knowledge, power, values and political change in a historical perspective (SCOONES 2009: n.pag.; DE HAAN & ZOOMERS 2005: 35ff.; LEACH et al. 2007: 12). It is these critiques that lead to the demand of a stronger theoretic foundation of livelihood approaches.

Livelihood *pathways* demonstrate an interesting approach to diminish the aforementioned critiques. Pathways focus on patterns of change in rural livelihoods, analyzing long-term dynamic change, with a focus on different scales and an incorporation of questions of power and political change. “While previous livelihood studies focused mainly on household-level factors contributing to vulnerability, and household coping strategies [...], pathways analysis provides a useful tool to analyze the interplay between individual and collective responses and effects [...],” (MÜLLER-MAHN et al. 2010: 662). Livelihood pathways discover patterns of change and their determinants in multiple ways. First, it can be used as an analytical tool to uncover multiple future options. Second, it is action oriented, discovering management options for future development. The first purpose of livelihood pathways necessarily leads to a reduction of complexity, giving different relevance to the influences of the pathways to be able to identify them. “Such a perspective is not problematic as long as it is strictly confined to analytical purposes that seek to identify the drivers and mechanisms in processes that lead to possible or likely future livelihoods,” (MÜLLER-MAHN et al. 2010: 663). Still, it is not always obvious as questions of changes are highly contested among actors and their goals and interests demand for alternative pathways. Actors constantly negotiate over conflicting interests and goals, which are fought over in political arenas (DE HAAN & ZOOMERS 2005:34ff.; LEACH et al. 2007:12). Diversity and variability as characteristics of livelihood pathways are essential since livelihood pathways are highly connected to processes of decision-making. Pathways can be defined as follows:

*“[...] pathways are best defined as patterns of livelihood activities which arise from a co-ordination process among actors. This coordination emerges from individual strategic behavior embedded both in a historical repertoire and in social differentiations, including power relations and institutional processes, both of which pre-structure subsequent decision-making,” (De Haan & Zoomers 2005: 43).*

This quote reveals that individuals do make their own livelihoods, but at the same time are influenced by specific given conditions, may it be power relations, political suppression or others. This view on livelihood pathways is closely related to

BOURDIEU's *Theory of Practice* and his ideas on habitus, field and capital (DE HAAN & ZOOMERS 2005: 42ff.).

DE HAAN & ZOOMER (2005: 36) argue that the research on livelihoods could learn from gender studies in terms of power relations, stating that "gender studies [...] started analyzing power as a critical mass upon which livelihoods depend and empowerment as the key to development and well-being." Gender studies discovered differences within the household, asking to no longer see the household as an entity but as a group in which differences in relation to livelihoods of individuals exist and interests are contested (LEACH et al. 2007: 12; DE HAN & ZOOMERS 2005: 38). This 'breakdown' of the household is intensified by processes of individualization and diversification. Households are thus less likely to be organized in one place. Coming back to the question of pathways, this might lead to divergent interests of development within the household and thus different livelihood pathways.

To give meaning to the afore mentioned incorporation of power relations in gender studies and the existing intra-household differences, gender studies are addressed in the following.

Gender questions were debated in geography to deconstruct the relation between spatial and sexual differences. With a focus on women in general, sex became one of many social aspects of distinctions, besides class, ethnicity, sexuality, and religion. The presumption that human beings automatically belong to one or the other sex is no longer active, rather there is a distinction to be made between the biological sex and the socially constructed *gender* (WASTL-WALTER 2010: 10ff.).

*"Gender is a culturally-specific set of characteristics that identifies the social behavior for women and men and the relationship between them. Gender refers to social differences, as opposed to biological ones, between women and men that have been learned, are changeable over time, and vary widely both within and between cultures," (Fish et al. 2010: 10).*

The distinction between sex and gender has been made since the 1960s, with the purpose of indicating the insignificance of the physical-biological sex and the importance of social equality of women (STRÜVER 2007: 904ff.; WINKER & DEGELE 2009: 7ff.). The aim was to illustrate women in their often marginalized role, displaying social disadvantages and power relations (MONK & MOMSEN 1995: 214).

In (geographical) development studies, the interest lies in the role of men and women in society: their rights and responsibilities, the gender specific knowledge, and their role in politics. Researches focus on gender specific power relations, work tasks and workloads, perceptions and decision making processes. It is the main aim to understand women as social actors and display their spatial behavior (MONK & MOMSEN 1995: 215ff.). Women are often disadvantaged, having fewer options for financial and personal security. These disadvantages find their root in historically developed gender roles (WASTL-WALTER 2010: 9ff.). The French anthropologist CLAUDE MEILLASSOUX (1967: 7ff.) identified the importance of women for society in his



*theory of domestic production*. In his work, he describes women's importance for the reproduction of labor, simultaneously identifying them as the most vulnerable group. Women are constantly exploited, living in a paradoxical situation, being protected and deprived by men at the same time. Women live under the domination of men; it is a situation of dependency which reflects on a history of repression. This situation differs with the age of a woman. While the repression is especially high during the age of fertility, women gain power as social actors when they reach the age of infertility and lose their importance in the motherhood role. Thus, women are exploited in a twofold way; there is exploitation of their work and of their fertility (MEILLASSOUX 1967: 92ff.).

Today, women are not only seen in their marginalized role, but also in their roles as experts, e.g. concerning specific types of knowledge. Case studies in the Global South were especially interested in gender differences in relation to environmental change in the past few years. It was discovered that women have a special relationship to the environment due to their daily work tasks. This special relationship concerns the interaction with the environment as well as an exceptional conception of environmental change and crisis (MOMSEN 2000: 47ff.). However, their expertise is often ignored hence degrading their role as social actors.

A quick look into the concept of gender discovered the permanent presence of power relations. The question of livelihood pathways will therefore be discussed from a gender perspective. The question of vulnerability is present in the discussion on gender as well as livelihood pathways. Vulnerability patterns will be discussed concerning different social (female) groups within the Afar society, thus some brief aspects of the vulnerability concept in social science will now be discussed. This section is mainly thought off to give brief overview in which way the term vulnerability will be used in this master thesis, instead of reflecting on the academic debates on the term.

ROBERT CHAMBERS (1989: 1) working for the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), defined the term vulnerability in order to clarify the difference between vulnerability and poverty, two terms that were long used as synonyms. In his article he argued that vulnerability does not "mean [...] lack or want, but defenselessness, insecurity, and exposure to risk, shock and stress," (CHAMBER 1989: 1).

The concept of social vulnerability developed from the research on famines and droughts, dealing with the societal conditions which turn risks into a social catastrophe. The aim of the concept is to analyze structures and processes which lead to an intensification/decrease of a certain catastrophe for social groups endowed with different assets in a certain geographical region (BOHLE & GLADE 2007: 99ff.).

CHAMBERS defined vulnerability as follows:

*"Vulnerability [...] refers to exposure to contingencies and stress, and difficulty in coping with them. Vulnerability has thus two sides: an external side of risks,*

*shocks, and stress to which an individual or household is subject; and an internal side which is defenselessness, meaning a lack of means to cope without damaging loss,” (1989: 1).*

His definition was further developed by other scholars. WATTS & BOHLE (1993: 46) developed a multidimensional concept of vulnerability defining a causal structure of vulnerability (see figure 3). This structure combines human-ecological aspects, entitlement, and political-economical aspects. The causal structure of vulnerability uses a net of three analytical concepts, *entitlement*, *empowerment* and *human ecology*, to define the degree of vulnerability of a certain group in a given geographical area. The entitlement approach analyses the potential loss of entitlements by asking for market accessibility and income relations. The focus of empowerment asks for power relations and dependencies. Human ecology, however, analyzes the given resource base. The combination of different approaches allows a broader understanding of vulnerability, its causes, and consequences. The three approaches overlap, giving way to another three parallel analytical concepts which need to be considered; economic capability, property relations, and class power. By considering these analytical concepts in their entirety, the social space of vulnerability can be defined in its causal structure (see figure 3). Hereby, it is evident that vulnerability is always context-sensitive, dynamic, multidimensional, and convertible. The degree of vulnerability varies between different social groups and scales (BOHLE 2007: 805).

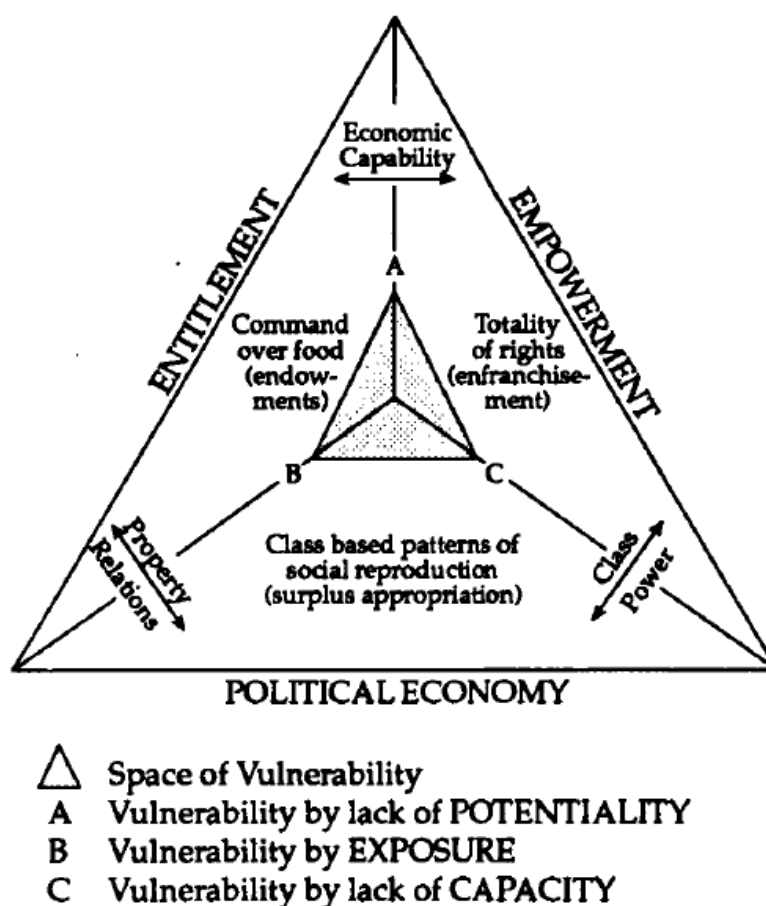


Figure 3: The causal structure of vulnerability (WATTS & BOHLE 1993: 53)

From the perspective of social science, the concept of vulnerability is a relative and dynamic concept. Relations and processes such as power relations, changing man-environmental relationships, entitlement relations, etc., all influence vulnerability. It is always laden with politics and incorporates several dimensions; economical, political, social and cultural dimensions of development. The concept can be operationalized using the approaches of livelihood research, entitlement, conflict or crisis theories, or the theory of fragmented development (BOHLE 2007: 805ff.).

The approach of livelihood pathways will be used to analyze the different reactions to deal with the transformation in Baadu of Afar women (the reason the concept of gender was introduced). A special focus will also be placed on differences between social groups of women (for this the concept of vulnerability was discussed). As a last pillar of the conceptual framework of this study, (feminist) political ecology is presented in the following section.

### 2.3 *(Feminist) Political Ecology: Linking Environment and Society*

*Political ecology* is a field of research which critically analyzes the interlinking between the environment and society. In the center lies “the assumption that any tug on the strands of the global web of human-environmental linkages reverberates throughout the system as a whole,” (ROBBINS 2012: 13). Out of the need to explain environmental problems, the approach of political ecology was developed by the British and Australian geographers PIERS BLAIKIE and HAROLD BROOKFIELD in their volume *Land degradation and society* (1987). Political ecology can also be interpreted as a response to the critique that environmental questions were generally addressed from an apolitical perspective (REUBER & WOLKERSDORFER 2007: 768; BOHLE 2007: 810; ROBBINS 2012: 282ff.). In their work, BLAIKIE & BROOKFIELD (1987) analyze the causes for land degradation in a historical, political and economic context. They define political ecology as follows:

*“The phrase ‘political ecology’ combines the concerns of ecology and a broadly defined political economy. Together this encompasses the constantly shifting dialectic between society and land-based resources, and also within classes and groups and within society itself,” (Blaikie & Brookfield 1987: 17).*

Political ecology as a fairly liberal analytical basis, embraces the interest of different disciplines. It therefore operates in an interdisciplinary field of research. The mutuality of the research areas of political ecology encompasses similar research questions and hypotheses. “Political ecology does not constitute a coherent theory but conforms to a specific mode of enquiry that identifies contextual sources of ecological change, questions of access, and political ramifications of environmental alteration,” (FRANKLIN 2004: 1). It is used to analyze environmental change, embracing questions of power and space along with the aim to explain political action. It debates and analyzes the multidimensional ecological conflicts in dependency with poverty, marginality and vulnerability. The interactions between society and nature are the center of interest in political ecology (see figure 4). The approach is widely used in social science, is strongly represented in cultural geography, and especially utilized in development geography (KRINGS 2008: 4; REUBER & WOLKERSDORFER 2007: 768; BOHLE 2007: 810).

Bryant & Bailey describe the work and determination of political ecologists in the following way:

*“This includes three fundamental and linked assumptions in approaching any research problem. Political ecologists: ‘accept the idea that costs and benefits associated with environmental change are for the most part distributed among actors unequally ... [which inevitably] reinforces or reduces existing social and economic inequalities ... [which holds] political implications in terms of the altered power of actors in relation to the other actors’,” (Bryant & Bailey 1997: 28f.).*

The following hypotheses can be conceived as the key assumptions of political ecology of all scientists working in the field:

- Environmental change is caused by multiple historical, social and political processes. These processes influence the environment from different scales (international, national, regional, local). Therefore, each environmental change must be analyzed in its context of economic, political and institutional framing (see figure 4).
- Natural resources are limited. Institutional regulations are needed to organize the use of natural resources.
- Power is unevenly spread between actors and interest groups connected to the environmental change. Each party has a different say in decision-making and are influenced differently from the profit of use or misuse of natural resources (see figure 4).
- Our perception of the environment/ natural resources is shaped by social, cultural and political norms and interests and can therefore be described as socially constructed. Political ecology is interested in stakeholders who produce and spread knowledge about the environment and environmental problems (KRINGS 2007: 951).

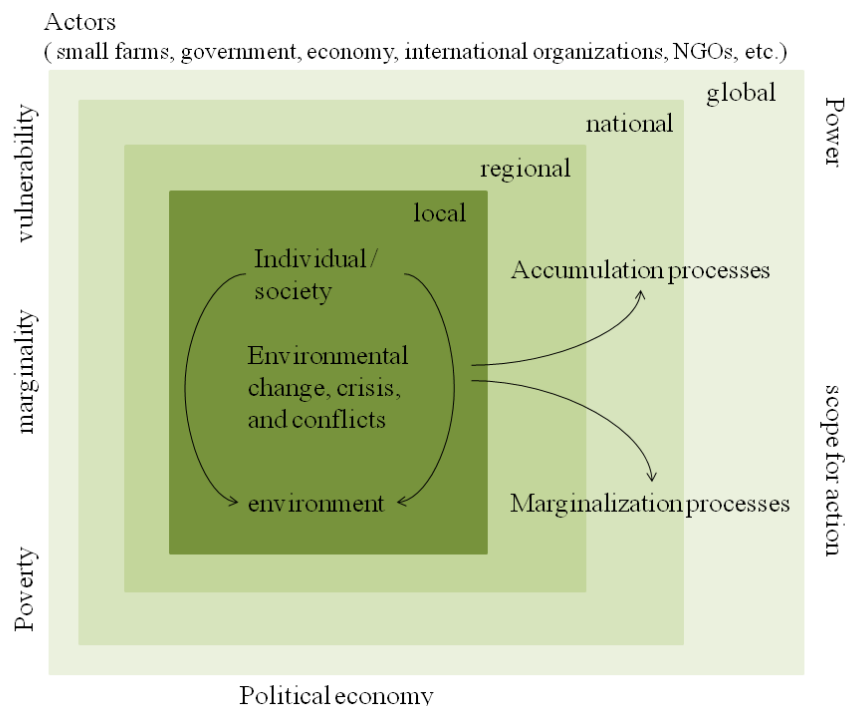


Figure 4: Concept of political ecology (modified after SAKDAPOLRAK 2010: 40)

Political ecology has two main goals. On the one hand, it tries to expose negative effects on the environment caused by states, international authorities and others, to

demonstrate the impact of policies and market conditions. The influences of these conditions are analyzed all the way to the bottom of the chain, at the household level. It mainly defends and speaks up for marginal and vulnerable groups. On the other hand, political ecologists display the way individuals cope with or adapt to environmental changes and crisis. This is the progressive side of political ecology (ROBBINS 2012: 99).

ROCHELEAU et al. introduced the concept of *female political ecology*, linking the concepts of gender and political ecology. The new concept “treats gender as a critical variable in shaping resource access and control, interacting with class, caste, race and ethnicity to shape processes of ecological change,” (ROCHELEAU et al. 1996: 4).

Hereby, feminist political ecology concentrates on three main topics:

- “gendered environmental knowledge,
- gendered environmental rights and responsibilities, and
- gendered environmental politics and grassroots activism,” (ELMHIRST 2011: 129).

Feminist political ecology “does not simply add gender to class, ethnicity, race, and other social variables as axes of power in investigating the politics of resource access and control and environmental decision-making [...] instead, the perspective of feminist political ecology builds on analyses of identity and difference, and of pluralities of meanings in relation to the multiplicity of sites of environmental struggle and change,” (THOMAS-SLAYTER et al. 1996: 287). Thus, feminist political ecology deals with questions of environmental awareness and concerns, with differences in knowledge of general environmental issues and gender differences. These differences go back to structural or situational measurements and always reflect on different power relations concerning ecological, social, political and economic issues. All topics are analyzed on different geographical scales. Gender relations themselves influence and, at the same time, are shaped by global processes (MOMSEN 2000: 51ff.; THOMAS-SLAYTER et al. 1996: 287; ELMHIRST 2011: 129ff.; WANGARI et al. 1996: 128ff.).

With a changing cultural, economic, ecological, and political system on a local, regional, national or international level, gender relations are influenced and “lives are changing dramatically as larger economic and political systems continue to transform [local] communities. They [men and women] struggle to find the economic, political, and environmental resources to resist, to develop alternatives, and to deal more effectively with externally induced dangers,” (THOMAS-SLAYTER et al. 1996: 291). The main topics concerning feminist political ecology are connected to the interlinking of environment and survival, the impact on global economies and political systems on localities, gender-based asymmetric entitlements, the value of local knowledge, gendered space, the realignment of rural-urban and productive systems, and women’s collective struggles (WANGARI et al. 1996: 127ff.).

In the research at hand, the approach of political ecology is helpful to explain the social-environmental changes in Baadu, as the case study is focused on the transformation process in the pastoral society of the Afar. Writing from the perspective of a political ecologist will help to understand the multiple factors and dimensions that need to be considered when analyzing the transformation process. With an incorporation of gender into the concept of political ecology, feminist political ecology is useful to understand the (ecological) transformation in Baadu from the perspective of Afar women. A strong focus will be kept on the existing power relations, in relation to gender aspects, between actors on different scales.

After having discussed the theoretical and conceptual framing of this master thesis, the methodical approach and the process of data collection will be discussed in the following chapter.

### 3 Methodical Conception

Chapter three gives an overview of the methodical approach used to collect primary data in the field. The general criteria of the qualitative approach will be explained first, followed by an overview of the sampling strategy chosen. The process of data transcription from verbal to textual data, as well as the strategy to analyze the data, will be displayed. After having discussed the methodical preliminary considerations, the focus will be transferred to the data collection process in the field, reflecting on the field conditions and experiences gained. The chapter closes discussing the scope of the methodical approach, evaluating possible disadvantages as well as problems faced during the process of data collection and data analysis.

#### 3.1 Pre-Considerations of the Methodical Approach

To analyze the afore described research question (see chapter 1), data was collected using a qualitative approach. The case study is based on the community level: specific individual cases on a micro level were analyzed. The criteria of *openness* and *flexibility*, allowed by qualitative empirical social research, open the possibility for the greatest possible closeness to the field of research (FLICK 1996: 13ff.). The aim of the thesis is to discover new correlations and structures instead of statistical representative results that verify already existing theories (MAYRING 2002: 19). The qualitative approach is needed to study the actor-oriented research question, delving into individual livelihood pathways and the ways in which they deal with structural, political and ecological transformation processes. A combination of problem-centered and narrative interviews with key informants, together with participatory observation, were used for the collection of data.

Reconstructive methods, such as participatory observation and narrative interviews, point to the conviction that the less intervention made by the researcher leads to the most valuable results in empirical social research. For example, interview questions should be asked as openly as possible so that the interviewee can give his or her own interpretation of the questions and point out, while answering, if the question even has any relevance in his or her personal life or cultural background. This approach allows the interviewee to structure the communication between him or her self and the researcher, revealing his own personal and cultural system of relevance. This very open method prevents premature interpretations by the researcher, which would be based on his or her own system of relevance and is of special importance



in a culture which is foreign to the researcher, like the Afar culture is to me<sup>4</sup> (BOHNSACK 2007: 20). These methodical requirements help to understand internal patterns of the interviewee's social surrounding. The openness of the qualitative approach reflects the research subject in the complexity of its every day context. Self-reflection of the researcher is needed to acknowledge the foreignness between researcher and research subject (FLICK 1996: 13ff.). It is the aim of this thesis to discover subjective meanings and individual knowledge and strategies for action of the Afar (women). Those can only be discovered using a qualitative approach.

The interviewees were collected following the principles of *theoretical sampling* introduced by GLASER & STRAUSS (1998: 51ff.) based on *Grounded Theory*. Grounded Theory is a widespread methodological approach in qualitative empirical research which aims to deduct theories from empirical data. It is an open, explorative methodology discovering variables which are of importance for broader phenomena (CORBIN 2011: 70ff.)<sup>5</sup>. The strategy of the theoretical sampling relies on the assumptions and aims of the Grounded Theory. The theoretical sampling strategy, therefore, does not ask for representativeness of the research data in general. Interviewees are collected in an iterative process by their relevance for the research question. Interviewees are not collected before but during the process of data collection. The first selection is based on preliminary theoretical considerations. During the process of data collection, the criteria for selection are more and more specified and target-oriented (STRÜBING 2011: 154ff).

The interviews followed a very open set of question which depended on the interviewee. The questions, in the sense of problem-centered interviews, were giving impulses in a certain direction, the answer was then openly given by the interviewee (MAYRING 2002: 67ff.). All interviews were recorded and afterwards transcribed. This was partly done with my translator, partly on my own. The transcription follows the original wording of the interviews. Emotions of the interviewees were only documented in special cases (MAYRING 2002: 89ff.).

The data collected during the interviews was added by the data from the participatory observation. The observation process continually accompanied me throughout my stay in Baadu. Observation is used to understand research subjects in their natural social environment. Some daily routines cannot be described in words but are conceived in observation processes. Impressions, influences, irritations and emotions of the researcher are also part of the data collection process, and therefore also part of the data collected (FLICK 1996: 16). Observations were documented in a personal research diary, in sketches, and with photographs. Besides the data collected in the field, secondary data, namely maps and secondary literature as well as statistics, were used as supplement.

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<sup>4</sup> I purposely use the first person singular to underline my personal interaction with the interviewees and the research field in general.

<sup>5</sup> For more information on Grounded Theory see GLASER & STRAUSS (1998).

The data was analyzed using the qualitative content analysis. This approach helps to systematically analyze the data. A theory based system of categories/codes formed the basis of the qualitative content analysis. Using these categories, the transcripts are analyzed one by one, selecting text modules that fit the categories (MAYRING 2002: 114ff.). The computer software MAXQDA was used to facilitate the qualitative content analysis. The analysis of qualitative data with a computer based software program leads to more transparency in the research process and raises the validity of the data analysis (MAYRING 2002: 135ff.; FLICK 2007: 452ff.). With MAXQDA, a code system based on colors was established. The transcripts are divided and assigned to the code system.

### **3.2 The Process of Data Collection in the Field**

As mentioned in the introduction, this master thesis was developed out of a research project implemented by GIZ with the aim to study the impacts of the spread of *Prosopis juliflora*. During my fieldwork, I benefitted from the close work with my Afar colleagues who also participated in the project of GIZ and the work with my German colleague Simone Rettberg, who has worked in the Afar Region since 2004. At the beginning of the data collection process, I depended particularly on the help of my Afar colleagues who helped me to access the field, one of the major challenges for the researcher. The position of the research in the field determines the quality of the collected data. Power relations and mistrust between researcher and research subject form an asymmetric relationship between the two sides. It is thus necessary to question one's own position as a researcher in the new social field. Power relations and hierarchical structures need to be critically reflected. The personal and cultural background of the researcher (unwillingly) influences the research process at all times. These barriers are not easily overcome and form a main constraint for empirical research (FLICK 2007: 142ff.; ROTHFUß 2009: 178; WAQUANT 1992: 51). Throughout my whole stay in the field, I worked closely with my colleague Mohammed Detona, an Ethiopian master student born in Gewane in Baadu. He facilitated my access to the field. Mohammed was also part of the research project by GIZ in the group from the University of Bonn. He helped me to find my first interview partners and translated for me in the first week of my four week stay in Baadu (see figure 5). Mohammed invited me to live with his family in Gewane (see map 2 and photo 1). Living in the house of Mohammed's family enabled me to quickly be accepted by neighbors and relatives. I accepted their wish to wear the local clothing, *pyjama*. I always ate together with the family, and tried to adapt as quickly as possible to the local lifestyle. Friends and relatives of Mohammed warmly welcomed me as a new member of the Detona family, curiously asking me many questions.

After a few days, the family gave me a local name, *Asa Medina*<sup>6</sup>, and my new name was quickly adapted by others. Living with the Detona family, eating together with the community and talking to the neighbors allowed me to gain the trust of the locals and facilitated access to the field.

I began my research in the Afar settlements of Old Gewane and Gewane (see map 2). The first interviewees were chosen by Mohammed after I explained my research interest and criteria to him. The interviews generally had to be taken together with a translator, since I do not speak the local language Affaringa. Finding an eligible translator proved to be one of the difficulties I had to face in the field (see also chapter 3.3). By the end of my stay, I had worked with three different translators in English and in French. The position of the translator in the field is as crucial as the position of the researcher for the quality of the data (ETZOLD 2012: 103ff.). Most interviews were conducted with Abdulkadir Hassen, and contrary to the other translators, Abdulkadir is very experienced. Abdulkadir lived in Canada for over ten years studying economic science, and so his English is excellent and it was very easy to communicate with him. Being an Afar himself, Abdulkadir could explain any cultural aspect to me which I did not understand due to my foreignness to the Afar culture. In this way, I was able to learn from his experience. In the beginning I was very skeptical of working with a male translator, and believed it would influence my results negatively, since I was working on a gender sensitive topic. However, my skepticism was positively eradicated when we interviewed the first women. Due to his great acceptance in the clans and his many years of experience with interviews, he posed the questions in a gentle way so that women answered openly even to sensitive questions. The uncertainty that the contents of the interview might be somehow altered is part of the translation process itself. While translating, the translator automatically changes some inputs in his own way of interpretation. These uncertainties cannot be erased and need to be critically reflected and accepted as part of the research process. Some details, for instance meanings of words and personal opinions, get lost in the process of translation (ROTHFUß 2009: 177ff.; BOURDIEU 1997: 780f.). This problem cannot be overcome when working with a translator is necessary.

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<sup>6</sup> *Asa Medina* means *Red Medina*. *Red* refers to my skin color while *Medina* refers to the holy Islam city of Medina in Saudi Arabia.



Photo 1: Mohammed's house in Gewane



Photo 2: First interviews conducted together with

The four weeks I spent in the field were divided into three parts of data collection (see figure 5). I spent the first two weeks developing an overview of the area and meeting the officials from the Woreda level (see also chapter 4) and members of other NGOs like FARM Africa and Care International. The first phase of data collection was hindered by missing transportation options (see also chapter 3.3). Although the complicated transportation situation somewhat hindered my work, it was beneficial in that I was able to get in close contact with the locals while I waited for a taxi or a truck to bring me to the villages around Gewane. When I arrived in the villages, I did not attract too much attention since I did not arrive by a modern four-wheel vehicle, which locals relate to the many NGOs working in the region. During this first period, I mainly talked to settled Afars living in the villages along the road side. In the second part of the data collection, I was able to use a car which enabled me to reach areas of the pastoralists far away from the Addis Ababa - Djibouti road.

Working with Abdulkadir during the second phase of my research increased the quality of my interviews due to his experience and great sensibility while talking to the people. In my earlier interviews, we were constantly surrounded by other women, men and children, which detracted from interviews. But with Abdulkadir, we were able to separate the interviewees from the surrounding people and find quieter places to talk. Separating the women from other Afars is crucial since they cannot speak openly being surrounded by their relatives and children take their attention away.

When my colleague Simone Rettberg arrived, shortly after I had started to work with Abdulkadir, my transportation problem was solved and I started to visit the areas far away from the asphalt road. Due to her year-long work in the region, Simone is widely known in the area. With her arrival, not only my transportation problem was solved, but I also was able to discuss my work with her, learning from her experiences and advice. We took four days to go to Awash, the next biggest city, which had a more reliable electricity supply with which to transcribe my interviews. I also used this phase to narrow in on my research questions. The first interviews

allowed me to set up a twofold structure of my research (see also chapter 1) and distinguish between different social groups of Afar women. I collected data by interviewing and observing Afars who still live a complete pastoral life constantly moving with their animals (mobile), Afars who live partly as nomads and partly settled (half-settled), and Afars who no longer live a mobile life and no longer pursue livestock production (settled). The interviewees were of different age and from different clans. Further interviews were conducted with female representatives of the government and NGOs. This differentiation into social groups of women was developed after the first phase of research. Interviews were also conducted with Afar men of different social groups and age. The questionnaire was narrowed and, using the method of theoretical sampling, I identified new areas and persons from which to collect data for my research question. Each phase of data collection was followed by a phase of transcription and specification of the research question. While working with the pastoralists, we stayed some nights with them in a tent. Due to Simone's close connection to the Maheisara Clan and Abdulkadir's general bond to the clans in Baadu, we were always warmly welcomed.

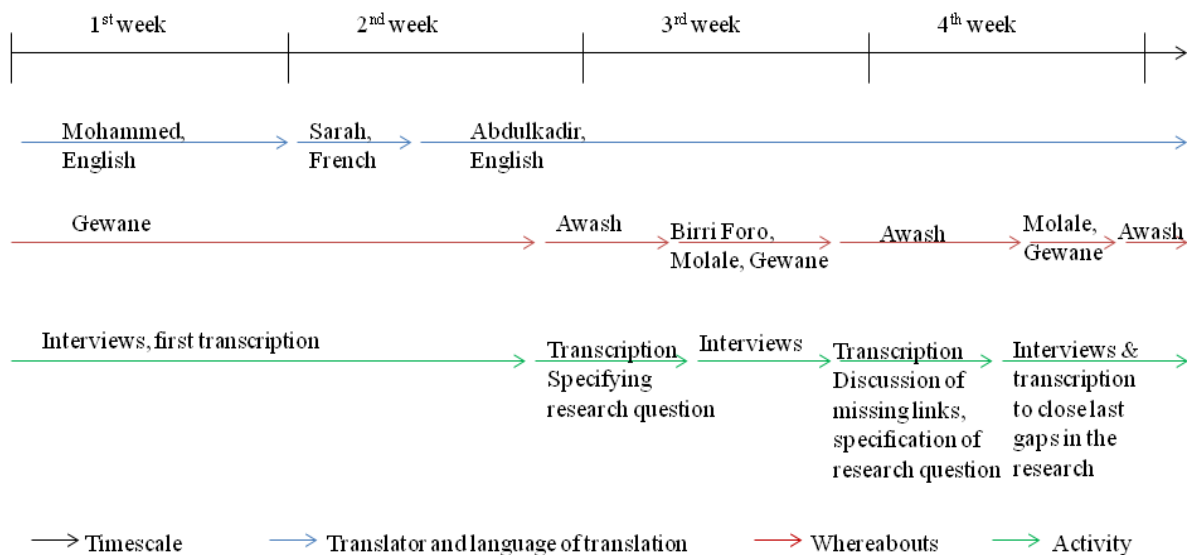
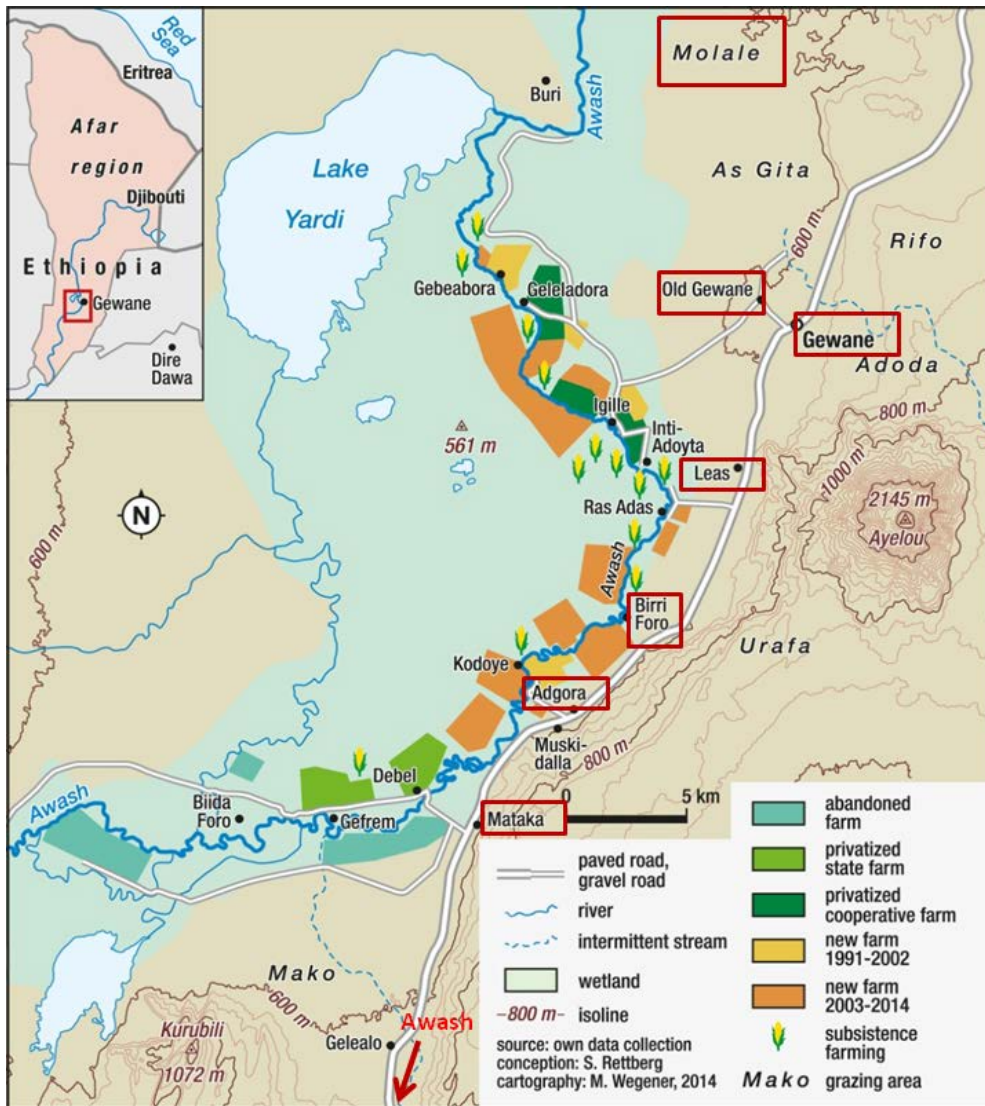


Figure 5: Schematic presentation of the process of data collection (own illustration)

The phases of transcribing the interviews took more than one third of my time in the field (see figure 5). Still, it was important to transcribe the interviews during the field stay to be able to reflect on them together with Abdulkadir, Mohammed and Simone.

Overall, I conducted about 30 interviews in seven different areas (see map 2) with men and women of different ages from the four social groups defined before. Only 24 of them could be used for the data analysis. Some interviews I conducted proved unessential for my research interest. For an overview of the interviews conducted see Annex One.



Map 2: Interview locations (framed in red) (modified and adapted from Rettberg 2009: 223)

Apart from the interviews, participatory observation was a constant companion of my stay in Baadu. The observation enabled me to understand daily processes within the community. These processes cannot always be captured by the interviewees. Therefore, the observation process is a main component of my research shedding light on many important findings.

Personally, I was amazed by the local's quick acceptance of my presence. Although, this is mainly due to the assistance by Mohammed, Simone and Abdulkadir, I still rarely faced skepticism by the people I was talking with. Many of them explained in detail their thoughts on the topics I was raising, and complemented them with their own experiences and opinions. However, any empirical work faces disadvantages and problems that will be described in the following section.

### 3.3 Disadvantages and Problems of the Methodical Approach

A main problem of my research project was *time*. As mentioned before, finding a translator proved to be one of the trickiest tasks of my research in the field. After the first ten days, when I had already worked with two translators and could not get any closer to my research goal, I clearly needed to find someone who was more experienced and who was able to support me not only while translating but also throughout the process of finding the right interviewees. Transcribing all my interviews took a total of eleven days. The transcription needed to be done while being close to Abdulkadir in order to resolve misunderstandings. Also, I had to take the time to collect data for the research project of GIZ, the original reason for my stay in Baadu. The collected data can be used for this case study, but further questions needed to be posed since the research for GIZ focused solely on *Prosopis juliflora*.

Unfortunately, working with a translator means that some aspects will be lost in the process of translation. This negative aspect cannot be avoided, but can be minimized if the researcher trains the translator in detail about the aim of the research (ROTHFUß 2009: 175ff.). A reflection of the work of the researcher and the translator is needed after each interview. Abdulkadir and I worked together closely with the assistance of my colleagues Simone and Mohammed. Together we discussed many aspects during all phases of the data collection process. Due to the short time in the field, I had to transcribe some of the interviews on my own. Generally, Abdulkadir and I translated those interviews together, which consisted of long narrative phases that could not be exactly translated during the interview. I translated those interviews where all answers could be translated during the interview. Afterwards, we would discuss together the parts of the interviews I did not understand.

A major problem I faced was the accessibility of key informants on the community level as well as on the Woreda and NGO level. This problem was especially prominent in regards to those Afars who still live a mobile lifestyle. These Afars live in the most remote areas far from any town, and rarely had the time to talk to me. Women were particularly busy taking care of children and domestic chores. Officials on the Woreda level as well as NGO members could not easily meet since they had to attend many meetings and travel to further away cities. Due to these problems, the interviews I conducted are not equally spread over the social groups I defined before. However, I was able to find representatives for each group who were able to answer my questions adequately.

The problem of transportation had negative as well as positive side effects as I already mentioned. Due to the lack of transportation in the beginning of my field research, my options to interview pastoralists were fairly limited as they live in remote areas which cannot be reached by public transportation. Even with the car arriving for the second half of my research, I was not able to make up for the time lost in the first

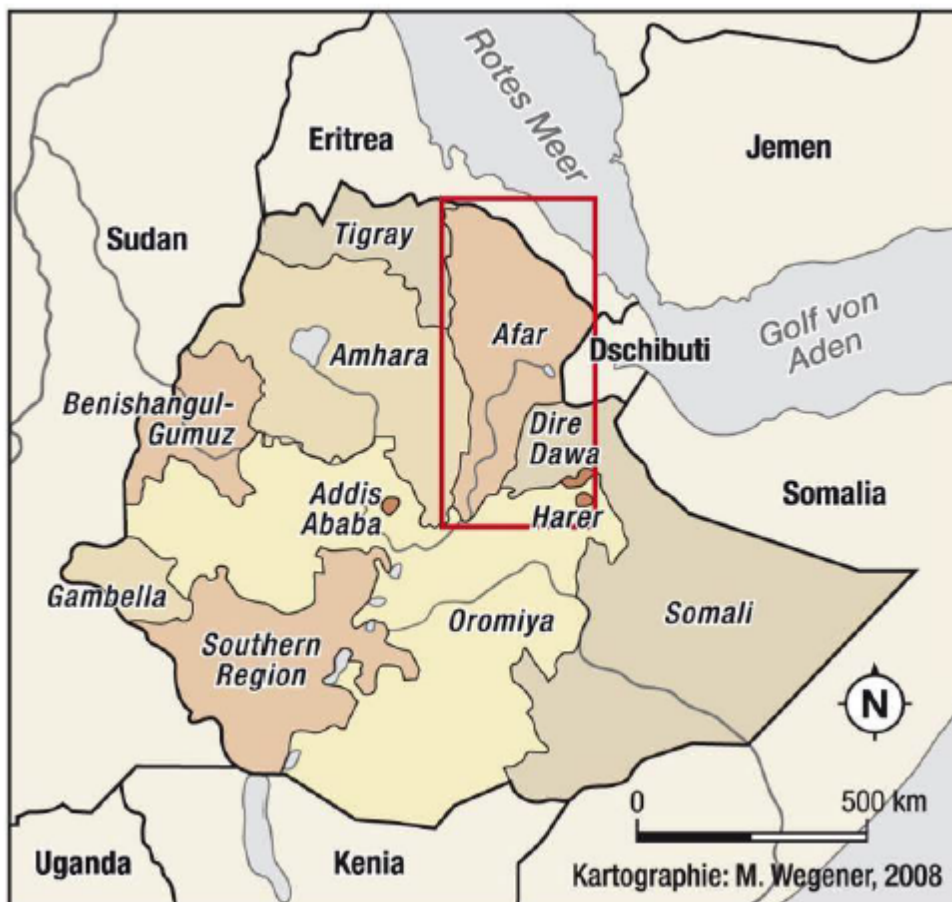
phase. I was able to interview some pastoralists, but not as many as I had planned for.

After having discussed the methodical considerations of this master thesis, the following chapter will give an overview of the case study area Baadu. Afterwards, the results of my study are presented in chapters five and six.



## 4 The Case Study Area

The case study was conducted in Baadu, a region located in the Middle Awash Basin in Afar Regional State (see map 1 in chapter 1), Ethiopia. The division of Ethiopia into a federal system goes back to the fall of the socialist military dictatorship of the Derg in 1991, which led to the division of the Ethiopia territory into nine administration regions in 1994 (see map 3). The administrative reorganization of Ethiopia marks the transition from the socialist military dictatorship to a federal democratic parliamentary republic. The administrative regions today are named after the ethnic majorities living in the defined areas (see map 3). Even though this fairly young system is supposed to guarantee representativeness of the regions in the national government and self-determination of the regions, the democracy of the Ethiopian government is highly questionable. In the following, a description of the Afar people living in the case study area will be given. This description is followed by a political and ecological framing of the Afar Regional State. After, the population of the Afars will be characterized. Finally, the role of women in the Afar society is discussed.



Map 3: Administrative regions of Ethiopia after 1994 (RETTBERG 2009: 54)

## 4.1 The Roots of the Afar People

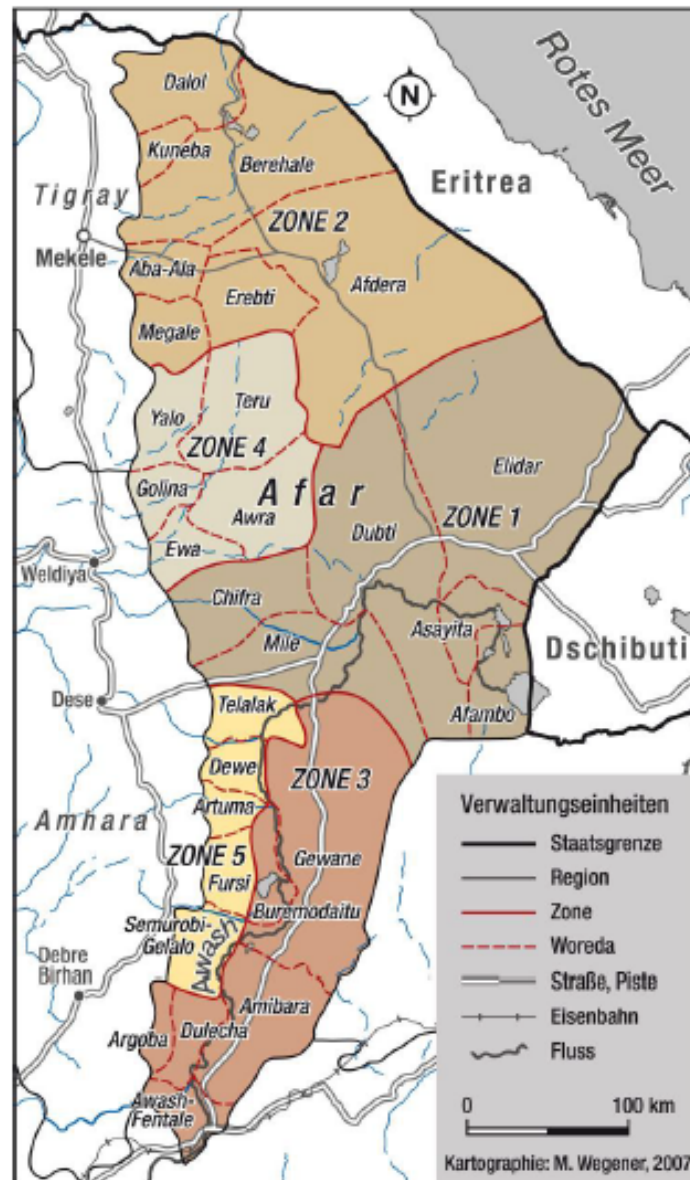
The ethnic group of the Afar is said to originate from the Arabian Peninsula. There is no single definition of the word *Afar*. “Despite having different meanings for their name, the Afar people have a distinct cultural and linguistic identity of their own and inhabit a well-defined territory in the African Horn; an area commonly referred to as the Afar Triangle<sup>7</sup> which is divided between Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti,” (YASIN 2008: 42). The Afars have always been a minority in all three states. With a total population of nearly 1.3 million, they represent 1.73% of the population in the multiethnic state of Ethiopia (CSA 2007a: 73). The area of Afar Regional State is of great geo-political interest as it marks the bridge between the African continent and the Middle East (see map 3). Today, the Afar Triangle often finds itself in the middle of the interests of different regional and global powers (YASIN 2008: 44).

The history of the Afar in the Horn of Africa developed from a system of sultanates which ruled over the three areas of the Afar-Triangle. The Afar Triangle was among the regions in the African continent in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with which the imperial powers had a growing interest. The Afar Triangle in particular attracted the attention of the Italian and the French colonialists. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the Afar Triangle was split between the Italian and the French imperial powers and the Ethiopian state. The separation of the Afar people under the influence of the colonial interests of France and Italy marks the beginning of many processes of demarcation of borders, which negatively affected the Afars and questioned their common identity. The division of the Afar people into three states also marks the beginning of a process of power deprivation and the loss of political autonomy, a marginalization process which is still going on until today. The Italians left the Afar Triangle in 1941, and their control was followed increasingly by the Ethiopian state. Ethiopia was ordered into five administrative zones under Haile Selassie. In the 1960s, the Afar Triangle increased its importance for the Ethiopian government, ensuring the accessibility of the Red Sea and opening the possibility for irrigation agriculture along the Awash River, the longest river of Ethiopia. While under the government of Haile Selassie, parts of the Afar Triangle were given to foreign and private investors who were expanding irrigation agriculture in the region. The land was then taken back and communalized under a socialist military dictatorship known as the Derg Regime. With the independence of Djibouti and Eritrea respectively, the separation of the Afar people in the Afar Triangle has been maintained to this today. In 1994, Ethiopia was divided into nine regions (see map 3), one of them the Afar Regional State with its own

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<sup>7</sup> “The Afar Triangle stretches from the northern most fringes of the Boori peninsula to the vicinity of the Abyssinian highland plateau in the west. The eastern border of the Triangle extends from the city of Djibouti in the south following the railway line from Ereh to Awash town. And both the west-east borderlines meet at Namale Fan, which is 75 miles NE of Addis Ababa. The north-south Afar coastal line along the Red Sea shores is over 800 miles long” (YASIN 2008: 42).

regional administration. There are further subdivisions on the administrative level of Woredas and Kebeles, the smallest administrative unit (see map 4) (RETTBERG 2009: 41ff.; YASIN 2008: 40ff.).

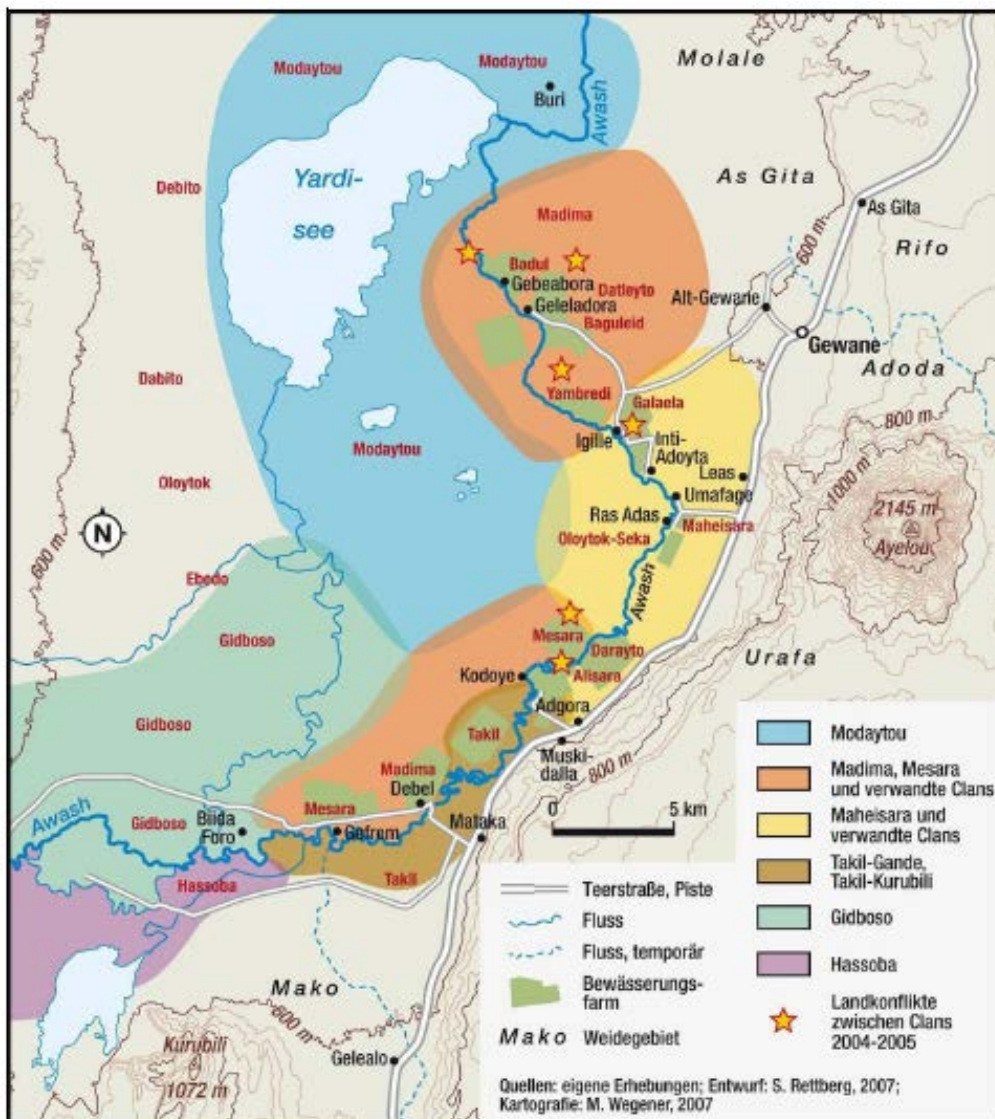


Map 4: Administrative zones within Afar after 1994 (RETTBERG 2009: 56)

## 4.2 The Political and Ecological Situation of the Afar

The Afar Regional State has five zones and 29 Woredas, (see map 4) which are again divided into Kebeles; the smallest administrative unit in Ethiopia. This case study was based in Baadu (see map 5) which belongs to Gewane and Buremodaytu Woreda. My focus was on Gewane Woreda. This special focus was due to my stay in

Gewane (city) and the lack of transportation at the beginning of the research. The Woreda level is the most important administrative level as it bridges national and regional interests. The responsible authorities on the Woreda level should be staffed with Afar people, but they are often assigned to people of other ethnicities, mostly people from the highlands, as many Afars lack the education necessary to represent their region on an administrative basis. In the voting of 2010, the Afar National Democratic Party gained 1.4%, which translates to eight seats (compared to a total of 547 seats) in the House of Peoples Representatives. As a minority of the nation, the Afar lack the ability to fulfill their own aims and interests and are repeatedly adversely affected by the interest of the Ethiopian government (see also chapter 5). The Ethiopian government does not have an interest in supporting the Afar, for the most part living as pastoralists, as pastoralism is still considered backward. In addition, the government wants to use the area of Afar in their own interests, e.g. promoting irrigation agriculture (YASIN 2008: 47ff.).



Map 5: The case study area Baadu and overview of the clans in the area (RETTBERG 2009: 126)

On the Woreda level, the affiliation of the Woreda employees to a certain clan is important, since they mostly do not represent the interest of the majority of the Afar living in the Woreda but rather the interests of their own clan. While working in Gewane Woreda I observed that the president of the Woreda belongs to the Baguleid Clan, which is related to the Medima and Mesara Clans (see map 5). Mohammed and Abdulkadir reported that zone three has almost no representatives in the regional government, thus making it difficult to represent the needs and interests of the people living in zone three. Medina, head of the women's affairs office, told me that out of four posts, three are given to highlanders, leaving her as the only Afar representative.

After the discussion of the political situation of the Afars in Baadu, the ecological situation will be addressed in the following. The ecological situation of the Afar Region is determined by its precipitation and temperatures. "Geologically this region is part of the Afar Triangle where the East African Rift Valley extends towards the Red Sea. This area is known for its tectonic activity, with recurrent earthquakes and volcanic activity," (RETTBERG & MÜLLER-MAHN 2012: 299). Generally, the climatic conditions are harsh with temperatures reaching from 25 to 48 degrees Celsius, especially in the northern parts of the regions, with exposed and rocky surfaces. Concerning the vegetation, there are predominantly bushes, woodlands and shrubs (RETTBERG & MÜLLER-MAHN 2012: 299). The annual precipitation is determined by two rainy seasons (a short one from March till April and a longer one from July until September). The Afar pastoralists depend on the availability of water and grassland for their animals, which again depends on the intensity of the precipitation during the rainy seasons (GOVERNMENT OF ETHIOPIA & USAID ETHIOPIA 2010: 11ff.). The reliability of the rainfalls has varied in the last years, leading to changing flooding regimes of the Afar River and recurrent droughts. Even though the Afars are used to periodically recurring droughts and the resulting famines, the intensity and rate of the droughts has increased in the last years, confronting the community with serious food security problems (RETTBERG 2009: 64ff.). In addition, the ecological pattern of the region along the Awash was changed with the expansion of the irrigation agriculture since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century taking large grazing areas from the Afar pastoralists.

Baadu, located in the Middle Awash Basin (see map 4 and 5) is known as a favorable area for livestock, especially cattle (RETTBERG 2009: 65ff.). The region benefits from its profitable position along the Awash River, with vast grazing areas and year-long water access. The flood plains around the Awash are seasonally flooded, and are surrounded by hills and mountains which offer grazing areas during the rainy seasons, they are called *alta*. With 450mm of annual rainfall, the Middle Awash Basin receives fairly higher precipitation than the rest of Afar, in which it ranks between 100 and 600mm (RETTBERG & MÜLLER-MAHN 2012: 299ff.).

The Awash River, with a length of 1,200 km, is the longest river in Ethiopia. The river is of the utmost importance for the region, as it is one of the perennial rivers in an otherwise extremely hot and dry area. The zones around the Awash are the only naturally suitable areas for agriculture in the semi-arid and arid terrain of Afar. Due to changing rainfall patterns, the river has increased in importance for the people in the region. In the past, the areas along the Awash River were rich with many different grass species and tree species that are important for livestock production. The changing flood regimes of the Awash are a mature problem in the areas along the river (Rettberg 2009: 64ff.). Since the 1980s, a new ecological problem of unknown consequences is observed in the Afar region; the invasion of *Prosopis juliflora* (see box 1, page 29). *Prosopis juliflora*, an invasive species, has started spreading in the region since its introduction by the Ethiopian government. Today, vast parts of Baadu are infected diminishing indigenous grass and tree species and threatening the livelihoods of the Afars (RETTBERG & MÜLLER-MAHN 2012: 297ff.). The spread of *Prosopis juliflora* is highly affecting the wetlands in Baadu. The species presence increased from 8% in 2000 to 40% in 2013 (AYANU et al. 2014: n.pag.). The changing rainfall patterns and flooding regimes of the Awash River, together with the invasion of *Prosopis juliflora* are leading to an intensive ecological transformation in Baadu which is threatening the availability of grazing land and with it the livelihoods of the Afars.

The changing political and especially ecological situation of Baadu will be further discussed in chapter five, where the results of the case study are presented. Concrete consequences of these transformations for the Afars will be analyzed in that chapter. In the following, the population characteristics of Afar, mainly Baadu, will be specified.

**Box 1: *Prosopis juliflora***

*Prosopis juliflora* is an evergreen mesquite shrub or small tree belonging to the Fabaceae family. It originates from South America, Central America and the Caribbean. *Prosopis juliflora* is known as a fast spreading plant which is drought resistant and tolerant to saline soils. In the 1970s and 1980s it was brought to Asia and Africa to prevent desertification and soil erosion. It was also planted in areas with high deforestation and fuel wood shortage. *Prosopis juliflora* was planted in areas with harsh climate conditions, where other plants failed to grow. Growing fast, *Prosopis juliflora* forms dense thickets replacing indigenous species. It has noxious thorns which can puncture car tires and shoes leading to injuries of human-beings and animals. The pods of *Prosopis juliflora* are protein rich (SEID 2012: 22ff.; MWANGI & SWALLOW 2008: 131ff.). Even though PASIECZNIK et al. (2012: 197ff.) argue that *Prosopis juliflora* is one of the most underutilized plants which could be very helpful to improve food security in famine-prone areas; the invasive plant threatens livelihoods and ecosystems (MWANGI & SWALLOW 2008: 130ff.). In some countries, e.g. India and Kenya, the pods of *Prosopis juliflora* are used as fodder for livestock (it needs to be mixed with other sorts of fodder since it causes digestion problems if it is consumed purely), honey and as flower for bread and cakes. Moreover, it can be used as a building material (PASIECZNIK et. al. 2012: 198ff.).

Anyhow, in Ethiopia *Prosopis juliflora* is causing many problems due to its invasiveness. In the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan it is identified as one of the top four invasive species in Ethiopia. In 2006 a total area of 700.000 ha was covered by *Prosopis juliflora*, of which 70 % lay in Afar (MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND

### 4.3 Population Characteristics of the Afar

Ethiopia is a multi-ethnic state with more than 80 unique ethnic groups and a large variety of livelihoods. A key distinction can be made between farmers, agro-pastoralists and pastoralists (see map 6). While farmers dominantly live in the mountain regions, pastoralists and agro-pastoralists can be found in the North Eastern and Southern lowlands of Ethiopia. The Afars are dominantly pastoralists, but the number of agro-pastoralists is increasing (GOVERNMENT OF ETHIOPIA & USAID ETHIOPIA 2010: 1ff.).

In the census of 2007, 1.4 million people were counted in the Afar Region, of which 1.25 million were identified as Afar. Thus, only 1.7% of the Ethiopian population belongs to the ethnic group of the Afar (CSA 2007a: 7). The Afar region covers an area of 96,707 km<sup>2</sup> of Ethiopia, or 8.8% of the country, which is more than twice the size of the Netherlands. Concerning social infrastructure, the region of Afar is highly underdeveloped, especially compared to the development of the highlands. The

population density within the region is low compared to the rest of the country (CSA 2007a: 229ff.).

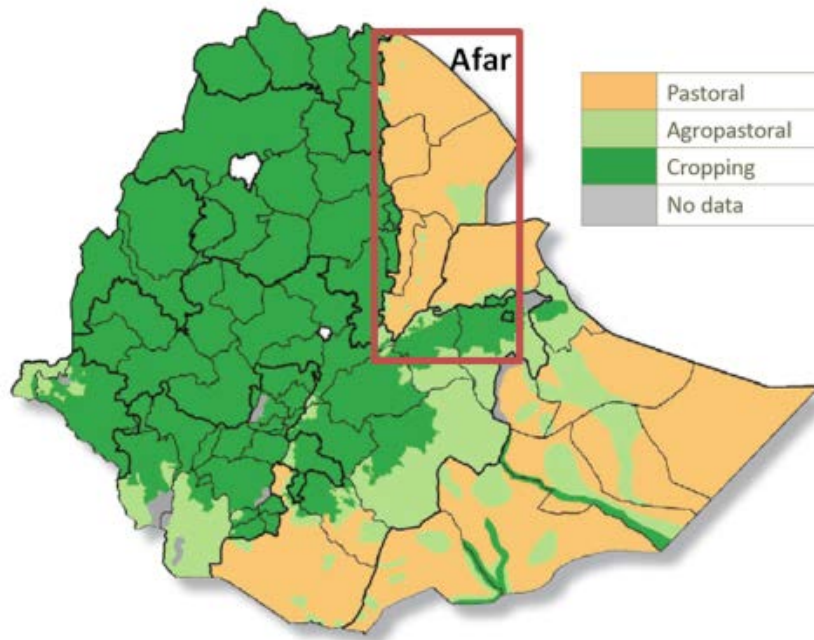
Generally, the Afar people are organized in a clan structure following a patrilineal pattern. All Afars share the same language, the Affarigna, and believe in the Islamic religion. The livelihoods of the Afars are mainly based on livestock production. The livestock, mostly a mixture of camels, cattle, goats and sheep, is their main source of income. Due to vast size of their animal herds, the Afars depend on the availability of grazing areas and water access to ensure their food security (GOVERNMENT OF ETHIOPIA & USAID ETHIOPIA 2010: 11ff.). The 2007 census shows that out of the 1.4 million people living in Afar, 86.7% still live in rural areas. At the same time, the census identifies only 30% of the people in the Afar Region as pastoralists, a number that highly deviates from the 85% RETTBERG (2009: 57f.) declared as pastoralists in her case study. The numbers also materially differ from observations of aid agencies such as SAVE THE CHILDREN et al. (2007: 10) who identified 90% of the rural population as pastoralists, of which 10% were identified as agro-pastoralists<sup>8</sup>. The *Atlas of Ethiopian Livelihoods* identified most of the Afar Region as inhabited by pastoralists (see map 6). Generally, the divergent numbers might be explained with different categorizations. Today, most pastoral families engage in other sources of income besides pastoralism, therefore, they might not be counted as pastoralists in some studies.

With a literacy rate of 17.3%, the Afars lie significantly under the national average of 39.8%. The possibility to attend school in general, specifically any grade higher than elementary school, is extremely difficult due to the lifestyle of mobility of the Afar pastoralists as well as the deficiency of schools and school materials in this area. There is also a lack of medical care within the region (CSA 2007a: 10ff).

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<sup>8</sup> The data of the census needs to be seen critically since it relies on extrapolation. Also, the pastoralists are highly mobile; data concerning the pastoralists can only be seen as an approximation at the current situation. Also, the definitions of the categories used in the census leave questions open: pastoralists are defined as “people who are wondering from place to place in search for water for their animals” (CSA 2007b: 5). It is not clear to which category, for instance, agro-pastoralists belong. Also, the most frequently used categories “rural” and “urban” do not find any definition at all. Therefore, in this thesis, the data is only used to display a trend.





Map 6: Livelihood Zone Types (GOVERNMENT OF ETHIOPIA & USAID ETHIOPIA 2010: 8)

The population of the case study area, Baadu, was reported as 63,000 (Gewane und Bure Modayitu Woreda) according to the census of 2007, a number that again slightly varies depending on the source. Of the people living in Baadu, 57,000 people live in rural areas and 8,000 are defined as purely pastoralists by the Ethiopian government (CSA 2007b: 10ff.). Map six, however, shows that the number of pastoralists found in the area is higher (as it comes from a different source). Baadu is divided into six main clans, which are then divided into 21 sub-clans (see map 5). The literacy rate of zone three is 28.9%, well over the main literacy rate of the Afar Region. This rate deviates substantially between urban and rural areas as well as male and female Afars. The lowest literacy rate is found among women in rural areas of which 14.1% are literate (CSA 2007b: 154ff.). In the field, a total number of eleven elementary schools in Gewane Woreda were counted. The only secondary school in Baadu is located in Gewane. There is no preparatory school in the region, though it is necessary to attend preparatory school to access university. There are eleven health posts in Gewane and all of them lack facility and personnel. Although it is considered to be the biggest and best equipped, we could tell from our visit that the health posts were missing fundamental equipment and staff.

#### 4.4 The Role of Women in Pastoralist Societies

In a pastoral society, strict gender roles determine the power relations, decision making processes, access to resources and work load and work task of men and

women. Often, women have less ownership rights than men do and also less access to resources such as education, which makes women more vulnerable to any kind of stress. While men tend to be the *specialists*, since they usually care for big livestock and follow a certain migration pattern, women are called *generalists* since they are in charge of all domestic chores; they rear the small livestock and take care of the children. Women's work tasks are more diversified than the ones of Afar men. Women generally interact more closely with the environment, as they rely on natural resources when searching for water, fire wood or other activities concerning domestic needs. Women are at once responsible for the family's nutrition, while being last in the nutrition chain, and are therefore the worst affected in times of famine (FISH et al. 2010: 5ff).

Gender roles are thus institutionalized and follow strict power dynamics, which lead to major inequalities between the two sexes. The power relations are reflected in entitlements and ownership rights as well as decision making. Women generally play a minor role in any kind of decision making. In the household itself as well as in the public sphere, men take the leading role in the family and make decisions that women must follow. The possessions of the family are managed by men. Livestock is also mostly owned by men, and women can only possess things which have been given to them by male relatives. Women are highly dependent on men economically, and are seldom able to secure their livelihoods on their own (RETTBERG 2009: 118f.).

In the political sphere, Afar women play a minor role as well, especially in Gewane Woreda where women are highly underrepresented. During the stay in Gewane, only one Afar woman could be found in the administrative system; Medina, the head of the women's affairs office. Thus, women are insufficiently able to give their needs and problems a voice. However, pastoral women take on important roles in rangeland and resource management, depending on natural resources to fulfill their daily activities (RIDGEWELL et al. 2007: 45ff.). Even though natural resource management issues have become very important in Afar, women have not been included in the legislative process.

The risk of illness is higher for Afar women than men due to their higher work burden, they are more prone to catch diseases. In addition, the food security of Afar women is less than that of men, both factors that lead to a higher mortality of Afar women. The Afars still practice Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), where the clitoris, the inner and the outer vulvar lips are cut. After the cutting, the vagina is sewn, leaving only a small hole for urine and menstrual blood. FGM is one of the biggest threats to women's health in the Afar Region (RETTBERG 2009: 120ff.). FGM is practiced before girls reach the age of one. Even though there are many campaigns of different NGOs and GOs to explain that FGM cannot be justified with the Islamic religion, the percentage of FGM practices lies by over 90%, as reported by Fatuma Hate from the local NGO Rohi Weddu. Women who are not circumcised lose their acceptance and will be socially marginalized from the community. The risk of social exclusion is perceived as worse than the health risks deriving from FGM. Due to the intervention of religious

sheiks, women began to 'only' cut part of the clitoris, leaving the vulvar lips. This is called the 'small' circumcision (RETTBERG 2009: 122). Even with the minor changes in FGM, the risk for illnesses and high mortality rate during delivery is still present.

The description of the case study area Baadu given in this chapter serves as a basis of background information for the data analysis and interpretation to follow. The next chapters present the results of the case study.

## 5 The Context of the Transformation

The livelihoods of the pastoralists living in Baadu are based on livestock production, mainly camel, cattle, goat and sheep. Pastoralists generally live a very mobile lifestyle, always in search of water and rangeland for their animals. Due to their mobile lifestyle, they are highly adapted to the seasonal changes and the accessibility of natural resources, especially water and rangeland. In the past, the area of Baadu has been known for its enormous cattle herds, but now livestock numbers are decreasing quickly. In fact, the cattle herds have almost been eradicated because they cannot adapt to ecological changes. The number of camel, goat and sheep is also decreasing. Droughts and famines have always been known in the Afar Region, and it cannot be argued that droughts and famines have been occurring more frequently (RETTBERG & MÜLLER-MAHN 2012: 299ff.) and therefore cannot be identified as the only factor leading to an impoverishment of the pastoralists. However, a general transformation process within the pastoral society living in Baadu was observed. This transformation does not rely solely on ecological changes, political, economic and social factors also need to be taken into consideration. While many Afars describe the transformation process in a negative way, others seem to benefit from the structural changes. In the following, the context of the transformation process of the pastoral society in Baadu will be analyzed. The transformation process will be looked at from a historical perspective relying mainly on the work of RETTBERG 2009. Present trends, which derive from the interviews and observations conducted in the field, are included in the analysis. The ongoing transformation is analyzed along different levels of difficulties the Afars are facing.

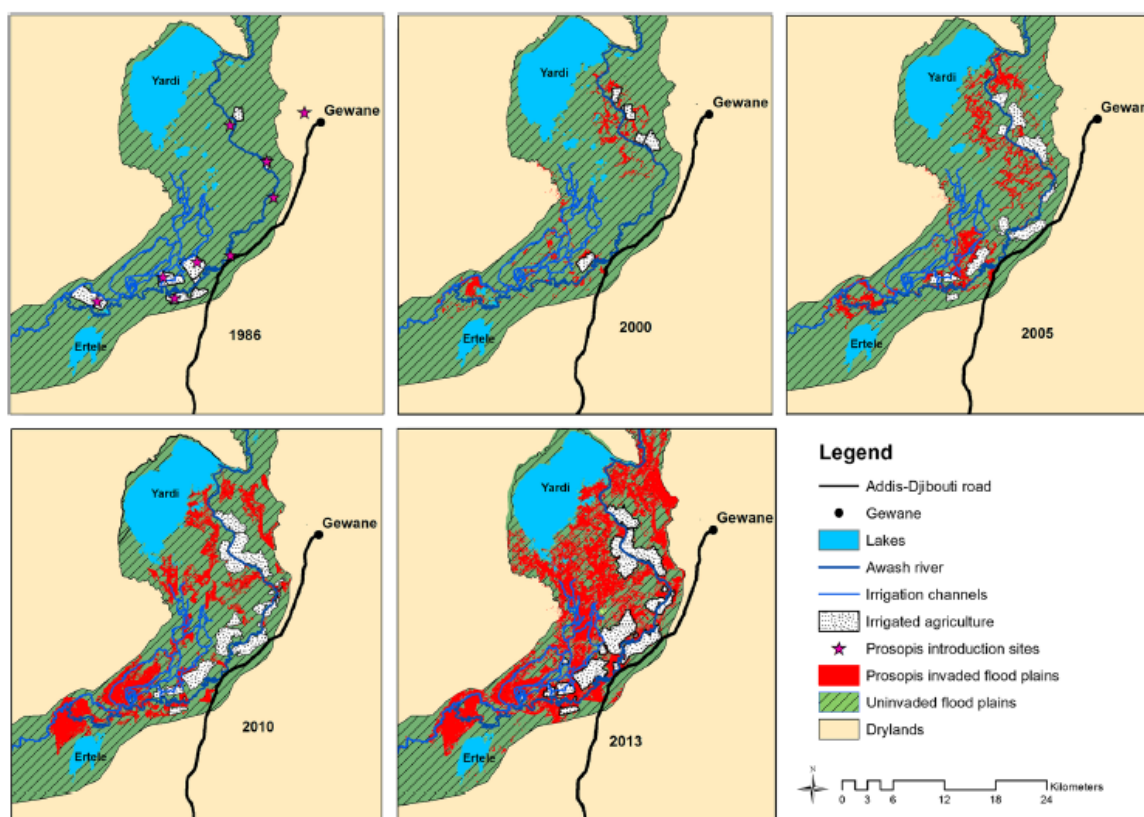
### 5.1 External Influences on the Livelihood Systems of the Afar Pastoralists

#### 5.1.1 The Invasion of *Woyane Harar*: Threat or Benefit to the Livelihoods of Baadu's Afar?

The invasive species *Prosopis juliflora* was brought to the Afar Regional State in the 1970s and 1980s by the Ethiopian government to ameliorate the micro climate. A pastoral woman from Birri Foro (see map 2) explains the spread of *Prosopis juliflora* in Baadu to me:

“In 1984, during Matalea, there was a huge drought. All the livestock perished. There was a big famine. Luckily, white people like you rescued us. After the famine, there was this Woreda administrative in Gewane, his name was Abas. The tree that never existed here, it must have come from somewhere, it was brought by Abas, may Allah kill him. He is the one who destroyed us. [...] Our livestock started to eat the pods and with the dung of the animals the tree was spreading very fast. With the tree came also the lion. There are a lot of lions today. Lions kill our animals without making a noise; they do it in a very silent way.” (Fatuma, midwife, Birri Foro)

The spread of *Prosopis juliflora* leads to many negative factors, of which the loss of rangeland is only one factor. *Prosopis juliflora* thickets also give shelter to predators, such as the lions described by Fatuma. In Baadu, the invasion of *Prosopis juliflora* is extremely rampant. Mostly affected are the areas along the Awash River, which are seasonally flooded and therefore, the plant can easily spread due to the good water accessibility and fertile soils. The invasion of the wetlands increased from 8% in 2000 to 40% in 2013, relating to 3,600 ha in 2000 and 20,000 ha in 2013. Drylands and agricultural areas are less affected, with a relative coverage of under 4% (AYANU 2014 et al.: n.pag.). The spread of *Prosopis juliflora* from 1986 to 2013 is shown in map seven.



Map 7: Areas affected by the spread of the invasive species *Prosopis juliflora* in Baadu (AYANU et al. 2014: n.pag.)

As map seven shows, it is obvious that the flood plains around the Awash River are especially favorable for an accelerated and intensive spread of *Prosopis juliflora*. The plant forms thickets (see photo 3) which often block pathways and cover areas which used to be inhabited by indigenous grass species that are essential fodder for livestock. The fast spread in the flood plains of the Awash River is caused by the distribution of the pods through animal dung and the water of the Awash River itself (RETTBERG 2009: 99). The flood plain areas of the Awash River are favorable dry season rangelands of the pastoralists. The invasion of *Prosopis juliflora* creates a disastrous situation for the pastoralists who depend on the accessibility of those rangelands. During my field trip to Baadu in spring 2014, first spreads of *Prosopis juliflora* in the higher-lying rainy season areas, *alta*, were observed. These regions were not affected in the past. Usually, the Afars used the *alta* regions solely during the rainy seasons when the Awash River flooded. Today, these areas are also important grazing areas during dry season and are now used throughout the year due to the missing rangelands along the Awash River (see picture 4).



Photo 3: *Prosopis juliflora* thicket



Photo 4: Small *Prosopis juliflora* plants in the rainy season area Molale

The spread of *Prosopis juliflora* was named as the main cause for the changing vegetation pattern in Baadu in the interviews and, thus, also the main factor leading to the deterioration of the livelihood situation of the pastoralists in Baadu. Pastoralists report that due to the loss of dry season grazing areas and a resulting loss of livestock, their livelihood and food security is no longer stable. Pastoralists perceive themselves to be responsible for the spread as they believe it must have been their own mal practice of the Islamic religion which brought Allah's anger to them. On the other hand, as can be seen in the previous quote from Fatuma, people highly distrust the Ethiopian government and also hold them responsible for planting *Prosopis juliflora* in the first place. However, now it is not only a question of responsibility, but also who will control the invasion, something the Afars now depend on the Ethiopian

government to see through. In 2011, the regional government of Afar came up with a guideline for *Prosopis juliflora* that clearly defines how *Prosopis juliflora* should be controlled, managed and eradicated (REGIONAL GOVERNMENT OF AFAR 2011: 1ff). The guideline has never been implemented.

Controlling the *Prosopis juliflora* has proved to be a difficult problem. On the local level, the eradication is hindered by the extremely mobile lifestyle of pastoralists, which does not allow a continuing maintenance and control of the plant. Locals also lack the knowledge to eradicate the plant from invaded areas. Most Afars feel destitute in their situation, as they watch their grazing areas being invaded by *Prosopis juliflora*, and their livelihoods becoming less secure as a result.

*“In the past we struggled a lot to prevent Derg Harar from spreading. [...] Even though we cut Derg Harar it came back even worse than before. [...] The cutting leads to the opposite effect that was wanted.” (Hawa, Old Gewane)*

If *Prosopis juliflora* is only cut but not uprooted, the plant grows back stronger than before. The clearing attempts of many people in Baadu therefore led to the opposite effect intended. Generally, *Prosopis juliflora* can best be controlled in areas where settled people live, e.g. on and around farms, since people are present throughout the year and can control the plant continually. The clearing on farms is either done in a self-organization of the Afars or under the order of investors of private farms (see also chapter 6). The plant is cut using a machete, *konchera*, and afterwards is dried and burned (see picture 6).

The present situation of the pastoralists and the decreasing livestock herds are most alarming as it endangers the food security of the Afars. This situation is worsened due to the animal disease *Harmaku* which again increases the loss of livestock. Animals feeding from the pods of *Prosopis juliflora* become affected with *Harmaku* (see picture 5). *Harmaku* leads to numerous animal deaths, mainly cattle but also camel and shoats, through a deformation of the jaw and digestion problems. *Prosopis juliflora* can only be used as fodder when it is mixed with other sorts of fodder, as the concentration of *Prosopis juliflora* in animal fodder should not reach over 50% (PASIECZNIK et al. 2012 197ff.). In Baadu, there is no such strategy for fodder production. *Prosopis juliflora* is used as fodder when other sources are missing. Due to the lack of grazing areas, many animals feed solely on *Prosopis juliflora*, leading to an increased number of *Harmaku* infections. Additionally, animals are injured by the noxious thorn punctures from *Prosopis juliflora*. In Baadu, many limping animals were observed who were injured by the thorns. Human beings are also affected by injuries of the plant. We observed some people are limping, and others lose their sight when their eyes are punctured. Infections often need treatment with antibiotics at health posts.

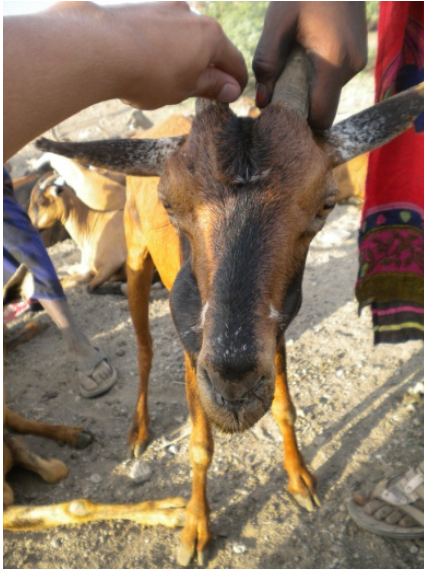


Photo 5: Goat infected with the animal disease Harmaku



Photo 6: Burning of dried *Prosopis juliflora* plants as a controlling

Pastoralists are the most severely affected and the most vulnerable to ecological changes such as the invasion of *Prosopis juliflora* because they depend greatly on the land and lack the resources to secure their livelihoods. Due to their mobile life a positive use of the plant, as will be described later or controlling is difficult. Saida, an elderly woman from Old Gewane describes the negative effects of *Prosopis juliflora* on the Afar:

*“This evil tree, we lost almost all our livestock. It is this tree which destroyed the pasture, the grass our animals used to feed from. Because of this tree, all the wild fruits we used to eat [...] are gone. When our livestock eats the pods, they get Harmaku and they die. It’s the same for cattle and shoats. Camels get easily injured by the thorns of Derg Harar because of their big feet. All these bad things only happen because of this tree. Since the spread of this tree we are experiencing food insecurity. [...] Before the spread of this tree we used to have different kinds of grasses [...] when the cattle feed on that grass their milk used to taste very good. All this is gone now. [...] The grasses do not grow anymore.” (Saida, pastoralist, Old Gewane)*

Many Afars leave the life of pastoralism since their livelihood system is threatened by the disastrous invasion of *Prosopis juliflora* as well as other factors, (see following parts of chapter 5) and choose instead to pursue new livelihood pathways. These new pathways are in many cases connected to a process of sedentarization and livelihood diversification to overcome the long-term dynamic changes which negatively affect the situation of the pastoralists.



One of these new livelihood pathways Afars choose is charcoal production, a niche Afars extract benefit from the invasion of *Prosopis juliflora* (see also box 2, page 39). Detona explains this new economic use of the plant to me:

*“Since the implementation of Woyanne Harar just until now we always had the feeling that it is a bad tree. It has no good, absolutely no use, except for destroying all the animals. First when the animals ate the pods, the dung of the animals made the tree spread really fast. We always felt there is nothing good with that tree. But recently, the tree of which we always thought had only negative aspects, we can see today that there are also some positive things. People started to make charcoal out of that tree. People who are making charcoal, those who have totally lost their livestock, they use the tree to make charcoal. They use the money to buy new shoats, guns, houses like this one and trucks. Things like that are changing the view. Instead of thinking that this is an evil tree, there are also positive things about it. The perception about that tree is changing in a sense.” (Detona, Gewane)*

The charcoal production is mainly found in Gewane, Mataka and Adgora (see map 2 in chapter 3). The benefits from charcoal are estimated to be very high. While it is easy to earn money with the production of charcoal, it also opens the possibility to expand market access and public transportation. The charcoal business is described by the Kedo-Abba, of the Mesara Clan, Aden Hassen:

*“Things really have changed. It was a shame for Afar men to cut fire wood and sell it in the streets, they would rather die of hunger. They used to be ashamed of touching charcoal. But time has changed. Now they are buying cars and construct houses out of it. The bagaget<sup>9</sup> and the motorcycles were bought with the money from charcoal. All these houses are built with that money. They bring these highlanders. For example, at first they can have ten workers from the south who cut the trees and make the charcoal. They can make a significant amount of money out of it.” (Aden Hassen, Kedo-Abba of the Mesara clan, Mataka)*

The engagement in economic activities, such as the production of charcoal, leads to the development of basic infrastructure in the region. Public transportation increased since people invested in motorized transportation in order to access the markets. As a result, the economy is becoming stronger, and (food) shops can be found in urban centers. In Mataka and Adgora especially, charcoal is sold along the road side of the Addis Ababa - Djibouti road. This opens up the possibility for petty trading (see chapter 6) a practice that is mostly done by women. The number of tea and coffee shops as well as bars and hotels is also increasing in the settlements along the asphalt road. Because there are more options for work in the Afar Region, the

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<sup>9</sup> Small taxis for public transportation. They look the same like the Tuck Tucks in India.

number of people migrating from the highlands to the Afar Region is growing. A general economic growth can be observed in specific regions along the asphalt road.

*“Our lives are changing because of the charcoal business. Our economy is becoming stronger. There is more transportation like the bagagets and the motor bicycles. We did not have that before. Also, we have more hotels and bars. More people are coming and we are mixing. We do not live in our traditional homes anymore. We have changed to high standard houses.” (Atcadu, Gewane)*

Huda Dubno, Kedo-Abba of the Maheisara Clan, describes charcoal as the ‘black gold’ of the region, welcoming the benefits of the economic activity. There is no mentioning of the illegality of the business, or the fact that only very few individuals benefit from it, leaving the rest of the Afars to deal with the negative aspects of the spread of *Prosopis juliflora*.

After having discussed some positive, and many negative, aspects of the ecological transformation in Baadu, mostly due to the spread of *Prosopis juliflora*, it is clear that there is a significant difference between the impacts on Afars in relation to the dominant livelihood system. Pastoralists living far away from permanent settlements who depend heavily on livestock production are negatively affected by *Prosopis juliflora*, while Afars living in urban areas who are more involved in non-pastoral activities are not as strongly affected by the *Prosopis juliflora* spread. Settled households depend less on the environment, and are therefore not affected as heavily as the pastoralists, and can benefit from the invasion through producing charcoal. Pastoralists have fewer options to cope with ecological changes as they are more exposed to the ecological changes in general, and lack the capacity to cope with them due to a limited resource base. Therefore, they are highly vulnerable to the impacts of the *Prosopis juliflora* spread. The vulnerability of pastoralists is increasing due to the spread of *Prosopis juliflora*, while the vulnerability of other Afars decreases as they can benefit from the ecological changes. Those Afars who no longer follow a pastoral life have a more diversified resource base and use the change to ameliorate their livelihoods. Referring to the causal structure of vulnerability, one can argue that the different vulnerability patterns of the households change in dependency of their dominant livelihoods since they are exposed differently, have different access to resources, and therefore, have entitlement and economic capability. The disparate impacts of *Prosopis juliflora* on different social groups of Afar are described by an agro-pastoralist woman from Leas:

*“Woyanne Harar has been a disaster for us. When our livestock feeds on Woyanne Harar they get a disease called Harmaku. Because of the Woyanne Harar many Afar lost their livestock. It is the cause for the loss of livestock. There are some who benefit from the Woyanne Harar. Those who can say something nice are the once who are in the charcoal business. It can also be used as firewood, so people who sell firewood,*

*they will also be able to say something nice about this tree. For pastoralists it is a curse. Because it is the main cause for the loss of livestock, it has wiped out our livestock. The pastoralists have Allah on their side, only he can help us now, it is beyond our capacity to deal with this tree.” (Fatuma, agro-pastoralist, Leas)*

Sedentarized people in urban centers have access to infrastructure such as water, electricity, transportation and food markets. They interact with and depend less on the environment. However, with more Afars living a mobile lifestyle, the number of Afars negatively affected by the invasive species is significantly higher than the number of Afars benefitting from it.

Ecological changes like the spread of *Prosopis juliflora* are only one of many factors which lead to the societal transformation process. Others will be discussed in the following section.

**Box 2: The Production of Charcoal in Baadu**

Charcoal production in Baadu officially began with a project implemented by the British NGO FARM Africa in 2003 to make use of the invasive plant *Prosopis juliflora*. First, the NGO supported mass campaigns to clear areas from the plant. Later, in 2004 the idea of control through utilization was lanced. Before 2004 charcoal production was banned from Baadu in order to protect indigenous tree species. In a facilitator role, FARM Africa achieved the permission to produce charcoal under strict obligations. Cooperatives were formed who cleared areas from *Prosopis juliflora* restoring rangeland and using the cleared wood for the production of charcoal. FARM Africa provided the necessary utensils and gave the members of the cooperatives training on the production techniques, business management and leadership as well as provided them with startup capital (FARM AFRICA 2008: 10ff). After the charcoal production was established it rapidly increased. However, locals found out about the benefit in using indigenous trees for the production of the charcoal, prices on the market were generally higher for charcoal produced out of indigenous trees. Due to increased charcoal production out of the indigenous trees, the charcoal production was again forbidden in 2006. Since the banning it exists as an unregulated contraband business in Baadu. The simplified organization pattern of today's charcoal business is displayed in figure six.

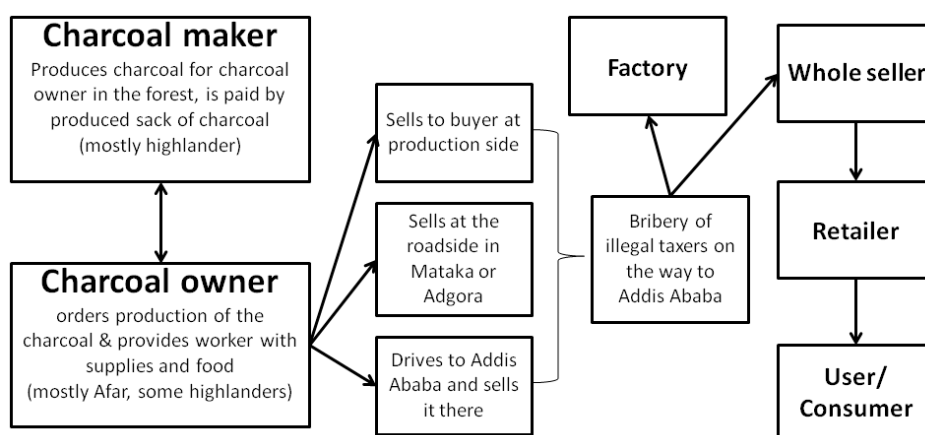


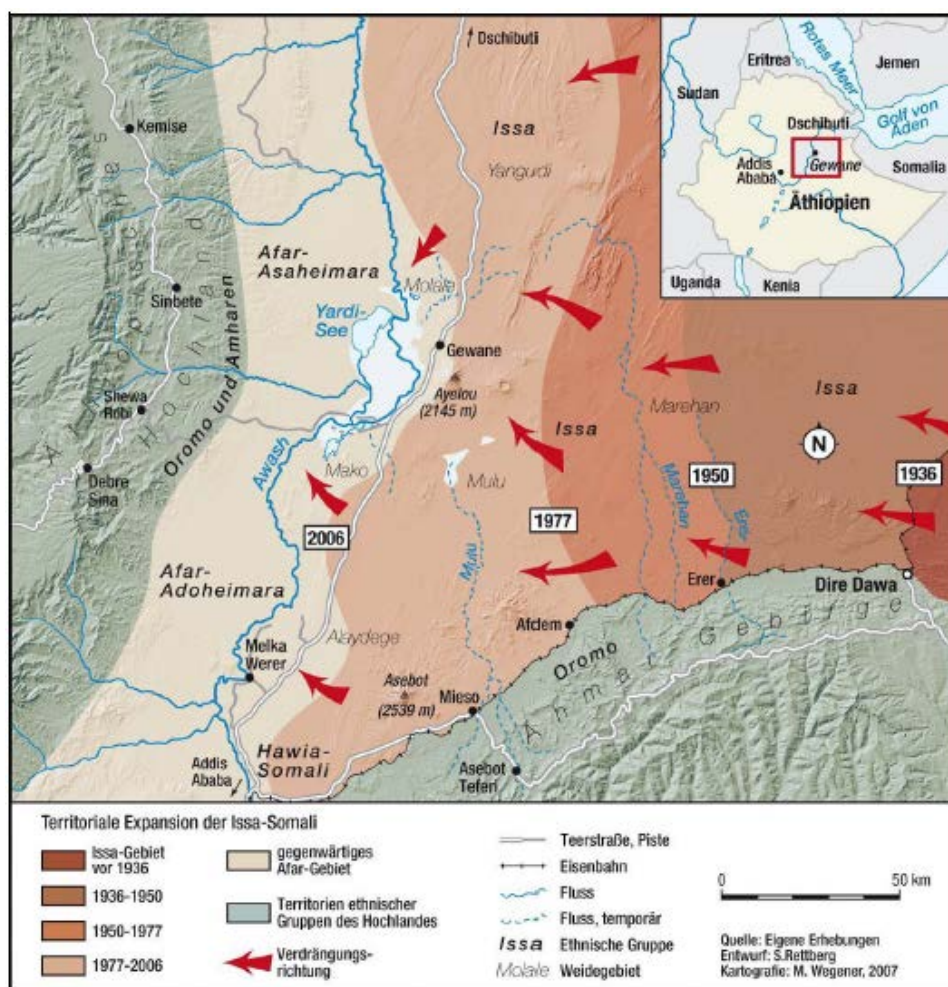
Figure 6: Organization of the charcoal production (modified after Detona 2014: 39)

Afars, usually acting as charcoal owners, engaging in the charcoal business are mostly young Afar men who speak Amharic and have some startup capital. Financial capital is needed to buy the supply for the workers in the forest (food, tools, and mosquito nets). The production of charcoal can rapidly generate income. Generally, a worker in the forest earns 20 ETB for one 50 kg bag of charcoal. This sack is sold along the road side for 70 up to 80 ETB, while prices in Addis Ababa are higher. The money earned by the charcoal owner depends therefore on his strategy to sell it (see figure 6). Some people store the charcoal and sell it in times where prices are higher, increasing the money earned while selling. Besides positive affects like increasing public transportation and market access

### **5.1.2A Constant Danger: the Permanent Conflict with the Issa-Somali Pastoralists and the Federal Police**

The conflict between the Afar and the neighboring Issa pastoralists who originate from Somalia has been a severe threat to the pastoral livelihood system of the Afar for many years. This conflict is also part of the transformation process, as it leads to different constraints for the Afar society in Baadu. RETTBERG (2009) analyses this conflict in detail throughout its historical development. The livelihoods of the Issa as well as the Afars, rely on livestock production. Thus, the conflict is mainly a fight over resources, especially grazing areas and water. In the past, there has been a stealing of livestock between the competing pastoral groups as well as killings on both sides. RETTBERG (2009: 179f.) divided the conflict between the two ethnic groups into three phases:

- Phase 1: Up to the 1930s. During this phase, the Afars felt superior to the Issa. They tried to take as many resources from them as possible.
- Phase 2: From the 1930s to the 1990s. Afars pursued the strategy of territorial avoidance because the Issa have increased in fighting strength.
- Phase 3: The beginning 21<sup>st</sup> century. The fight between the two groups is professionalized. Territorial claims are presented in permanent settlements along the Addis Ababa - Djibouti road.



Map 8: Territorial expansion of the Issa-Somali (RETTBERG 2009: 88)

Since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the Issa expanded their rangelands further into the Afar's territory (see map 8). The conflict between the two groups has not only led to the death of many Afars and Issas, but also threatens the livelihood security of the Afar as many grazing areas, especially rainy season grazing areas, were taken by the Issa (see figure 8). The accessibility of grazing land is one of the main problems the Afar pastoralists are facing today. In the interviews, the pastoralists complained about the inactiveness of the Ethiopian government to support a peace between the two groups. Peace is urgently needed and Afars search for help from the government in order to negotiate an agreement. The Ethiopian government has been inactive because they have a strategic interest to secure the Addis Ababa - Djibouti road, the only possibility for sea access and thus an important trade route. Many Djiboutian citizens belong to the Issa, and the Djiboutian government is also mainly composed of Issa. The Ethiopian government does not want to risk the peaceful situation between the two countries and threaten access to the Red Sea. Therefore, the Ethiopian government sets its own strategic interests above the critical situation of a minority of its own population. Huda Dubno, Kedo-Abba of the Maheisara Clan, was part of the delegation sent to the Ethiopian government to ask their support in the

conflict with the Issa. It has been more than a year since the conversation with the government, but there is still no help to be found.

Due to the inactiveness of the Ethiopian government, the Afars have to organize themselves to protect their livestock, mainly with guns. Through governmental regulation, these guns are banned within 20 km from the asphalt road. Anyone entering this banning zone with a gun can be shot on the spot by the Federal Police. While the Afars have to enter this no-gun zone in order to reach their grazing areas, the Issa do not depend on this area (see map 8) and therefore are not affected by the ban. Huda Dubno describes this critical situation as follows:

*“When the Afars go to the banning zone bare handed there are two things happening: the cattle go to the Issa and the dead bodies come to the Afars. Before we went to the federal government, we went to the regional government to president Ismael. We asked him if he could help us and if he had to say anything about this [Federal Police taking weapons from the Afars]. He said that there is nothing he could do for us. Ismael told us that anyone who is seen in 20 km of the asphalt road can be killed at the spot. But the asphalt road is crossing through us [though the Afar territory]. Now, the Afars are bare handed, the Issa can come and kill us.” (Huda Dubno, Kedo-Abba of the Maheisara Clan, Gewane)*

During our stay in Gewane we were told about a peace agreement in the area around Gewane which was established between Afar and Issa in 2012 with the help of religious leaders from Djibouti. The peace agreement allowed both sides to access areas of the enemy to find urgently needed water and grazing areas. While Issa came all the way to the Awash River to find water, Afars went deep into the Issa territory to find grazing land for their animals. In spring 2014, the peace agreement was broken when several young Issa men killed three Afars and stole some of their weapons. The situation of the Afars was worsened due to the practice of the Ethiopian Federal Police along the Addis Ababa - Djibouti road, which is contributing to the endangered livelihoods of the Afar.

In the area around Gewane where the peace agreement had been made, the Afars were caught between the interests of the Issa and the Federal Police (which is violently protecting the asphalt road between Addis Ababa and Djibouti). Afar and Issa were able to enter the areas weaponless without being afraid of livestock thefts or bloody conflicts. With the peace agreement ended, the Afars are no longer able to access to grazing areas they urgently need, and their situation is tenuous once more as they are caught again between the Issa and the Federal Police and lack of resources on their own land. The new situation is described by Aden Hassen, Kedo-Abba of the Mesara Clan:

*“The situation is really bad right now. The Afars have never seen something like this under any other regime, not under Haile Selassie, not under Derg. Now, the Afar can't carry their guns anymore. If they go without their guns the Issa are waiting for them, they are waiting to take their animals from them. Too many goats and sheep were taken. In Gewane, the Afar wanted this peace agreement desperately, because they were in such a bad situation. Hundreds of shoats were killed to make this peace agreement, to celebrate the peace agreement. There were these religious people who came. Four camels were slaughtered. Afar and Issa were eating together and the Afar were very happy. From what I heard, the peace is broken now because the Issa killed three Afars who were sleeping in their homes. They killed them just to take their guns. It is a huge problem, the Afar are under extreme pressure from the Federal Police. The Afars really do not know what to do. Last week, I was in Galaalu, several goats and sheep were taken not too far from Galaalu. When the Afars wanted to go and take them back the Federal Police prevented them from going. The Afars just really don't know what to do, because the Issa still have their guns, nobody will go there and take the guns from the Issa. And the Federal Police prevents us from doing anything. The Afars don't know what to do; they don't know who to turn to. Even my gun they took it from me. I don't take my shoats far anymore because I am weak and I don't have my gun. We also respect what the government tells us. When they told me to stop, I stopped. They told me to bring them the gun and I gave it to them. They just took my gun away.” (Aden Hassen, Kedo-Abba of the Mesara clan, Mataka)*

Shortly after the peace agreement was broken, my colleague, translator and I were part of a peace-making process between the two groups while we were staying in one of the remaining rainy season grazing areas, alta, in Molale (see pictures 7 and 8). Some Issa elders returned livestock, which was stolen by Issa youngsters. The Issa elders did not want to compromise the peace, and they apologized for the Afar which had been killed. During their conversation, which we were able to record, it was obvious that the mistrust between the Afar and the Issa is a constant problem in the negotiation processes between the two ethnic groups. While the Issa can usually trust the word of the Afar, they themselves face enormous issues controlling the young men among them and getting them to accept the decisions of the elders. Agreements made by clan leaders and elders are often not accepted by the younger Issa who want to demonstrate their strength and masculinity with cattle raids and the killing of Afar men.

The difficult situation was discussed openly between the Afar and Issa elders, as both groups are aware of the problems the Issa elders face:

*“I can tell you, when the Issa talk among themselves they say that the Afar have been good since the peace agreement. The Afar only once took three camels and the next morning all three were returned. So we, the Issa, have problems. We are not keeping our promise. I know that. For me, for example, last time a camel that was stolen by the Afar, I did not wait an order from the committee to return it back to the Afar. I returned it myself. If some of my shoats are lost I don't report that to the committee. I come to the*



*Afar directly myself looking for them. Nowadays, I found these eight cattle and I brought them here myself. Now I will try to bring the elders you were asking me to bring.” (Roble, Issa elder, Molale)*

[...]

*Afar responds: “Now the Afar are saying ‘The Issa are fooling us. The Issa are not serious about peace. On one hand he claims he wants peace, on the other hand he steals our cattle and camel.’ For example, you know last time Afar and Issa were almost about to fight because in the broad daylight the Issa were stealing camels. Those are for example the Issa from Kabili who are at peace with us. When the Afar stopped them a fight almost broke out. Even if you personally love peace and want it to prevail if others keep on stealing, will this not lead to killing of each other? What I am trying to say is: You are a good person. Since you have not the capacity to stop the Issa from stealing our animals there can’t be a real peace. So please I want you to go back home and tell us that you can no longer keep the Issa away from stealing our animals. Let us not talk about peace. [...] While you are talking about peace here you will be stealing from somebody else. Please let us be honest with each other. What I am saying is: what is peace? The Afar want peace and the Issa want peace but if the Issa keep on breaking the agreement, can there be real peace?” (Afar, Molale)*



Photo 7: Afar and Issa negotiating in Molale



Photo 8: Issa men sharing camel milk which was offered by Afar elders

The mistrust between the two pastoral groups leaves the Afars in a complicated situation since they cannot rely on agreements made with the Issa. The problem regarding the conflict with the Issa is twofold. On the one hand, there is the conflict between the two ethnic groups. The peace agreement, which lasted for quite some time, can be seen as a positive development, but only a small area made the peace agreement, which itself is not secure. On the other hand, there is a problem protecting the livestock, as the few that remain cannot be properly guarded in the contact zones with the Issa (see map 8 and map 10) with the Federal Police confiscating the weapons needed for the protection of the animals. Without access to further grazing areas in the territory of the Issa, the livelihood security of the Afars is at risk.

When I was leaving the area, more reports came in regarding incidents between Afar and Issa in the area of the peace agreement. The Afar left Molale the same time we did, one week after the conversation with the Issa elders. The numerous pastoralists in Molale no longer felt secure as they were afraid the Issa would conduct a large livestock raid in Molale, which is located close to the Issa territories.

Overall, the external factors of the transformation process in Baadu need to be seen within a complex framework. The loss of rangeland is a main problem for the pastoralists. As can be seen in map eight, much of the rainy season areas, alta, were lost to Issa in the past, while the remaining land is extremely invaded by *Prosopis juliflora* (see map 7). My research discovered that the few remaining alta areas have now started to be invaded by the plant. This leaves the pastoralists in a very dangerous situation, as they no longer have any alternatives for livestock fodder. Pastoralists are a highly vulnerable group that now finds it selves vulnerable to any kind of stress. The situation is worsened due to the encounters with the Federal Police and the inactiveness of the regional and national government. Their food security is especially endangered by the transformation process since the pastoralists exclusively rely on livestock production and fruits from indigenous plants which again are disappearing due to the *Prosopis juliflora* spread. The external factors are intensified by an internal transformation process of the Afar in Baadu. These internal factors will be discussed in the following.

## **5.2 Internal Factors of the Transformation Process in Baadu**

*“In the past we always wanted to start a family. Now, people are turning into materialists, they are after money.” (Detona, Gewane)*

Changes in the internal society of Afar are observed by the locals. The Afars, who used to live purely from pastoralism, are now split into different groups with varying livelihood strategies.

### **5.2.1 The Fading Culture of Sharing**

The culture of the Afar pastoralists relies on a system of sharing. Those who have a lot and could be considered as rich give to those who do not have a lot and could therefore be considered as poor. In the past, this translated to a redistribution of livestock. Due to the afore mentioned problems the pastoralists are facing externally, this redistribution is no longer possible, because no one owns enough animals to be able to share them with others. ‘Rich’ households as they were considered in the past no longer exist. Today, nutrition, grain and milk are shared among the pastoralists,

but only few livestock. The system of sharing is a system of solidarity, a social system which allowed the security of the livelihoods of poor households through the mercy of richer households, a system of reciprocity (RETTBERG 2009: 185ff.).

This culture of sharing is getting lost within the new emerging generation which is more interested in their individual benefits than in the well-being of the majority of the clan. Solidarity and reciprocity, main values of the clan, are being replaced with values of individualism in the transformation of the pastoral society. A new system of values, deriving from external and internal factors of the pastoral society, is now developing. One Afar from Baadu explains the changes:

*“When it comes to the history of Baadu, I cannot tell that in a short story. Baadu had brave leaders. People used to love each other, they were so brave and they were such brave warriors, their forces used to go as far as Gobadi and Djibouti to fight the French colonialists in Djibouti. In histories they write about the forces of these people. At that time people had love for each other. The history of Baadu’s braveness is exceptional, not even Awsa or any other region has such a history like Baadu when it comes to bravery. Because they have a unity, they have love for each other; they have respect for each other, because they have such strong and brave leaders. Today people have become materialists. When people become materialists the love that used to bind them together gets broken. They have become materialists to the point where they fight against each other. I am really sad that things have changed for the worse.” (Detona, Gewane)*

The unity within the clan seems to now be replaced by a new system of values, which in turn gives way to a new behavior, as Afars described in the interviews. In Baadu, this development is towards an individualistic and materialistic way of thinking. The behavioral change can be observed especially in connection to the charcoal business. This new economic activity leads to a monetization of the Afar society. This changes their value system, since financial capital did not have any importance in the past. The culture of sharing would demand for the now richer households to share the benefits with other members of the clan. The monetization, coupled with a close interaction of the very different lifestyles of the migrants of the highlands living in the towns along the Addis Ababa – Djibouti, leads to a fading of the traditional values system. This development is seen especially critical by those who do not benefit from the new economic activities:

*“They are individuals [the ones working in the charcoal business]. But for us, our life is this. If we didn’t have our livestock anymore, do you think they would come and rescue us? They are individuals, they live their own life. Nobody cares about us. Things have changed. People used to greet each other; they don’t even greet us anymore. Let alone help us.” (Ali Humed, pastoralist, Molale)*

As of today the culture of sharing still exists in part. While the culture of sharing used to be practiced within the whole clan, it is now only evident between close relatives. Thus, a social fragmentation within the clans can be observed (see chapter 5.3). The system, which is extremely important for the poorer households to secure their livelihoods, is no longer reliable.

Besides a fading culture of sharing, changing power constellations on a clan basis can be observed. These will be discussed in the following.

### **5.2.2 Power Constellations within the Clan: the Role of the Kedo-Abba**

The developments described in the previous sections lead to a new social constellation within the clans. In the past, it used to be the Kedo-Abba, the clan leader, who led the clan, took the primary role in decision-making processes, and was accepted as an authority. To the outside, the Kedo-Abba represented the interests of the clan. RETTBERG (2009: 143ff.) underlined the fading role of the Kedo-Abba, arguing that they are being alienated from their own clans while no longer acting in the interest of their clan. Clan members themselves observe this change. There is also a spatial separation between the Kedo-Abba and the other clan members as the Kedo-Abba usually lives in the towns along the Addis Ababa - Djibouti road while most of the other clan members live with their livestock following the nomadic lifestyle of pastoralists.

The changing role of the Kedo-Abba within the clan could also be observed when analyzing the functionality of the charcoal business during the data collection process. It was observed that the authority of the Kedo-Abba was no longer considered when making decisions of land use. Land in Afar is communally owned. Certain territories belong to certain clans. This structure is defined between the clans themselves and does not have any legal force. In the past, it used to be the Kedo-Abba who decided the use of the territory (RETTBERG 2009: 143ff.). Today, as Aden Hassen Kedo-Abba of the Mesara Clan mentioned, many areas, especially some areas along the Awash River, are used for charcoal production without permission. A main problem of the charcoal business is the cutting of many indigenous trees which are not only a source of fodder for livestock, but also part of the nutrition of the pastoral families (see pictures 9 and 10).

*“Sometimes other trees are used. The clan cannot be happy about that, when they see it they try to stop it. But it is still happening. Usually, if they cut saganto or kasalto, if someone sees them do that they will come to the clan leader and they can be given a warning. But there is always some cheating. With kasalto, all of the shoats can eat the fruits from it. Camels can browse on it; it is a disaster when they cut those trees to make charcoal.” (Aden Hassen, Kedo-Abba of the Mesara clan, Mataka)*



Photo 9: Cutting of indigenous trees for charcoal Photo 10: Indigenous trees piled to be burned to

The clan leader himself says that there are no sanctions taken against the cutting of indigenous trees. *If* the Kedo-Abba is informed about the illegal cutting, he might send a warning but nothing further. Aden Hassen also outlined in the interview that the indigenous trees are essential as fodder for camels and other livestock. Even in the problematic situation the Afar pastoralists are facing today, the Kedo-Abba is not preventing the clan members from turning the situation from bad to even worse by destroying the last remaining indigenous forests along the Awash River. In addition, the areas cleared from indigenous trees are quickly invaded by *Prosopis juliflora*, as can be seen in picture ten.

The missing authority of the Kedo-Abba leads to conflicts of interest between the clan members who follow different livelihood pathways (see chapter 6.4). Resources are contested and power relations demonstrated. The reason for the missing intervention of the Kedo-Abba in land use decisions, especially concerning the charcoal business, can be connected to their own involvement in the business. This again leads back to the results found by RETTBERG (2009), who stated that the clan members are no longer acting in the interest of their clan, but rather put their own interests at the forefront of their decisions.

As a result of the absent communal land use decisions of the Kedo-Abba, the situation of pastoralists is again worsening as their vulnerability increases even while some members are positively affected. Already, pastoralists are the ones most negatively affected by the changes. Now, they can't even rely on their clan leaders. In the following section, the social fragmentation of the Afar society is further discussed.

### 5.3 The Social Fragmentation of the Afars in Baadu

The afore described external and internal factors of the transformation process in Baadu lead to a social fragmentation of the Afar society. The transformation process in Baadu leads to a social fragmentation of the Afar based on an increased

individualization and monetization of the Afars. Many Afars drop out of pastoralism, no longer able to secure their livelihoods on the basis of livestock production. Only few Afars find opportunities to benefit from the changes (this will be further discussed in chapter 6). Due to this development, the clans are spatially separated, which increases the disconnection between the clan members as they follow different livelihood pathways. The transformation is described by Fatuma Hate, program director of the local NGO Rohi Weddu:

*“In the past we had large herd sizes. [...] The Afar pastoralists used to depend totally on their livestock. Because that has changed, there are tendencies for some Afars to move to the urban areas, to get education for their children, better health access, and many other things that are necessary for people in search for a better life. Because many Afars lost so much of their livestock, some of them are getting into agriculture. Yes, there is a trend for some of them to come to the urban areas and settle, where they can send their children to school, and where they can have a better life for themselves. Many of them are getting engaged in agricultural practices.” (Fatuma Hate, program director Rohi Weddu, Awash)*

The trends described by Fatuma especially outline the access to education, which is more accessible in urban areas. The differences in access to infrastructures and the engagement in economic activities (see also chapter 6) increase the disconnection between mobile and settled households. The external influences on the Afars produce an extremely difficult situation for the livestock production and therefore for the livelihoods of the Afar pastoralists. Not being able to rely on any authority from the Kedo-Abba or the government is contributing to the social fragmentation of the Afar society. In the past, a social fragmentation of the Afar was prevented through the internal strategies of the culture of sharing, as locals reported. The culture of sharing is weakened today, thus accelerating the social fragmentation of the Afar society.

This social fragmentation divides the pastoralists into groups of different vulnerabilities depending on their access to resources, their entitlements, and the power relations towards other actors. There are those households which are entitled with comparatively many assets. This group benefits from the new economy activities in the area and new opportunities to access markets and transportation. They form the richer and less vulnerable group of the Afars (mostly settled households). They used to be the ones who shared their belongings with the group of the more vulnerable, those with less assets who depend on the sharing of others, and who are negatively affected by the transformation process in Baadu (mostly mobile households). If the richer group contributes anything, it is limited to close relatives.

Figure seven illustrates the results of chapter five from the view of political ecology, including some aspects of the concept of *vulnerability*. In the research project of GIZ which was the origin of this master thesis, a special focus was put on the local scale, thus limiting the scope of the project. Due to interviews with Woreda officials and

representatives of regional and international NGOs, the results could be expanded to some degree to the regional, national and international scale. However, the local scale was identified as the main scale of interest. It is obvious that the interests of the national and regional government lead to clear hindrances of the livelihoods of the Afar in Baadu. Even the growing charcoal economy, which some individuals use to ameliorate their livelihood situation, is complicated by the banning of the business from the region, which chose an outright ban instead of developing a clear plan that would allow the business to increase but safeguard the indigenous plant species at the same time. Obviously, there are various stakeholders at different levels with divergent interests in the region.

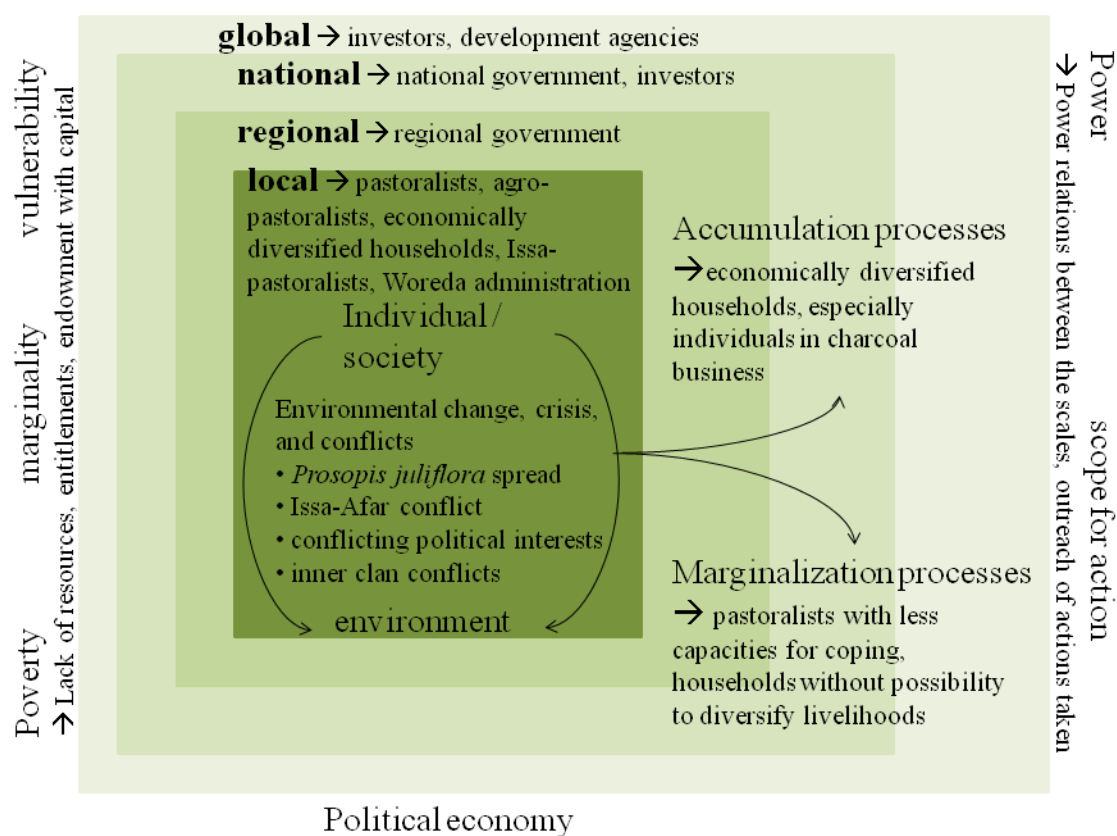


Figure 7: The transformation process of the Afar society from the view of political ecology (own illustration after SAKDAPOLRAK 2010: 40)

As it was mentioned in chapter four, the number of pastoralists declared in the census of 2007 does not seem to fit numbers observed by scholars and NGOs. It can be assumed that the government is intentionally decreasing the number of pastoralists since their special interest lies in a process of sedentarization. The situation of most Afars, which is highly vulnerable at the moment due to transformation process, was to some degrees triggered by decisions taken on a national level. The invasion of *Prosopis juliflora*, planted at the direction of the Ethiopian government, is one example. Again, the inactiveness of the national and

regional government to ameliorate the livelihood situation of most Afar shows the divergent interests between local, regional and national scales in the region. Generally, it can be stated that the processes on the regional and national scale are intensifying the crisis and conflicts at the local scale. The Ethiopian government also has a great interest in a process of sedentarization as it wants to give the land to (international) investors who use the land for irrigation agriculture. On the local scale, divergent interests within the clan are leading to conflicts. These conflicts weaken the bond of the clan members, reducing options for coping and adaptation.

Afars respond differently to the difficulties they are facing due to the transformation process, as was already shown with the charcoal business. They choose different livelihood pathways to strategically overcome livelihood insecurity. The question of livelihood pathways will be addressed in the following chapter with a focus on Afar women and their livelihood diversification strategies.



## 6 Gender Aspects of the Transformation Process

The foregone chapter identified general social, ecological and political factors of the transformation process of the Afar pastoralist society in Baadu. The transformation process was analyzed from a political ecologist perspective, paying specific attention to different geographical scales and power relations. The question of vulnerability was also debated. A special focus was given to the local level. The question now is how this afore described transformation process influences gender aspects and leads to different livelihood pathways. The main aim of the following chapter is to analyze which changing conditions affect women in particular in their everyday life, and which advantages and disadvantages arise for Afar women and their agency. A specific focus is on the livelihood diversification strategies of Afar women which are triggered by the transformation process and lead to new livelihood pathways. The transformation process will be analyzed through the lens of how it influences power relations between Afar men and women.

### 6.1 *Prosopis juliflora* Invasion: an Ecological Disaster for Afar Women?

There are gender-specific differences concerning the impacts of *Prosopis juliflora* which are related to the different work tasks and workloads (see table 1) of Afar women and men. While women are in charge of domestic chores, small livestock rearing and the taking care of children, men usually herd the large livestock, namely camel and cattle. It was observed that those differences in work tasks lead to different interactions with the environment and the use of resources. Direct impacts are linked to the interaction of Afars with natural resources when fulfilling work tasks, while indirect impacts arise for instance from the charcoal business. Women stay close to the house and the settlement, while men travel with the livestock in search of grazing areas. The areas around settlements are usually heavily invaded (AYANU 2014). Women reported in interviews that daily routines like fetching water, collecting firewood and tending the shoats are hindered by the invasion of *Prosopis juliflora*, which blocks pathways and wells, complicating and prolonging the individual tasks.

The clearing of the invasive plant, as a response to the difficulties, is a new work task which is not exclusively done by women but still adds highly to their work burden. If the *Prosopis juliflora* bushes grow too large, women might lack the physical strength to be able to fully remove the plant. Generally, women only try to control the spread if they can no longer work around it. Hawa explains her experiences in controlling *Prosopis juliflora* to me:

“Derg Harar grew back worse than before, in a really crowded, dark and unmanageable way. The cutting leads to the opposite effect that was intended.” (Hawa, Gewane)

Table 1: Gender specific work tasks of Afar women and men (modified and complemented after Rettberg 2009: 121)

	Women	Men
<b>Mornings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• milking shoats</li> <li>• preparing breakfast (mufe or milk)</li> <li>• preparing Hashera</li> <li>• collecting water and fire wood</li> <li>• clearing the fences from animal dung</li> <li>• send shoats out for grazing (children usually guard the animals)</li> <li>• preparing of mufe</li> <li>• processing of milk (if available)</li> <li>• production of gedayta mats, work on farms, etc. (depending on livelihoods)</li> <li>• taking care of small children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• milking of camel and cattle</li> <li>• check animals for diseases, if necessary treatment</li> <li>• eating breakfast</li> <li>• guarding camel and cattle on grazing areas</li> </ul>
<b>Midday</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• production of gedayta mats, work on farms, etc. (depending on livelihoods)</li> <li>• household chores (also clearing of <i>Prosopis juliflora</i> around the settlement)</li> <li>• taking care of small children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discussion of public affairs</li> <li>• sleeping</li> </ul>
<b>Afternoons</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• collecting water and fire wood</li> <li>• production of gedayta mats, work on farms, etc. (depending on livelihoods)</li> <li>• preparing mufe</li> <li>• taking care of small children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• chewing Khat</li> <li>• local politics and discussions</li> <li>• controlling return of camel and cattle</li> </ul>
<b>Evenings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• milking shoats</li> <li>• preparing of dinner (milk or mufe)</li> <li>• putting children to sleep</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• eating dinner</li> </ul>

The negative experiences that result from the Afars' lack of knowledge to control and manage the plant make them so desperate that they try to ignore the spread as long as possible. However, the spread of the plant seriously endangers women's lives. *Prosopis juliflora* decreases the availability of grazing land and causes the animal disease *Harmaku*. Less livestock leads to an insecure livelihood situation of the Afar; the food security is shifted from periodic to chronic food insecurity. The food insecurity is worsened by the disappearance of indigenous trees, of which the roots and fruits were used as supplementary food supply. The disappearance of indigenous plants is accelerated by the fast growing charcoal business. Food shortage always hits women hardest since they are the ones responsible for the provision of food to the household. Also, they rank last in the order of taking their

meals; therefore they are affected first by mal nourishment. Since pastoralists can no longer rely solely on livestock products for their nutrition, women started adding grains, mainly maize, to the household's nutrition. Women reported that they use maize flower to bake bread, mufe, which is eaten in addition to milk, butter and yogurt. The baking of the bread takes much of their day since women have to grind the maize, prepare the bread dough, make a fire to heat the 'oven' built in the ground and take the time to bake the bread afterwards (see pictures 11 and 12). It is also part of the work tasks of women to buy the maize from the surrounding farms, if they do not produce it themselves, and carry it on their backs all the way from the farms to wherever the household is at the moment. These distances are often quite far. A pastoral woman reported that she walked all the way from Molale to Gewane (10 km) and back to bring maize flour to prepare food for her family.



Photo 11: Fire to heat the rocks used to bake mufe



Photo 12: Baking of mufe in an 'oven' build in the

The health situation of women is not only worsened due to the insecure food supply, which has the strongest impact on women, but also because of injuries receiving from *Prosopis juliflora*. The thorns of *Prosopis juliflora* are about three to six cm long. Injuries caused by these thorns are numerous. Many injuries occur among women when they interact with the environment to fulfill their household chores. There is no traditional treatment for the injuries. An Afar woman from Biri Foro describes the handling of injuries caused by *Prosopis juliflora*:

*"We go to the clinic. If the infection becomes really dangerous we take the injured one to the clinic so that they can get treated. If the infection is not too bad, we treat it with salt water and we tie it with a piece of cloth. After washing it with salty water we can also use chewing tobacco for treatment. Those things we do only when the infection is not too bad."* (Fatuma, midwife, Birri Foro)

For poor households it causes financial problems to buy medication for the treatment, as well as the cost to access health facilities which might be far away. If women

themselves are injured, they might not be able to fulfill their work task while they are injured. If the household chores cannot be transferred to another (female) household member, the situation can become severe for the entire family.

Against the manifold negative effects of the invasive plant, there are only few beneficial aspects. The branches of *Prosopis juliflora* are used to build fences for the livestock, but also around the compound. The thorns make the fences especially effective. The branches are sometimes also used to build the *Afar ari*, the traditional Afar hut, which are built by women. However, women stress that *Prosopis juliflora* is not a good building material in comparison to the traditionally used gedayta grass. *Prosopis juliflora* is only used because the traditional building materials are disappearing. When using it, women add plastic as building material to fill holes and make the Afar ari water proof. Plastic was not used in the past and demonstrates the lack of traditional resources.

The only possible way to benefit from *Prosopis juliflora* spread is by engaging in the charcoal business. Only very few Afar women engage in the business themselves. It is almost exclusively men who engage in charcoal production. The women who partake in charcoal production report that the business is highly dangerous for women. One problem concerns the charcoal workers who do not obey orders given by women. To guarantee a successful charcoal production process, the charcoal producers in the forest need to be controlled throughout the process of production by the charcoal owners. Women face sexual harassment while going to the forest to check on the performance of the workers. The few women engaged in the business reported that they need a male counterpart to successfully do their work and be able to protect themselves against harassment.

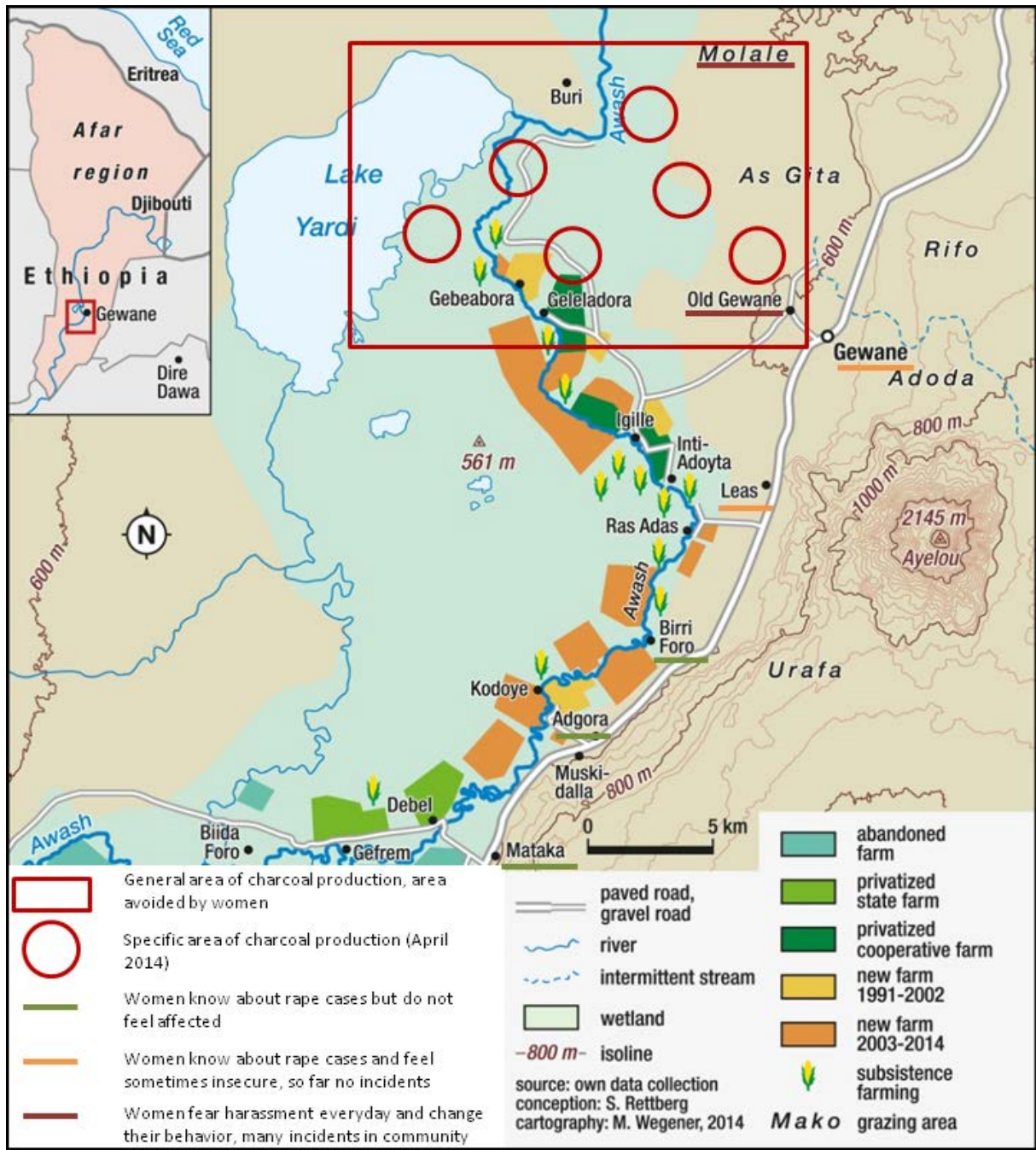
*“This job is not really suitable for women. Women are afraid of being sexually attacked by the Wolayta workers. Usually, I try to go with the Afar guard. The last time you saw me, I went to the forest by motorcycle with the guy. But you have to be daring, you cannot be afraid. But sometimes, if you are too daring, that can also be risky. There are some Afar women who do not even go deep into the rural area.” (Rabea, migrant from Amhara Region working in the charcoal business, Gewane)*

In Gewane, the biggest town in Baadu, there is only one Afar woman who actively works in the charcoal business. Thus, the number of Afar women directly benefitting from the charcoal business is almost nonexistent. The positive economic development of the charcoal business cannot counter balance the negative impacts that the business has brought. In addition, women living close to the charcoal production sites in the forest report an increased number of rape cases. Afar women are raped by migrant laborers from the highlands. The Afars describe the rape cases as highly violent. Women were often killed after the incident. Those Afar women living close to the production sites (see map 9) are afraid to get in any kind of contact with the workers because they fear sexual harassment and rape. Sexual harassment

became common with the fast emerging business. The language barrier between the mostly Amharic speaking workers and the Affarigna speaking women increases the fear of the Afar women since they cannot communicate with the workers. The behavior of the women depends on the distance to the charcoal production sites, since an interaction between Afar women and highland workers is only given with settlements in close distance to the production sites. Generally, production sites are moved every three month so reporting a precise localization of the sites is not possible and they can only be spotted approximately (see map 9).

The present situation is described by Medina, head of the women's affairs office, in Gewane Woreda:

*"There are cases of Afar women being raped by the Wolaytas. Even for myself I don't want to walk by myself. There were cases when Afar women were raped and nobody was caught, they just went into the forest and disappeared. There were some who were captured and taken to prison. Who ever told you about it was not lying. It is a serious problem for Afar women." (Medina, head of the Women's affairs office, Gewane)*



Map 9: Correlation between charcoal production sites and areas of fear (modified after RETTBERG 2009: 223 and DETONA 2014: 42)<sup>10</sup>

In the past, any kind of sexual harassment on Afar women was avenged by the males in her clan. Women report that this protection mechanism, which frightened possible attackers, is no longer functioning. The number of charcoal workers has increased rapidly in the past few years, and those who attack Afar women mostly

<sup>10</sup> Only areas where interviews were conducted are included in the rating of the rape cases. The charcoal production sites are intentionally marked as approximate areas since the sites are moved every three months.

disappear before the Afar men can take revenge. The failing protection mechanism increases the feeling of insecurity among Afar women. The newly arising *spaces of fear* (see map 9) completely change the daily activities of Afar women. To overcome the fear of the threat of sexual harassment, Afar women change the course of their daily routines. Activities they used to do on their own, like fetching water and collecting fire wood, are now done collectively in order to feel (and be) safe(r). Afar women also try to stay closer to the Afar men who they can call to help in case anything happens.

Hawa describes the situation as a woman who is directly affected by the problems deriving from the charcoal business:

*“In the past time the women had free access to the forest area and they went there alone. Now women do not go far away from their home when they are alone. Women no longer have access to the resources they need to build the traditional houses. In the past, women went to the forest area to find the material needed for the traditional houses. They even went early in the morning [...]. Today, women do not go to the forest anymore. If they have to go, women go in groups and take knives with them. If women have to work as herder they try to stay close to the Afar men so they can protect them. If something happens, they call for the Afar men.” (Hawa, Old Gewane)*

The number of rape cases reported differs between the areas. Mainly, a number of about ten cases are reported within the last year. Due to these rape cases, Afar women feel insecure and do not only fear rape, but especially sexual harassment which happens on a daily basis. The feeling of insecurity, the changed daily routines, and their avoidance of some areas completely, hinder the access to many resources needed to fulfill their daily chores.

Afar women cannot specifically locate the afore described areas of fear. Generally, there is a differentiation to be made within the group of Afar women. Those women who are close to the charcoal production sites have a constant feeling of insecurity even if they might be more or less secure depending on the areas they interact with for their daily chores. Other groups of women, who live further away from the production sites, fear the sexual harassment less, and thus act, more freely. Some Afar women who live far away from the production sites have only heard about the rape cases but do not feel affected (e.g. women living in Birri Foro) (see map 9).

The afore mentioned aspects allow us to gain a picture of the impacts the invasive plant *Prosopis juliflora* has on pastoralist Afar women in Baadu. Both direct and indirect impacts make their daily work tasks more difficult and time consuming. It adds new factors to the already long list of work tasks of Afar women. Further exploration into the work tasks of women illustrated that women engage more directly with the environment than men (due to their manifold duties) and depend on natural resources to be able to fulfill their tasks. Arguing from the view of *feminist political ecology*, it becomes obvious that there are also “gender differences in experiences

of, responsibilities for, and interests in ‘nature’ and environment,” (ROCHELEAU et al. 1996: 3) in Baadu. These gender differences are manifested in the strict gender roles of the Afar society and lead to distinctions concerning environmental knowledge. Even though Afar women are responsible for the work tasks with the closest environmental interaction, they lack the rights to make decisions which influence their interaction with the environment. Environmental concerns and awareness, key interests of feminist political ecology, show wide gender differences in Baadu. *Prosopis juliflora* invasion, for instance, is the first problem stated by women, while men often name the conflict with the Issa first. All issues named before reflect on the uneven power relations between men and women (see also chapter 6.4). The negative aspects of the invasive plant together with the missing capability to adapt to the changing ecological conditions out of resource scarcity make pastoralist women the most vulnerable group, while other groups of women who are economically diversified are less affected. Those who are less affected are in most cases settled households who no longer follow the mobile lifestyle of pastoralists and thus interact less with the environment and depend less on natural resources. The impacts of the invasion of *Prosopis juliflora* are summarized in table two.

Table 2: Positive and negative aspects of *Prosopis juliflora* invasion on Afar women (own findings and illustration)

Positive	Negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• building material</li> <li>• fire wood</li> <li>• engagement in charcoal business</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• limited access to resources</li> <li>• settlement areas especially invaded</li> <li>• new work tasks</li> <li>• work tasks more time consuming</li> <li>• missing knowledge on management</li> <li>• loss of livestock → food insecurity</li> <li>• disappearance of indigenous plants</li> <li>• health situation (malnourishment, injuries)</li> <li>• sexual harassment, rape, areas of fear</li> </ul>

In the following, strategies of livelihood diversification will be discussed as households search for new opportunities to secure food and their general livelihoods. The question of livelihood pathways is closely linked to the process of livelihood diversification but will be discussed in detail in chapter 6.4 after having discussed cultural changes, which need to be taken into account to analyze livelihood pathways.



## **6.2 The Role of Women in Livelihood Diversification Strategies**

“In the past the main responsibility of women was to perform household chores and sometimes also to look after animals. But because things are changing over time, women now also become bread winner like men. They now also have to worry about sending children to school it’s also becoming more and more the chore of women. They are becoming more and more independent. Women are also getting involved in petty trading and then they are the ones who are bringing income, money, into the household. It’s no longer only the men. This increases the responsibility of women. Men and women are sharing responsibilities now a day.” (Medina, head of the women’s affairs office, Gewane)

This quote outlines changes in the role of women observed in Baadu. These changes influence the agency of Afar women when they change their livelihood pathways. The insecure livelihood situations, which were discussed in the previous section, of the pastoralists lead to the sedentarization of some Afars who drop out of pastoralism. This opens up new chances and constraints for social practices of Afar women as they enter into new social fields. This chapter focuses on livelihood diversification strategies and the role of women within this process when they enter into new livelihood pathways.

Households have to diversify their livelihood strategies to be able to secure them. The security of the livelihoods of the Afar is mostly gained by an engagement into economic activities of women. These new income-earning activities are mainly observed around the Awash River, which is suitable for agriculture, and around the Addis Ababa - Djibouti road where the market access needed for trade is given. The access to financial capital is needed to buy supplementary food. The income-earning activities are, to a great extent, covered by women. Securing livelihoods of households is closely linked to the food security of the household, which lies in the responsibilities of women. The engagement of Afar women in income-earning activities is twofold. It opens up new possibilities to access (financial) capital, but also increases the work burden of women as the new activities are added on top of their already burdensome work load. In the following, the different activities and the engagement of women in these activities are discussed.

### **6.2.1 Small Scale Irrigation Farming**

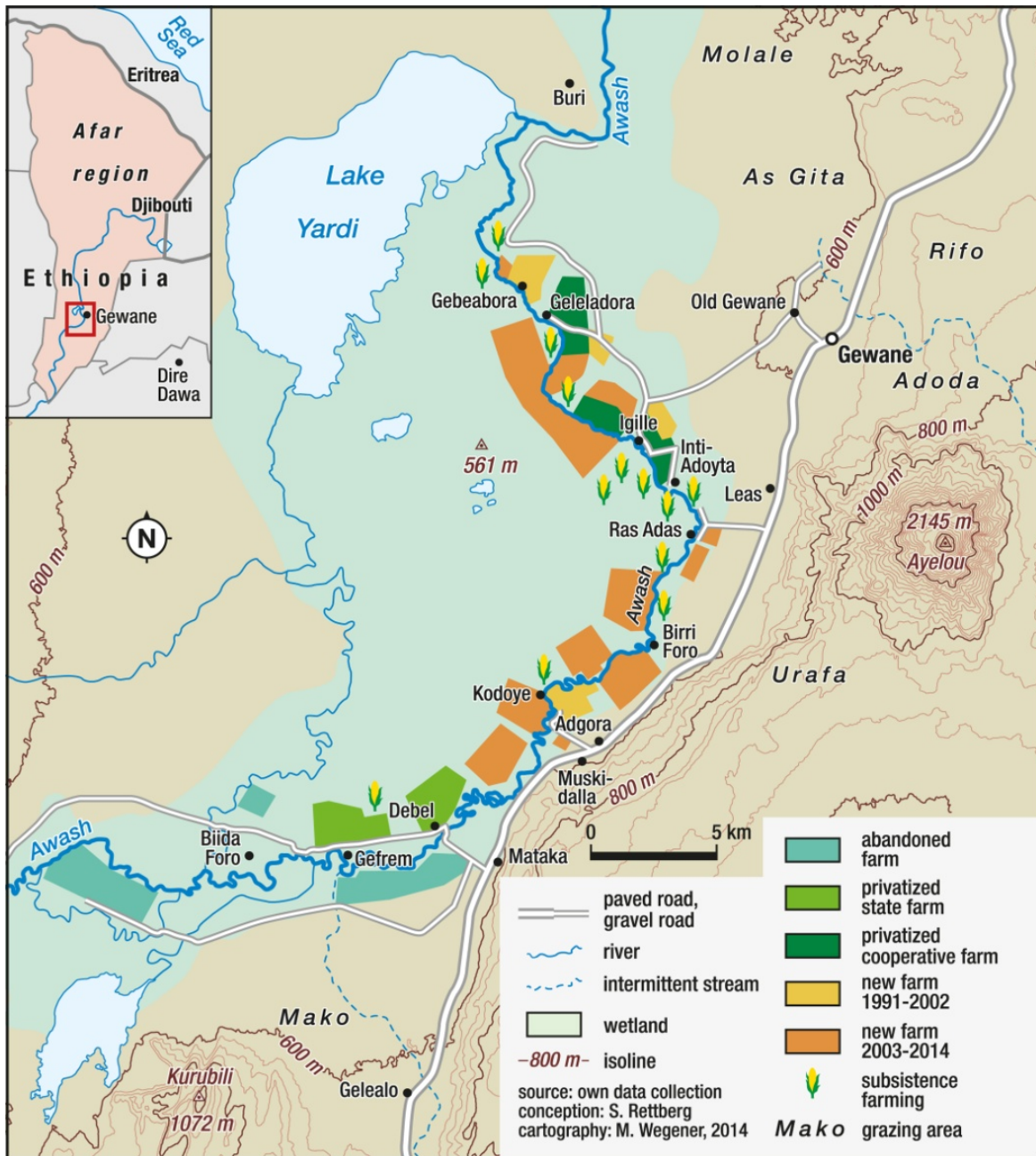
A main strategy of Afar households in Baadu to secure livelihoods is to engage in irrigation agriculture. Small scale irrigation farming is increasing rapidly in the flood plains around the Awash River. But the number of state farms and farms of private investors is increasing as well (see map 11). Agro-pastoralists in Baadu mostly grow

maize and own some livestock (see pictures 13 and 14). Maize can be stored and used for household consumption throughout the year. As Afar women reported in the interviews, the possibility to store the goods produced on the farms decreases the vulnerability of households to the risk of droughts and famines, since they are less dependent on the products coming from livestock production which are not storable. Maize and other agricultural products which are not needed for household consumption can be sold to gain financial capital. Some of the maize is given to poorer relatives as a practice of the culture of sharing. The possibility to store goods aids the situation of women who are in charge of the households' food supply, since the overall food situation of the household is improved.

Physically intense work is mostly done by women. The number of men working on farms is increasing, but still small compared to women. As long as the household keeps livestock, men will be concerned with the rearing of the animals. This leaves the heavy physical work on the farms mainly to women while men travel with the large livestock. Even though the work on the farms is increasing the work burden of women, they do find themselves in a more secure food situation and evaluate the increasing engagement in agricultural activities positively.

The small scale irrigation farms around the Awash River are normally divided into pieces of half or one hectare. The work on the small farms is individually organized. The farms belonging to the Afars are usually located in close distance to their huts (see picture 13). The work on the small scale irrigation farms is highly affected by the spread of *Prosopis juliflora*. The clearing of the areas takes a lot of physical strength and time since it grows back quickly:

*“After harvesting, Woyane Harar is growing very fast. If we leave the farm for only a week, Woyane Harar will grow very high. Clearing the area from the tree is also a problem for us. For farmers or agro-pastoralists this tree has not been good. It affects the livestock as well as the farmed land. It grows very fast and we have to clear the area often. It is hard work. It is daily struggle.” (Fatuma, agro-pastoralist, Leas)*



Today, grinding mills for the maize can be found in the towns along the asphalt road. Agro-pastoralists use these mills to grind the maize they harvested from their farms. Even though the mills facilitate the work of the women since they do not have to grind it by hand anymore, this also causes problems. Women have to organize the transportation from their settlements to the urban centers. The distances can be between two and five kilometers (e.g. closed the closest grinding mill from Leas is Gewane, from Birri Foro it is Adgora, see map 11). Walking, it takes an intense effort to bring the heavy sacks of maize to the mills and back. Public transportation in many cases is not affordable.



Photo 13: Shoats and maize fields in Birri Foro



Photo 14: Maize harvest in Birri Foro

The work on farms is highly connected to the process of sedentarization since women have to stay close to the farms to fulfill their work. Even though the consumption of staple foods is not preferred by Afars who favor the consumption of livestock products, they benefit from a more secure food situation.

### 6.2.2 Petty Trading

Petty trading is practiced exclusively by women. It depends on the accessibility of markets and is thus practiced along the Addis Ababa - Djibouti asphalt road where many people, especially truck drivers and members of NGOs, come by. Petty trading differs in dependency of accessible resources. While women in Adgora and Mataka mostly produce gedayta mats (see pictures 15 and 16), women in Leas sell firewood. In Gewane they sell injera and cold drinks. In every area the selling of khat<sup>11</sup> is practiced. Petty trading allows women to access financial capital that can be used for household needs, and also gives them more economic independence from their husbands.

Women in Adgora reported that they produce about three to four gedayta mats per week. These are sold along the road side (see picture 17) for about 150 ETB. RETTBERG (2009: 195) reported the price to be 20 to 30 ETB per gedayta mat in 2005. The price has therefore increased significantly in the past nine years; although the high inflation rate of the ETB needs to be taken into account. Some women use the money exclusively for household expenses, while others have to give parts of the money to their husbands; frequently men use the money for khat consumption.

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<sup>11</sup> "A plant whose narcotic leaves are chewed as a stimulant" (MÜLLER-MAHN et al. 2010: 671)

“Besides the money I spend for the household, I give the money to my husband. My husband chews khat, he needs money for this.” (Arbai, Adgora)



Photo 15: Swamps with gedayta grass



Photo 16: Production of robes which are needed for gedayta mats

The making of the gedayta mats is dangerous for the women, since they have to go into the swamps to collect the gedayta grass. In the swamps (see picture 15) they face the risk of attack by crocodiles or pythons. From the swamps, the women carry the heavy gedayta on their back to their homes where they first have to make the little robes which connect the single gedayta stems. The robes are made from the skin of the stems (see picture 16). Afterwards, the single stems have to be cut into the same length and connected with the cord. The mat has to be watered throughout the whole production process, to prevent them from drying and breaking. Arbai describes the process of gedayta mat production:

*“The process of making the gedayta mats takes long. First, we have to cut the gedayta grass, then we have to dry it, we have to make the robes, it takes about two days. It also takes a lot of strength. Some women are stronger than me. It depends on the strength of the women. But I can make three in one week. Some women who are stronger than I can make four or more.” (Arbai, Adgora)*

All the time and strength needed for the production of gedayta mats is added to the household chores which still need to be completed. Still, the access to financial capital improves the livelihoods of the households in general since food can be bought from small food stores. Women have the opportunity to act more independently and are less economically dependent on their husbands.

Other ways to gain income through petty trading is the selling of firewood. This activity has decreased since the appearance of the charcoal business. Afar women offer the firewood along the road side, but customers generally prefer charcoal and therefore rarely buy the firewood.

Some women start to open little tea and coffee shops (see picture 18). They might also sell cold drinks and injera. These activities used to be done almost exclusively by migrants from the highlands. It is just recently that Afar women engage in this new income-generating activity. The money earned selling tea and coffee is comparatively small to other sorts of petty trading so it is done in addition to other sources of income.



Photo 17: Women selling gedayta mats at the Addis Ababa - Djibouti asphalt road



Photo 18: Afar woman in her tea and coffee shop at the Addis Ababa - Djibouti road

*“Amina used to help Hawa clean the office but now she has her own business, she sells tea. The money she earns is for the household. It’s only a small income, per day she gets maybe 20 or 30 ETB.” (Mohammed, interview with Hawa, Old Gewane)*

The selling of khat can be observed everywhere in Baadu, even in the areas far away from the urban centers such as the rainy season grazing area Molale. While it is chewed mainly by Afar men, the selling of the khat within the towns is mostly organized by women. As Mohammed and Abdulkadir explained to me, the khat is grown in southern Ethiopia. It is brought to the Afar region by minibus and arrives fresh every day. From the minibus, it is distributed by different retailers, men and women. When the khat arrives in the afternoon, one can see everyone run towards the streets to either buy the khat to sell it in the little khat shops (mostly women) or to wait in front of the shops to be able to buy it (mostly men). Some retailers buy the khat and sell it by motorcycle in the remote areas, e.g. Molale (only men). The addiction to khat is posing a huge problem, especially for the poorer households, since men tend to spend the household’s money on khat instead of household necessities.

One Afar woman in Gewane reported that she receives 15 to 25 bunches of khat per day. She sells them at a price of 50 ETB. She herself has to pay 40 ETB per bunch. Thus, she earns 10 ETB per bunch which makes a total of 150 ETB to 250 ETB per

day, a fairly high income compared to the selling of gedayta mats, firewood or tea and coffee. The khat is mostly sold to the people in the villages and urban centers, Afars as well as highlanders. Only a small portion is sold to truck drivers and Afars living in the remote areas.

The selling of livestock, mainly shoats, is also a common practice to generate financial income with which to buy food and other household needs. The sale of livestock poses difficulties to households who own very small livestock herds. Camel and cattle are seldom sold because it is difficult to access camel and cattle markets (they are far away from Gewane Woreda), and households prefer to keep them since cattle and especially camel are of high value. Camels are mainly sold when new weapons have to be purchased.

### 6.2.3 Daily Labor and Monthly Salaries

Petty trading and irrigation agriculture are the main economic activities of women. Very few find other ways to generate income. During the interviews, daily labor and monthly salaries were discussed. Daily labor is mostly connected to the work on large irrigation farms (see also map 11). The possibility to gain income on state farms goes back to the 1970s when these were first established by the government around the Awash River. The state farms offered the first opportunity to generate income. Back in the 1970s, the work on the state farms was mainly done by migrants from the highlands. Today, many Afars generate income through the work on the farms, which are usually privately owned. While Afars used to work on the farms only as a temporal strategy to overcome droughts, (RETTBERG 2009: 197) today they can be found on the farms throughout the year.

RETTBERG (2009: 197) identified 50% of the households in Adgora worked on farms in 2007 and 23% of the households in Leas. The observations in 2014 showed that there are still many Afars working on the farms and the work on one's own farms has especially increased. This was reported by the Kedo-Aaba of the Mesara Clan. Also, other interviewees reported that the number of households engaging in farming has increased, either as daily laborers or on their own farms. In Birri Foro, for example, the Afars reported that all the households' work was either for the investor or on their own small irrigation farms. The farms can be found in the flood plains along the Awash River, so naturally the number of Afar engaging in farming is higher in the villages close to the Awash River than in the villages further away.

While women and children mostly do the physical work on the farms, working during the harvest, clearing the land from *Prosopis juliflora* and other weeds, watering the farms, and so on, Afar men prefer to work as guards since they see the work on farms as degrading. Guarding the farms and being in charge of guns correlates to their understanding of proper work for Afar men (RETTBERG 2009: 198). While there

used to be mainly cotton farms in Baadu in 2007, today most investors grow sesame since the price for cotton on the world market has decreased in the last years.

Monthly salaries are rarely found among Afar women. It is mostly men who work for the regional government in the Woreda offices who receive monthly salaries. In Gewane Woreda, only the head of the women's affairs office is an Afar woman. Some women work as cleaners in the Woreda offices, but this is a rare opportunity to receive a monthly salary and cannot be understood as a main source to generate income. Women receiving monthly salaries can also be found within NGOs. If the household receives a monthly salary, the livelihood situation of the whole household can improve since the income is more stable and the livelihood situation of the household no longer depends on the success of petty trading, or the chances to be employed for daily labor. This also certainly takes pressure off women and can ameliorate their situation.

Generally, most households today do not solely engage in a single activity to generate income but are highly diversified, engaging in many different activities. Often a combination of livestock production, farming, and petty trading can be observed with some family members perhaps receiving a monthly payment. Common combinations are livestock production with either farming or petty trading at the side. A single income earning activity is often not enough to secure the households livelihoods. Even though it is mostly women who engage in these activities, several of the people within a household have to engage to secure a stable living. Men usually search for work that correlates with their understanding of a proper position for Afar men (e.g. working as guards). An Afar woman in Birri Foro described the diversified livelihood strategies of her household:

*"Women like my daughter work for the investor. When there is work like clearing of Woyane Harar, but they also work on the farm. They also have their own farm. They make gedayta mats but not for selling just for themselves to make the Afar ari. The husbands of my daughters work on the farm. The husband of one of my daughters works for the police. He is stationed in Mille. Otherwise my daughters do normal daily activities women do in the household."* (Fatuma, midwife, Birri Foro)

Today, only few households manage to live solely from livestock production. Since livestock production is still the preferable form of living, many new livelihood pathways include the possession of livestock. While men travel with the livestock (just like they always have) women have to manage new income earning activities in addition to their general work tasks. The question of livelihood pathways will further be addressed in chapter 6.4.

The following section focuses on changing traditions which are directly related to gender aspects, namely absuma marriage and inheritance rights.



## 6.3 Changing Afar Traditions Changing the Agency of Afar Women

### 6.3.1 *Absuma* Marriage

*“The absuma marriage is as important as our spine that we need to be able to stand up. The rest of our body is attached to it starting from the neck. For us, absuma is the pillar of Afar family. Her clan is related to her, me as her husband and her children. She is the one who binds everybody together. She is the bond between her clan and my clan. This is why absuma is so important.” (Aden Hassen, clan leader Mesara clan, Mataka)*

Absuma marriage is the traditional patrilineal cross-cousin marriage practiced in Afar culture. The tradition of absuma marriage is highly appreciated by Afar women as well as men because it gives the opportunity for everybody to be married, regardless of their wealth, looks, or health status. Marriage is important because it means that one can have children, which is perceived by the Afars as important for the future of the clan. It is important to marry within the ‘family’ of the clan for the Afars. The absumas usually grew up together and thus know each other. This is supposed to strengthen the family bond. Absuma marriage protects women from abuse, since traditionally the male clan relatives protect the Afar women if her husband is abusing her. Marrying someone from the outside who does not belong to the ethnic group of the Afar raises suspicion. The Afars say that getting married to a non Afar is only possible if you are either very good looking or very wealthy. In the Afar community there is strong agreement about the advantages of the absuma marriage. Only few disadvantages are named concerning absuma marriage:

*“I would never say it [absuma marriage] needs to be completely abandoned. Absuma has advantages and disadvantages. Me, I support the absuma when we talk about its advantages. Of course, if I talk about the disadvantages, I also support that young girls do not have to marry very old men anymore. But if we talk about the good things, for example, a handicapped woman will always have a husband, that’s a good thing. Regardless of their wealth, women and men will always have a husband or a wife. Nobody will look down on them. They will always have a partner. [...] If an Afar man marries a highland girl, the only way is if he is wealthy. The reason I say the absuma marriage is good is because regardless of your looks you can get married and have children. Also, handicapped people can get married. [...] If I had three daughters, two of them are good looking and the other one is not good looking, I would make sure, that the one who is not good looking gets married first.” (Medina, head of the women’s affairs office, Gewane)*

The only disadvantage of absuma marriage named by Afars is the tradition that very young girls can be married to old men. This tradition has slightly changed, especially because women today can refuse to be married and file a complaint in the women affair's office in Gewane. Settled households especially have access to these kinds of institutions. The abolition of this part of absuma marriage has great opposition. Old men who are in search of a second wife in order to have further children as well as older women who do not want traditions to change are lobbying against the liberation of absuma marriage.

*"In the past, old men still used to have children, because they were married to young women. Now, that we get closer to those highlanders and the government is also coming to us, they tell our women that there is something called democracy, so women no longer want to get married to old men with grey hair like me. This is affecting the growth rate of us. It's all because of these highlanders and the government. If I tell them I want to marry them, they will tell me that our blood doesn't mix." (Ali Humed, pastoralist, Molale)*

While in the past the decision of marriage was made by the father, today these decisions can sometimes be made with the consent of the women. Still, the process of including the women and asking for her consent is rare. But today women have the possibility to fight for their rights with the help of governmental institutions like the women's affairs office. Thus, Afar women cannot be forced into an unwanted marriage as easily as before. Still, Afar women often seem to accept their faith. If they are asked whether they were forced into marriage they mostly answer 'he was my absuma' not answering the question directly. Women state that a husband gives them protection and security. Nevertheless, there are women who decide, against the will of their parents, not to marry their absuma. This often happens when the absuma is either many years older or the connection between the different clan members is weakened. The social fragmentation of the Afar society causes problems for absuma marriage, since not all households live close together anymore. This weakens the families' connection because they no longer live close together or do not share the same kind of lifestyle. For example, as some still follow the pastoral life, while others drop out of pastoralism and pursue a different lifestyle in urban areas. The tradition of absuma marriage is modified in some areas close to urban centers. In these areas, women are more often able to determine their marriage with the help of governmental offices and NGOs. Detona, who no longer arranges the marriage of his daughters, explains to me his reasons for letting his daughters choose their own husband:

*"Now it is no longer my decision, my hand is out of it. When I was young I had the opinion that I had to decide. But things have changed, I have changed. The good thing about absuma is that it makes the family strong. If I let my daughters marry their own cousin then the family bond gets stronger. But when she marries someone from the*

*outside, he will not care and the bond loses strength. If she brings someone from the outside, he is not our relative. I know with time things change. For my own daughter I chose someone I thought was suitable for her. She accepted my will and she had my grandson Ali, he is living with us right now. After that she said she didn't like him. So I had to allow her to leave her husband, I couldn't fight her anymore. Even when he came here to negotiate with me, I told him that it is no longer in my hands; she has to decide on her own." (Detona, Gewane)*

Some fathers let their daughters participate in the marriage decision for different reasons. Some of the younger women in Gewane outlined that they will refuse to marry their absuma in order to marry someone they liked. Deciding a marriage with the consent of the woman is a new phenomenon. However, the influence of men in absuma marriage is still dominant. Also, Afar women generally describe the absuma marriage as positive. The suspicion of other ethnicities and the associated risks to marry someone for his/her looks or wealth is still active. The possibility to be part of a decision-making process, especially one that is as essential as the decision of marriage, demonstrates some kind of empowerment of women and their new ability to stand up for their rights, influencing the agency of Afar women. This addition to the possibility to access financial capital through the engagement in economic activities, allows women to become less dependent on their husbands and enter into new social fields (see also chapter 6.4).

It is not only the absuma marriage which is changing in the process of societal transformation, but also inheritance and possession rights. This will be discussed in the following section.

### **6.3.2 Ownership Rights of Afar Women**

Women generally have less ownership and inheritance rights than men, as well as limited access to financial capital, which can limit women's agency. Generally, it is possible for women to possess their own livestock, the basis of the livelihoods of pastoralists, but by nature livestock is mostly owned by men. Camel and cattle, which are the most valuable livestock among the pastoralists, are almost solely owned by men. The only possibility for women to gain access to possession is through inheritance or gifts of relatives, since Afar women usually are not able to access financial capital to buy livestock on their own.

In the past, women were not included in the inheritance at all. Today, women are included in the inheritance of their father and their husband, all of which is organized by a religious leader. Wives generally get the biggest share of the inheritance. If a man has several wives, the wife with more children is favored, and the wife with more sons will be favored above all. Daughters only receive a very small proportion of the inheritance; usually goats and sheep. Even though in some clans it is possible for

women to inherit camels and cattle, this is rarely practiced. The argument for a bigger share of inheritance to the sons is that they are responsible for their families, and it is therefore more important for them to possess numerous livestock. In the belief of Afar culture, daughters do not need their own possessions since their husbands are supposed to take care of them. In the Afar pastoral society, men are held responsible as they are head of the household. Detona, Mohammed's father, describes the changes in the inheritance law:

*"Women in the past were not allowed to inherit their father's things. [...] For me today, I see women enjoy better freedom than in the past. I see this as a positive development."* (Detona, Gewane)

The access to possession and the administration of one's belonging is essential to gain increased independence (see also chapter 6.4 and the biographies of Fatuma and Acauka chapter 6.5). If women inherit anything and they are either married or remarried, whatever they possess normally becomes the property of the household. But women need to possess their own things in order to become economically independent from their husband, and have options to leave him if necessary.

Divorced women are left in an especially difficult situation since it is the husband who decides if and what he gives his wife when they divorce. In difficult cases, the husband can decide to not give anything at all to his ex-wife, and he can even refuse to give her the divorce papers, complicating her future life and possibility to remarry. Unmarried women depend heavily on their relatives, since often they cannot manage to take care of the household chores and keep enough livestock to secure their livelihoods. The women's affairs office helps women to solve difficult situations like divorces, but is limited by lack of financial resources. If the husband is not reachable, (when for instance, he lives in Djibouti) the situation can often not be resolved. Aden Hassen, Kedo-Abba of the Mesara clan, describes the special situation of divorced women:

*"It all depends from person to person. But of course it is the man who decides. If the divorce is peaceful the man will probably be more generous. If there are fights he can decide to not give her anything. He can even decide to not give her the divorce papers. In that case it is very hard for the women and she will suffer. Especially now, we don't live in Afar ari anymore, we live in the towns, women have the support of the women's affairs office and the government, so sometimes it is even the man who has to leave."* (Aden Hassen, clan leader Mesara clan, Mataka)

Women headed households face the most difficulties when it comes to the question of ownership. They depend on the good will of their relatives to donate livestock to them or help them by giving milk and other nutrition. Women headed households also

depend on the help of their children to be able to manage all work tasks that need to be fulfilled. If the children are still very young or there are no children at all, the single women depend on their relatives to tend their livestock so they can take care of household chores and engage in income earning activities (see also chapter 6.5).

This section gave an overview of the possibilities for women to gain access to possessions. It was meant to outline difficulties connected to ownership and inheritance rights of women. Generally, economic independence is the key to more overall independence and empowerment of women. Fairly new possibilities to access financial capital are the plural income-earning activities which were discussed in chapter 6.2. Women also benefit from their newly-gained inclusion in the inheritances of their husband and father. The access to ownership is enabling women to act more independently from their husbands, influencing the agency of women when the endowment with capital is increased.

The impact of the transformation process on Afar women was discussed in this section. It can generally be stated, that the transformation process has mostly negative impacts on women concerning their work load. Changing clan traditions, which can be observed in connection with the absuma marriage and the inheritance law, can be beneficial for women. Generally, the access to financial capital ameliorates their overall situation. It was demonstrated that the engagement of women in livelihood diversification strategies is twofold, since it increases their work load but also makes them more (financially) independent from their husbands and other clan members. An overall distinction needs to be made between different groups within the heterogeneous group of women. In dependency on their overall livelihood situation, women are affected differently by the transformation process, and therefore choose different livelihood pathways. While some women experience some kind of empowerment benefitting from the process, others are further marginalized and their vulnerability increases. It is the situation of long-term dynamic changes which lead to individual responses as a strategy to overcome stress. The question of power relations which is closely related to livelihood pathways as well as the heterogeneity of pathways will be discussed in the following section.

#### **6.4 The Empowerment of Afar Women and New Livelihood Pathways**

The livelihood insecurity observed in many Afar households caused by the transformation process in Baadu leads to a diversification and new pathways of the Afars in order to reestablish their livelihood security. Livelihood diversification is mainly expressed in diversified economic activities of Afar households, which then lead to new livelihood pathways which derive out of long-term dynamic changes. Many pastoralists are no longer able to live purely from livestock production as they lack the access to rangeland. The milk they receive from their livestock is no longer

enough to feed the entire family, and financial capital is needed to secure the household's additional food supply. It is mostly Afar women who earn the additional financial capital needed to buy food. The afore described engagement of Afar women in economic activities (see chapter 6.2) is changing their role within the household, influencing power relations between men and women and modifying their agency. The diversification strategies can be correlated to livelihood pathways. In the following section, the changing power relations between Afar men and women will be discussed. In the second section, a differentiation within the group of women is made and the different livelihood pathways are discussed.

#### **6.4.1 The 'Democratization' of Women**

The shift from a purely pastoral life to more diversified livelihood strategies is mostly connected to a process of sedentarization in places where income can be generated and markets can be accessed (e.g. roadsides, urban settlements, around farms). The shift towards a settled life close to urban centers leads to a changing role of women within the household as new social fields are entered and their agency changes.

*"In the past Afar women were considered the property of their husbands. She does whatever her husband tells her to do. And normally boys were given the opportunity to go to school, even today. Girls were considered to become the wife of their husband anyways, so where is the point having them educated? Things are now a little bit better. You see more Afar girls going to school. When an Afar woman has the opportunity to go to school, she can change her life. Nobody can tell her what to do, because she will know about her rights. She can say no to absuma marriage, there are places where women can go. If she knows about her rights, she will know where to go to file complaint." (Fatuma Hate, program director Rohi Weddu, Awash)*

Fatuma Hate, the program director and founder of the local NGO Rohi Weddu whose aim is to promote the rights of Afar women, describes education and the knowledge about one's own rights as the key to more self-determination of Afar women. Education as well as awareness of one's rights are increasing the most in urban areas where people live in one area, are partly or completely settled, and infrastructure is easier to establish. Afars who no longer follow a mobile lifestyle benefit from this basic infrastructure found in urban centers. All schools and governmental institutions are found in these areas, while mobile Afar households can access infrastructure only temporarily.

Changes in the role of women have also been observed by the women's affairs office in the Gewane Woreda. The engagement in income earning activities together with the possibility to education strengthens the awareness of women about their rights

and their will to claim them. The women's affairs office is widely known in the area around Gewane. When women know about their rights, they are more likely to claim them and take part in the process of changing traditions. The women's affairs office helps any women regardless of her age or the problem they are facing. The office cooperates with the Sharia court and the local police. A main aim of the office and some local NGOs such as Rohi Weddu is to promote rights of women by teaching them their rights and the possibility to claim them and speak up for themselves. Women who are aware of their rights often file complaints when necessary:

*"More and more women are coming forward, now that they know that there is a place where they can file complaint. Women are learning more and more about their rights. I am not saying everything has changed but at least now there is a slight change."  
(Medina, head of the women's affairs office, Gewane)*

The claiming of their rights is intensified by the education of women and their economical independency. The economic activities which open up the option to generate one's own income enable women to be more independent from their husbands. The awareness of women about their rights can be most clearly seen in their engagement in income earning activities and helping to change traditions like the absuma marriage and inheritance/ownership rights. Women enter new social fields where their habitus is also changed to some degree, moving women's agency to more self-determination.

In the previous section, changing traditions were discussed. It was also debated in what way the tradition of absuma marriage has changed. To some degree, one can say that women become more independent by refusing to marry men who are much older or abuse them. But all Afars, even women, still feel strongly about cultural traditions. One can say that the tradition of absuma is part of their habitus, their socialization. It's something that is shared in all divergent social fields found among the Afars. Other traditions like clothing and some behavioral patterns are changed when entering a new social field. In the urban centers, for instance, women no longer dress in the traditional Afar dresses with the accompanying jewelry. Even though men discuss these changes negatively, women do not listen to the demands of their husbands to dress differently:

*"They [Afar women] also had their own perfume; they used the smoke of wood as perfume. They made a whole, put the wood inside the whole and burn it. The women sit above the whole and used the smoke as perfume. They prepared themselves for their men like that. In the past they also had their own jewelry. They wore it on top of their head and at the sides of the head. They used some kind of red wood; they put it into the water and colored their clothes with the red colored from the wood. Today, there is nothing left of this culture. Women go to school today; there is no core on them anymore. All the women have their own rights, they can decide for themselves. In the*

*past women were rich and they made all the jewelry themselves. They were able to fill their stomach. The past was better for us.” (Hamed Herre, pastoralist, Old Gewane)*

Thus, one can observe how women change their social practices when entering the new social field of the settlements along the asphalt road. They begin, independently from their husbands, to decide where their children go to school and what they do with the money they earn through their economic activities. Of course, the power relations between men and women are not completely eradicated, and it is still the husband who takes the role as the head of the family, but due to the access to financial capital women do have the option to act more freely. Women make decisions which were previously made by men, and they no longer have to ask their husbands for money in order to be able to buy food and other household supplies. Some women refuse to marry their absuma, standing up for their rights and deciding their future on their own. Women more often take the role of the bread winner in the household, making their husbands dependent on them. Men often complain about the new agency of women, but at the same time they do not act against it. The agency of women has clearly changed due to the new endowment with (financial) capital and their knowledge about their rights. Taking the role of the bread winner in the household and being supported by institutions which teach women about their rights opens up new opportunities for social practices of Afar women. Women now are able to take an active part in the decision-making process, and be able to make decisions about their future themselves.

The afore described changes of the role of women in the Afar society, which are closely linked to their agency and influence their vulnerability, can only be observed in urban areas. In the remote areas, where Afars still follow the mobile pastoral lifestyle, there are no such changes to be observed. Even in urban areas where these changes can be found, they emerge slowly.

In the following, a distinction between different social groups of women will be made. This distinction mainly relies on the current livelihood situation of the women and their livelihood pathways.

#### **6.4.2 Distinctions between Social Groups of Afar Women and Livelihood Pathways**

Generally, women cannot be seen as a homogenous group. There are differences within the group of women which absolutely need to be taken into account in order to fully understand the changes of the role of Afar women that can be observed in Baadu. These groups of women belong to different social fields and are endowed with diverse sets of capital; they also follow varying livelihood pathways relating to power relations and a co-ordination process between the household members. The



agency of women within these varying social fields differs. This can clearly be seen according to their livelihood pathways which are closely related to the livelihood diversification strategies. While a great part of the Afars still follow a purely pastoral life, many have dropped out of the pastoral system to become either agro-pastoralists or engage in other income earning activities, such as petty trading, to secure their livelihoods. Afars who engage in income earning activities live along the asphalt road or in the flood plains of the Awash River, which are favorable for agriculture. This leads to a geographical division of the clan members which can be followed by a loss of social and cultural capital. Living in (or close to) urban centers opens possibilities to access basic infrastructure which is not given for those who still live the mobile life of the pastoralists. Urban centers give access to infrastructure like market access, transportation, schools, health centers, electricity, water and food stores, and also the access to institutions like the women's affairs office. The remote areas of the pastoralists cannot be reached by the many NGOs and other organization which have the aim to promote the rights of women and ameliorate their situation. Women in remote areas lack the possibility to engage in income earning activities and they follow the livelihood pathway of pastoralism. The afore described trends can only be observed among women who engage in income earning activities and thus live closer to urban centers/asphalt roads where market access is given. It is a decision a household makes to settle and engage in new livelihood pathways. This is on one hand triggered by long-term dynamic changes and the fact that some households need to follow these new livelihood pathways to secure their livelihoods. On the other hand, it is the household itself which decides the kind of economic activities they will engage in and the mixture of these activities. Those women who still follow the purely pastoral pathways are excluded from this social transformation process, the empowerment process, and the benefits deriving from the economic independency of Afar women.

*"It is very obvious, women who live deep in rural areas, where there is no electricity, where there is no access to clean water, where there is no any health facility, women deep in rural areas cannot have the same changes like the women living in more urban areas like Gewane. For example in Gewane, if a women wants to buy food there are places where she can go to buy food. She can even go to a hotel to eat something there. There are shops, there are health facilities, and women can get health care even if it might not be adequate, it is better than nothing compared to the Afar women living in the rural areas. There is a big difference between the urban and the rural areas, changes cannot be the same." (Fatuma Hate, program director Rodi Weddu, Awash)*

Besides the missing access to basic infrastructure, women in rural areas also depend completely on their husbands, economically as well as socially. Power relations between men and women are more pronounced in these areas than in urban areas. Pastoral women do not have the opportunity to gain their own income and are not able to have the help of institutions to free themselves from an unfortunate situation.

They interact and depend highly on the environment and the resources they extract from it. Grazing areas for their animals are necessary to secure their food supply which relies solely on livestock production. Thus, pastoralist women are more severely affected by the spread of *Prosopis juliflora*. While the women living in the urban settlements live far away from the charcoal production sites, the pastoral women do have to enter these areas to fulfill their work tasks. It is therefore the pastoral women who are affected by the rape cases and the sexual harassment of the charcoal producers in the forest. The pastoralist Afar women have less opportunities to cope with any kind of change since their access to resources is extremely limited and they are less endowed with any kind of capital. They are the most vulnerable group within the Afar women as they cannot benefit from the transformation process in any way.

In the towns, women have more opportunities to be economically independent. They depend less on the accessibility of natural resources. Due to their diversified livelihoods and new livelihood pathways, they have more options to cope with changes which make them less vulnerable since they can access a different set of resources. Being engaged in agriculture (agro-pastoralists) opens the option to store food. In urban centers, markets can be accessed where goods can be sold and food supply can be bought. It is mostly through their economic activities that women become more independent. Aden Hassen describes the differences:

*“In this area [Mataka] women can be more independent than those women who live in rural areas. You have seen women who stay along the road all day long trying to sell gedayta mats. They become more independent.” (Aden Hassen, Kedo Abba of the Mesara clan, Mataka)*

When households drop out of the pastoral life, the power relations between men and women change because often women take the role as bread winner and men become financially dependent on their wives. In the urban settlements, they also have the access to support of the women’s affairs office and several NGOs. A separation of Afar women into four groups can be made according to their livelihood pathways. This distinction is documented in table three and is linked to the livelihood diversification strategies.

Generally, most households diversify in multiple economic activities and do not rely on a single strategy. The livelihoods pathways thus need to be seen in individual cases of the Afar women who usually engage in a single livelihood diversification strategy, of which the number of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists is highest. For women who engage either in agriculture or petty trading, it is the men who take care of the livestock, thus the women change their livelihood pathways according to their new economic activities while men remain in the livelihood pathways of pastoralism.

Women-headed households can be found in any of the four differentiated groups of women. They have a special role since they are usually more vulnerable than the rest of the Afar women. Divorced, widowed and unmarried women often depend on the help and good will of their relatives since they cannot take care of the work tasks they face on their own. Their situation changes if they have older children who can help with the work tasks. Therefore, the situation of women-headed households and their livelihood pathways depend on the age of the children and the help of relatives, as well as the access to resources for potential diversification strategies.

Table 3: Social groups and livelihood pathways among Afar women in Baadu (own findings and illustration)

<b>Livelihood Basis</b>	<b>Lifestyle</b>	<b>Access to Basic Infrastructure</b>	<b>Current Situation</b>
pastoralists	mobile	only temporarily accessible	most vulnerable group within the group of women, no capacity to cope with risks, negatively affected by transformation process
agro-pastoralists	partly settled, partly mobile	mostly accessible	more secure food situation, harvest can be stored and sold (access to financial capital)
petty trading and daily labor	settled	accessible throughout the year, women depend on market accessibility, basis infrastructure is given in areas with market accessibility	less vulnerable since independent of droughts, surplus on markets can have negative impacts, benefit from transformation process
monthly salary	settled	always accessible	low vulnerability concerning food security of the household since monthly income is assured

To summarize, the group of women is heterogenic, and each group endowed with different sets of capital which influence their social practices and their position within the field (see figure 8). The livelihood pathways they chose were identified in table three. The size of the circles in figure eight do not stand for the endowment with capital of the agents particularly, but underline the different endowment with capital of the agent in the sense of BOURDIEU. The groups of women belong to different social fields but also share the same field relating to their membership within the clan. Generally, women who are economically independent from their husbands face new options for social practice. In the remote rural areas, the agency of Afar women is still highly constrained by the will of their husbands and their low endowment with capital. Pastoral women are by no means independent. The role of women generally changes with the social fields women are positioned in. Even though the social field of pastoralism, agro-pastoralism and other forms of income earning activities partly share the same logic, they also differ from one another. It is these differences of the social field as well as the endowment with (financial) capital which opens up new options or constraints for social practices of women. Generally, the changing role of women is a slow process and by no means progressing quickly. It is highly related to the new livelihood pathways. Using the concept of arena, the social field is physically placed. Within the arena, interactions between the different agents take place. It is the arena where power relations between men and women are contested but also where the negotiations between the agents take place (e.g. market accessibility), and interests and goals are contested. Pastoral women, for example, are less endowed with capital and can thus, referring to BOURDIEU's metaphor of the game, invest less in the game of the social field. Referring to the concept of livelihood pathways, they will be less likely to stand up for their interests and goals in the process of co-ordination. Women with diversified livelihoods generally have more diversified sets of capital and can thus invest more in the game, already following new livelihood pathways. Therefore, their influence and power in negotiations is higher.

As different livelihood pathways can be found within a household (e.g. women who engage in agricultural activities or petty trading while men still follow a pastoral pathway) underlines the 'breakdown' of households, they can no longer be seen as an entity but need to be addressed in their diversity. This does not only apply to the livelihood pathways, but also to the concepts of habitus and vulnerability.

In the following section the biographies of two Afar women, both leading women-headed households and their different livelihoods pathways will be described.

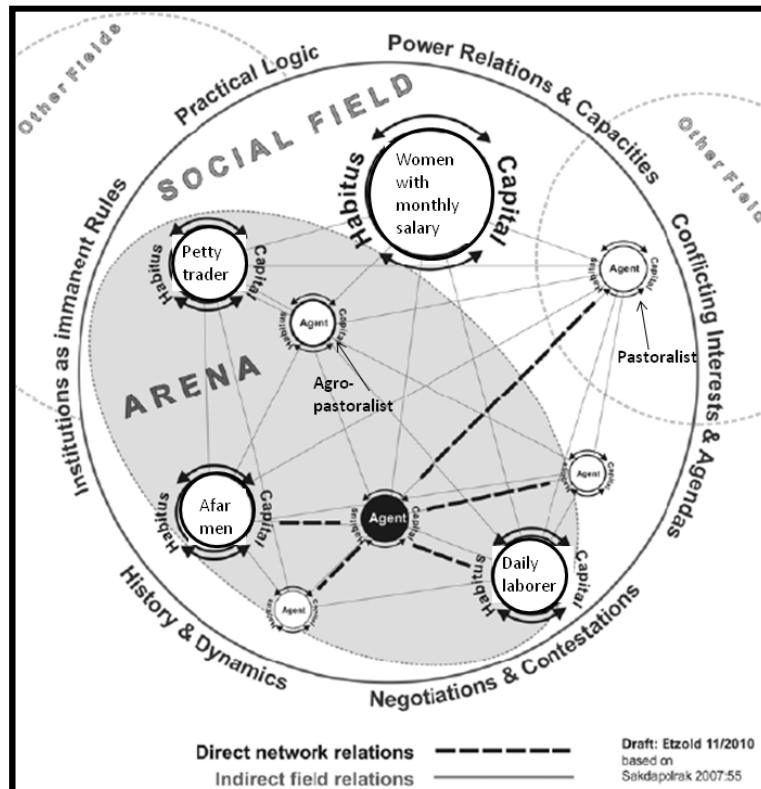


Figure 8: Integration of the key findings in BOURDIEU'S Theory of Practice (modified after ETZOLD 2013: 30)

## 6.5 Biographies of Two Afar Women

**Acauka Ali** (see picture 19) is an Afar **pastoralist** woman in her mid thirties. She was born and raised in Baadu. When she was married to her absuma, she and her husband left Baadu in search for a better life and went to Djibouti where her husband could work as a daily laborer in the port, loading and unloading ships. In the beginning they did well, but after a while Acauka's husband began to chew khat. He no longer brought the money he earned home to his wife so she could pay for the household expenses. He also started to abuse Acauka. Far away from her clan, there were no male relatives who could protect her from the abuse. When her husband refused to finance the education of her sons and the abuse became worse, Acauka went back to Baadu for the protection of her clan. She was pregnant with her third son at that time. Her husband refuses to give her the divorce papers. He still lives in Djibouti. Today, Acauka's situation is very difficult:

*"I know there is the Sharia leader and I know that there are places to go to, but what does that help me? My husband lives in Djibouti now. Unless he comes here there is nothing I can do. I lost four children, and then I had three. Women sacrifice so much for their husbands, I had seven children and I lost four of them. How come he cannot be nice to me? He is not a good man. I am struggling."* (Acauka Ali, pastoralist, Molale)

Although Acauka no longer has to take the abuse of her husband and she was able to fulfill her wish and send her oldest son to school, her situation as a divorced mother creates a very unsecure situation. She depends heavily on help and gifts from her relatives. Before she and her husband left to go to Djibouti, they owned camels and cattle; today none of this is left. Some relatives donated goats and sheep to Acauka to give her a livelihood basis for herself and her three sons. Today, Acauka moves with the rest of the clan to any place where they can find water and grazing land for the livestock, as she is not able to secure her livelihood on her own and has to follow her relatives.

*“Before we left we had camels and cattle. When I came back none of that was here. People here told me that all of them died. My uncle contributed some goats and sheep to me to have some livestock on my own. But I depend on my relatives.” (Acauka Ali, pastoralist, Molale)*

Acauka uses the few goats and sheep that were given to her to support her family. When she needs to buy additional food for her children and herself she sells livestock. The selling of livestock is limited since financial capital is needed almost all the time to buy additional food, and the number of shoats she owns is declining fast. When Acauka is in possession of financial capital she goes to the farms along the Awash River and buys maize from the Afar who own farms. Acauka describes her dependency on her relatives as follows:

*“Daud Mohammed supports me. He gave me some goats. I use them to feed my children, to support them. We are neighbors, he helps me a lot. We live next to each other our huts are right next to each other.” (Acauka Ali, pastoralist, Molale)*

During her days, Acauka has to take care of her two sons who stay with her. The oldest son attends elementary school in Gewane and he comes to Molale to help her on the weekends. She has to bake mufe, collect firewood, fetch water and take care of the other two boys. When she has to fetch water, the older son takes care of the youngest son. She also depends on the help of her relatives who take care of her livestock and watch her sons when she has to leave to fulfill her duties. Since Acauka became a divorced mother her situation has deteriorated. She does not have any source of income besides the few goats and sheep which she can sell. Apart from her livestock, she depends on her relatives who look after her livestock, take care of her children, and share their milk with her. Her dependency on others and her very constricted options for action, due to the low endowment with capital, make her highly vulnerable towards any kind of stress. Within the co-ordination process of the livelihood pathways of her relatives Acauka depends on them and cannot chose a new livelihood pathway for herself.



Photo 19: Acauka Ali with her youngest son in Molale



Photo 20: Fatuma Ibrahim (middle), Simone (left) and I (right) during the interview at the old fuel station in Gewane

**Fatuma Ibrahim** (see picture 20) is about 50 years old and lives in Leas. She used to be a pastoralist but had to diversify her livelihood and became an **agro-pastoralist**. Her biography is revealed through two interviews, one led by Simone Rettberg in December 2005, the other led by me in spring 2014. Fatuma was born in Inti-Adoyta which is two kilometers from her present home of Leas (see map 11). She has never lived anywhere else than Inti-Adoyta and Leas. Fatuma and her husband used to live mainly from cattle. Before the drought in 1983/84, Matalea, her husband owned 1,200 cattle. But most of them died during the drought, and only 40 remained. The few cattle remaining died in the drought of 2002/03 or were stolen by the Issa. The situation of the household was worsened when Fatuma's husband became sick with tuberculosis. Fatuma, who had to take care of the children on her own could no longer find the time to make gedayta mats, a business she had started as an additional income strategy when their cattle herd was decimated. Besides the income from the gedayta mats, the livelihood of Fatuma's family was based on 20 shoats. With the few remaining shoats, Fatuma's household was among the poorest households in Leas. In 2004, Fatuma's husband began to engage in farming, growing maize on a small farm in Inti-Adoyta after recovering from tuberculosis. The household still depended on the help of relatives and urgently needed to generate income in order to secure their livelihood situation and also food security. Growing maize was supposed to ameliorate the food situation of the household but the spread of *Prosopis juliflora* proved to be a special challenge for pursuing an agricultural lifestyle.

Fatuma holds the spread of *Prosopis juliflora* responsible for the impoverishment process of the Afars and the reason why the cattle nomads especially were not able to recover after Matalea. In her opinion, it is also the reason why she had to diversify her livelihood strategy and follow a new livelihood pathway. The disease of her husband also caused severe problems for the household, since Fatuma had to take care of her children and the remaining livestock all by herself when her husband

became sick, taking over both the male and female role in the household. When her husband began to grow maize on his own farm after his health situation had ameliorated, the situation of the household improved. After the first harvest, however, her husband turned sick again and they could no longer engage in farming. In 2005, Fatuma's situation was bleak, and the household's descent into poverty appeared unstoppable. Selling more and more goats and sheep to be able to buy at least some food, took the last remaining basis of their livelihoods. Fatuma started begging and depended on her relatives and neighbours. These long-term dynamic changes in her surroundings finally made her change her livelihood pathway.

When I met Fatuma in 2014, she told me that her husband had died of tuberculosis. She refused to remarry and has lived as a widow ever since, a decision she chose actively. When her children grew up and she did not have to take care of them throughout the day anymore, Fatuma began to grow maize on her own, and again she decided to change her livelihood pathway. Growing maize allowed her to secure the family's food supply, so that she was able to ameliorate the situation of the family. Today, her children can look after the shoats while Fatuma herself cooks breakfast, fetches water, collects firewood, and works on the farm. Her oldest son helps her on the farm whenever he is not in the local agricultural collage in Adgora. The work on the farm is labour intensive but the diversified livelihood ameliorates the food situation of the household as the maize can be stored for the dry season. Fatuma reported that she harvested 32 sacks à 50 kg maize. She used 12 sacks for household consumption, ten were sold to support her son's education, and the other ten were stored. Now that she has older children, work tasks can be distributed among the household members. The work load of Fatuma is still high, but she was able to ameliorate her overall situation by diversifying her livelihood strategy and following a new livelihood pathway of agro-pastoralism:

*“Now at least we have our farm, we grow bokolo. We have enough to store some and it lasts throughout the year. Just my health situation is not as good anymore; I am not very strong anymore. The difference and the good thing is that I do not have to beg. The food situation is better now. I do not have to ask people about it anymore. We do not have to go far anymore to buy bokolo like before [before they had to go to Gewane to buy grain]. I have storage where I keep my products. We are ok, thanks to Allah. I am better off except for my health issues. I do not beg.” (Fatuma, Leas, interview 2014)*

Besides the farm, Fatuma also has about five cattle and 50 shoats. Her overall livelihood situation has become less vulnerable since Fatuma relies on several sources of income and has different options to secure the family's nutrition situation. Compared to Acauka Ali who finds herself in the same situation as Fatuma in 2005, Fatuma can live a fairly independent life. Her food situation ameliorated in the past years when she engaged in new sources of income and she can also rely on the help and support of her children. She consciously decided not to remarry and chose a new



livelihood pathway of her own by engaging in agriculture. Today, she feels more independent as the head of the household and does not have to obey to another's orders. Acauka Ali's situation is different. Her children are still young and cannot be of great help in and around the household. She greatly depends on the help of her relatives since she is not able to fulfill all chores on her own or find new ways to secure her livelihood situation. Acauka Ali is highly vulnerable to any kind of stress since she lacks the capacity to adapt her livelihood to these changes. Her capital basis is fairly limited. On the other hand, Fatuma Ibrahim was able to diversify her livelihood by engaging in agriculture and choosing a different livelihood pathway than Acauka Ali. The option to store the harvested maize makes her less vulnerable towards droughts and famines and more independent from her relatives. Acauka does not yet have the options Fatuma has, as she has to follow her relatives on which she relies heavily.

## 7 Conclusion and Perspectives

Aden Hassen, the Kedo-Abba of the Mesara Clan, said that Afar women make up the back bone of the Afar society. Women are the spine that holds everything together. This is a general saying in the Afar society. Nevertheless, Afar women are the ones who face the heaviest workload and hardship. They are in charge of the well-being of the family. In times when societal transformation is affecting the well-being of the family, women have to deal most with these risks and compromise to keep the well-being of the family intact. This master thesis followed the goal to analyze, describe and explain the transformation process of the Afar pastoral society in Baadu with a special focus on gender aspects of this transformation process. It was analyzed in what ways the traditional role of Afar women is changing due to the transformation and how this is affecting power relations between Afar men and women.

The concept of political ecology was used to analyze the transformation process in Baadu. The value of this concept lies in its possibility to understand ecological changes from a multi-level perspective. Even though the focus of this master thesis was on the micro level, some regional, national and international aspects were taken into account. From this angle, the transformation of the pastoral society in Baadu was analyzed. The spread of *Prosopis juliflora*, the conflict with the Issa, the interests of the Ethiopian government, and internal clan value changes were identified as factors of the transformation process. It was outlined that no single factor can be held as the starting point of the transformation process. It is this broader set of long-term problematic changes that is leading to a societal transformation, since the livelihood basis of the pastoralists is becoming more and more insecure. In the case of Baadu, a general trend of individualization and materialization was observed, which leads to a disconnection of internal clan structures. The transformation process lies in the center of the interplay of interests on different geographical scales, where power relations determine the influence of these divergent interests. While the Ethiopian government is endangering the Afar lifestyle for their own interests, for example, promoting sedentarization to secure sea access to the Red Sea and giving land to (international) investors for agricultural activities, the Afars still hold pastoralism as the most valuable form of living. Due to uneven power relations and the dependency of the Afar pastoralists on the Ethiopian government, the outcomes of these divergent interests are still to be determined.

The influence of the transformation process on gender relations and the impacts on women's livelihood pathways form the center of this master thesis. It was asked how the role of women in the household and within society is changing and how this is affecting their agency. These questions were answered in the light of BOURDIEU's *Theory of Practice* as well as the concept of livelihood pathways, always keeping questions of gender and vulnerability in mind. Due to the transformation process, the

food security of the pastoralists is at risk, a problem that mostly concerns women as they are in charge of the well-being, and therefore also the food supply, of the family. Hence, most pastoral households can no longer live purely from livestock production, as they are missing the necessary resources. A strategy of most pastoral households lies in the adaptation of livelihoods through livelihood diversification. Even if some households continue pastoralism, for women this is still connected to a subsistent systemic livelihood transformation, as they are the ones who have to take care of further income earning activities anyways. This demonstrates that the household can no longer be seen as an entity. A categorization has been made into four livelihood pathways Afar women follow today. First, some continue to follow the nomadic-pastoral life. For women, this means a high engagement in household activities, such as taking care of children and household chores. Second, many households engage in agro-pastoralism. While most Afar men continue the life of nomadic-pastoralism, women are in charge of the farms. The physically labor-intensive farm work is added on top of their domestic chores. The third pathway is connected to petty trading. This livelihood pathway, similar to agro-pastoralism, is due to a changed livelihood pathway of women who engage in different kinds of petty trading while men take care of the remaining livestock, and thus follow their traditional livelihood pathways. The fourth and last categorization was seen in those women who receive monthly salaries. This is a very small group, as monthly salaries are usually only paid by governmental institutions and NGOs. Very few women have the opportunity to engage in this kind of political work. In search for more sustainable livelihoods, the engagement of households in different activities can be seen as a strategy to diversify risk. This master thesis purposely identified the afore named livelihood pathways outlining a 'breakdown' of the household unit as members of the household follow different livelihood pathways. It is necessary to distinguish between household members to understand their strategies to overcome long-term dynamic changes and to outline the role of women as important agents into securing the household's livelihood. The activities of a household generally depend on the access to labor and resources, as well as knowledge. Generally, it was observed that all households adapt to the transformation in some way. Households which continue nomadic pastoralism today live off different livestock than in the past and, in many cases, depend on engagement in non-pastoral activities.

The responsibility for further income generation, a need that was observed in all parts of the pastoral society in Baadu, is generally passed to Afar women. The livelihood pathways they choose are connected to their personal adaptation strategy and reduce the vulnerability of the whole household. As women take care of the well-being of the family by engaging in different income generation strategies which are linked to livelihood pathways, they enter into new social fields which are influencing their agency. The livelihood diversification strategies are often linked to a process of sedentarization. In their new livelihood pathways, women change their role within the household and often take on the role of bread winner, making their husbands dependent on them. This changes their overall situation in the household as power

relations change. The process of changing power relations between Afar men and women is intensified by the work of governmental institutions who promote the rights of women. The values of Afar women are changing within this process as they begin to make their own decisions and become more independent from their husbands. In light of the *Theory of Practice*, this means that women, by entering into new social fields, get access to new and more (financial) capital which empowers them and their role within the 'playing field'. Afar women have a new opportunity to stand up for their rights and determine their own destiny. One example of this in the context of Afar traditions is that women no longer blindly accept their faith, but rather are stepping out and refusing to marry their absuma when necessary.

In the response to the long-term dynamic changes, the role of women in the household and in society is changing. This transformation leads to a reduction of their vulnerability in dependency of external stresses as they are less dependent on their husbands and diversify risks by pursuing different kinds of activities. Still, the question of vulnerability can only be addressed in relation to the livelihood pathways of women. Their overall vulnerability is highly connected to the interaction with, and dependency on, natural resources. Either way, their engagement in income earning activities is twofold, as their already high work burden continues to increase.

The changes in the role of Afar women are not spread equally over different social groups of women. Women in remote areas who still follow the conservative form of nomadic-pastoralism are deprived of the beneficial changes other women are experiencing. The access to institutions such as the women's affairs office and NGO's is crucial for the empowerment of women as they educate women to become more aware of their rights. Therefore, the changes observed in the societal role of women are not the same for all Afar women, but depend on their livelihood pathways and thus their access to financial capital, institutions, and to urban centers. Afar women who do generate income and know about their rights can change power relations within the household and include themselves in decision-making processes.

It is the recommendation of this master thesis that further research should be done to continually observe the changes among Afar women studied in this master thesis. In my personal opinion it is extremely interesting to analyze the changing role of women within the newly emerging generation of Afar women who are born as settled Afars and do not have a close connection to pastoralism anymore. A focus should be led on the power relations between Afar men and women, their livelihood pathways, and the interaction of Afar women with migrants (women and men) from the Ethiopian highlands. With a further research interest in the gender aspects of the transformation process in Baadu, it can be analyzed if the newly chosen pathways can secure the livelihoods of the Afar in the long term. Thus, it is also of interest if forms of pastoralism can still be active even in the midst of this long-term transformation process. It can also be identified in future research whether the empowerment of women is further emerging, or if it is somehow limited. In relation to the empowerment of women, political actions should be included.

To conclude, it is mostly Afar women who secure the livelihoods of Afar households when conditions change that lead to insecurities, and they usually do so by following new livelihood pathways which are connected to an engagement in economic activities and the gain of financial income. Even in Baadu, different strategies of livelihood diversification were found hinging on the accessibility of resources. It is questionable if these findings can be transferred to other regions in Afar. Generally, it is known that pastoralism alone can no longer secure the livelihoods of the Afars, and therefore the engagement of women in the process of long-term adaptation is crucial. Therefore, gender aspects should be included in research on the transformation process of the Afar society in the future.

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## Annex

### Annex 1: List of Interviews

The following table lists the interviews conducted in the field. Interviews which were not transliterated and also not used for data analysis and interpretation are not listed. The recordings of the interviews are attached with a CD and the very end of the thesis.

Interviewee	Details of the interviewee	Approx . age	Date of interview	Interview language, translator, comment
<b>Old Gewane</b>				
Hawa	Modaytu Clan, widow	55	1st April 2014	English, Mohammed Detona
Saida	Badul Clan, married	80	2 <sup>nd</sup> April 2014	English, Mohammed Detona
Hamed Herre	Badul Clan, married	80	6 <sup>th</sup> April 2014	English, Mohammed Detona
Robi Haya	Dababura Clan	50	8 <sup>th</sup> April 2014	French, Sarah
Woman	married	30	11 <sup>th</sup> April 2014	English, Abdulkadir Hassen
<b>Gewane</b>				
Atcadu	Galela Clan, widow	45	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2014	English, Mohammed Detona
Fafi	Dababura Clan, not yet married	19	7 <sup>th</sup> April 2014	French, Sarah
Medina Amir	head of the women's affairs office Gewane, not yet married	30	17 <sup>th</sup> April 2014	English, Abdulkadir Hassen
Huda Dubno	Kedo-Abba, married, Maheisara Clan	45	17 <sup>th</sup> of April 2014	English, Abdulkadir Hassen, interview mainly conducted by Simone Rettberg
Detona	Galaela Clan, married, Mohammed's	70	18 <sup>th</sup> April 2014	English, Abdulkadir Hassen

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	father			
Rabea	migrant from Amhara Region not yet married	25	24 <sup>th</sup> April 2014	English, Abdulkadir Hassen
Humed	Woreda official	40	24 <sup>th</sup> April 2014	English, Abdulkadir Hassen, Interview mainly conducted by Simone Rettberg
<b>Adgora</b>				
Arbai Ali Kamil	Takin Clan, married	45	9 <sup>th</sup> April 2014	English, Abdulkadir Hassen
Sarah	Takin Clan, married	35	10 <sup>th</sup> April 2014	English, Abdulkadir Hassen
<b>Mataka</b>				
Aden Hassen	Kedo-Abba Mesara Clan	55	15 <sup>th</sup> April	English, Abdulkadir Hassen
<b>Leas</b>				
Fatuma Ibrahim	Bagulait Clan, widow	45	10 <sup>th</sup> April 2014	English, Abdulkadir Hassen
Fatuma Ibrahim	Bagulait Clan, married	35	4 <sup>th</sup> December 2005	Interview conducted by Simone Rettberg
Group of men	Bagulait Clan		25 <sup>th</sup> April 2014	English, Abdulkadir Hassen
<b>Birri Foro</b>				
Fatuma	Alysara Clan, Midwife	70	16 <sup>th</sup> April 2014	English, Abdulkadir Hassen
Saida	Alysara Clan, divorced	55	16 <sup>th</sup> April 2014	English, Abdulkadir Hassen
<b>Molale</b>				
Ali Humed	Bagulait Clan, married	60	18 <sup>th</sup> April 2014	English, Abdulkadir Hassen
Acauka Ali	Bagulait Clan, divorced	35	18 <sup>th</sup> April 2014	English, Abdulkadir Hassen
Group of Afar and Issa men	attempted to keep the peace		18 <sup>th</sup> April 2014	recorded and translated and transliterated by Abdulkadir Hassen and Simone Rettberg

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<b>Awash</b>				
Fatuma Hate	Program Director of Rohi Weddu, not yet married	30	26 <sup>th</sup> April 2014	English, Abdulkadir Hassen

## **Annex 2: Interview with Medina Amir, head of the women's affairs office**

The interview was conducted on the 17<sup>th</sup> of April 2014 in Medina's house in Gewane in the afternoon. The interview was translated by Abdulkadir Hassen. Medina is the head of the women's affairs office in Gewane since three years.

*Medina, I am here because I am doing some research on the Afar women. I am interested in ongoing changes. I came to meet you because you are the head of the women's affairs office and I would like to talk to you about your observations, perceptions and experiences.*

You are welcome to ask me your questions.

*Can you please tell me about your office and your work?*

My name is Medina Amir. I am head of the women's affairs office in Gewane. The office is also concerned with children and youth. Our main focus is to look into women's issues, not only Afar women but any women. We try to help any women regardless of their race or their age. In the past, the tasks of the women were limited to the household activities. Now, with the changing environment and recurrent droughts, the Afar lost their livestock. The burden on Afar women has increased. Today, it is not only their responsibility to take care about household activities but they are also forced to become income earners. They start for example to make gedayta mats or get involved in petty trading. The burden on Afar women is increasing. The budget of our office is limited. We wish we had support so we could extend our work. So I try to work with NGOs and other development agents. We wish we could help more women but our capacities are limited. Our women they are not lesser than any other women in the world. If they would be given the opportunity and capacity, they could do anything other women can do. It is just limitation. Sometimes we can organize them into cooperatives so that they can help each other. But, if you ask me 'what is the workload on Afar women compared to men?' the big burden of workload is with the women.

*Are you mainly working with incoming complaints? Or do you also set up projects? How do you actually work?*

Our office has to deal with severe budget constraints. First of all we try to raise awareness and teach Afar women about their human rights. For example, we tell them that they don't have to take abuse. Our office is the place where they can come and file their complaint. There are some men who abuse their women, we try to raise awareness and tell them that they don't have to accept abuse. Now there is a place for Afar women where they can come to. We try to counsel them and teach them. They can come straight and file complaint. If it is a man who is refusing to give a

woman the divorce papers, they can come to us. If we can't help them we give it to the Sharia court. For example, there are some men who abuse their women but they refuse to give the divorce papers to the women. That can be a very painful experience for the women, because when she is separated and she has no divorce papers she cannot get married to another man. When they come to my office, I try to make the man accept the decision of the woman. If he insists I forward it to the Sharia office and he will be forced according to the religious obligation. Because this concerns everybody, there is the justice office, there is the police, there is the women's affairs office, and then there is the Sharia office. We work together in all cases that concern women. For example, in some kebele a woman is abused but the woreda worker is corrupt and he tried to support the man, we have established a committee from these four offices to prevent cases like corruption. I even had a meeting with the committee yesterday. More and more women are coming forward, now that they know that there is a place where they can file their complaint. Women are learning more and more about their rights. I am not saying everything has changed but at least now there is a slight change.

*Do women mainly come to your office because they are facing abuse?*

Besides these household disputes and domestic violence, my office also works with the forced marriage of young girls, the absuma marriage. Last month I rescued four little girls who were still going to school. I mean culture is not a simple thing, it takes a lot of time, and we are doing our best for young girls. Culture is not an easy thing it's nothing you can change quickly, the Afar culture is a deep rooted culture.

*What do you do with the girls after you rescue them?*

They go to school. For example, one of the four girls, she was an orphan, she didn't have parents. I went to Mataka and they were beating her up because she said that she didn't like her husband to be. I went in and I physically had to rescue her. I brought her here, we filed a complaint to the police. After keeping her with me for a while, I had to return her back to her family, and now she is going back to school. I brought her with me to Gewane she stayed with me until they solved out that thing in Mataka and now she is going back to school. I did the same thing with the girl from Birri Foro. Personally, I have to face physical violence. I have to face abuse and assaults. If you want you can personally talk to the girls they can tell you about their experiences. If you want to we can just go now. You can yourself talk to her.

*We cannot go right now, because we will go to Molale later. The girls how old were they?*

Maybe 16 or 17. Some of them can look a bit older but they are still very young. The family who was trying to force their daughter into an unwanted marriage, now this is girl going back to school.



*Do you always get the help from the police and the Sharia office? Does the cooperation work well?*

No, problem, we cooperate together. Before the complaint reaches our office, the police can also file a complaint and pass it on to our office. If it is a criminal case the police will just deal with it but when it comes to dispute, they can forward it to our office so we can deal with it. But if it is purely criminal the police will just deal with it.

*You said that the number of complaints is increasing. Can you tell me how many are coming in per day or per week?*

We don't have statistics. It varies, sometimes we have five cases a week, and sometimes it is only two or one. I don't just sit by the office and wait for the cases; I also go to the kebeles to raise awareness. If it is only a dispute, I will try to settle the dispute before the woman even needs to come to my office and file a complaint. Sometimes, things can be settled when it is not such a big deal. Some things do not need the official way through my office.

*Do you get in trouble with the men when you go to the kebeles and try to raise awareness or try to settle a dispute?*

It is obvious that men will not be happy with us telling their women about their rights. It is new for them. For me, when I have a family dispute, I don't necessarily try to support woman, I try to be as objective as possible. In most of the cases we know women are being mistreated. And in those cases this is something new and not all men are happy about it. But things are changing. Sometimes we get abuses and some insults, and things like that. Because it is a deep rooted culture, we do not only get insulted by men but also by women. The women feel that we are trying to separate people. We get most abuse from the women who are related to the men. Just to give you one example. Six or eight month ago there was this case were a men tried to take a girl with him. He tight her hands and put her in the back of an ISUZU. I was informed and I ran to inform the police, and I stopped the ISUZU truck and then I let the girl free. I got some insult from the men, but the most insult and abuse I got from other women. They said 'What the hell do you do? It is not you business, you destroy our culture.'

*Was she his absuma and felt the right to take her?*

Yes, but since there are many absumas, sometimes even among the men they try to betray each other. But the biggest abuse was not from the men but from the women.

*We have talked about changes. What exactly do you mean by changes? What exactly is changing? And what are causes of these changes?*

Factors of changes are first of all that the way of living has changed. The Afar used to be purely pastoralists. Now, they are more and more urban settlements established

around them. Also, there is the increasing influence of the government. Now there are things like our office. Our office is trying to raise awareness. The awareness raising depends on our capacities. There are many factors. It is the urban settlements, the government that is intervening, the awareness rising, and the possibility to file complaints. Things like that.

*In what areas can these changes be observed?*

We don't claim to reach all women in Gewane woreda. It depends on our budget, we try to go deep into rural areas, and we try to create awareness. Sometimes we give them some training. But our budget is very small. There are some NGOs who help our office. We do what we can, but we don't claim to reach everybody and we are not able to change everybody.

*Maybe more from your personal opinion, what do you think how far do these changes reach?*

This requires a huge budget. Because of this deep rooted culture, I cannot sit here and tell you that there is going to be a huge change. This requires a lot of work and a lot of budget and I cannot sit here and tell you everything is changing. There is a change, but very slowly. It's something that has been there for a very long time and people just have their own point of view. Even if the government is trying to influence the process, this requires everybody's interest. All stakeholders need to contribute something to bring change.

*We talked a little bit about the tradition of absuma. Are there other traditions that cause problems for women?*

Besides *absuma* I feel the FGM is another huge problem for Afar women. From the time they are being circumcised this FGM is causing Afar women a lot of suffering. When they give birth, again it causes them a lot of suffering. But now it is changing, they only cut a little bit of the clitoris. My office is trying to do everything it can to stop it, but I am sure it hasn't been stopped. We don't allow them to do it in the open, but I am sure they still do it hiding.

*What is your personal opinion on absuma?*

I would never say that it needs to be completely abandoned. *Absuma* has advantages and disadvantages. Me, I support the *absuma* when we talk about its advantages. Of course, if I talk about the disadvantages, I also support, that young girls do not have to marry very old men anymore. But if we talk about the good things, for example, a handicapped woman will always have a husband, that's a good thing. Regardless of their wealth, women and men will always have a husband or a wife. Nobody will look down on them. They will always have a partner. Maybe that has something to do with the fact that Afar women are never prostitutes, they have

always a partner they stay with. Regardless of your wealth status, you will have a partner. If an Afar man marries a highland girl, the only way is if he is wealthy. The reason I say the absuma marriage is good is because regardless of your looks you can get married and have children. Also, handicapped people can get married. Of course it has its disadvantages; there are young girls who would rather kill themselves drinking poison than to marry a way older guy. This is something I cannot support. But overall it also has advantages. It is Afar culture, as long as the girl marries an absuma that she likes, it is an excellent thing.

*Do you think it is only about the age, can't it be that even though the absumas have the same age they don't like each other due to other reasons?*

Yes, like you said, there are cases where the girl didn't like her husband even though they had the same age. When they have never seen each other before, they come from somewhere else and the marriage is arranged, and they try to make them marry. There are cases where the girl gets surprised and the girl doesn't want to marry the guy. If the boy and the girl grew up together, they know each other, and then they are absumas and they like each other; in that case it is the perfect situation. But cases like you said, when even though they have the same age, although they are the same age, but she doesn't like him, it is not always about the age difference.

*What do you think are the main problems women are facing today?*

In spite of all the challenges, according to me, what the Afar women need today is capacity building. They need to do what they like to fight the challenges they are facing. Another thing is education, education is a very important thing. We try to give them trainings, they need to be trained. Our capacity is limited, but they need help.

*Where does your office mainly get the money from?*

The budget that is allocated to our office from the regional government is only for overhead costs like paying for the office workers, salaries, it is not a lot. Sometimes NGOs like Rohi Weddu, AMREF they try to provide us with capacity. It is not enough. The NGOs who come to work with us they come not often, they come whenever they wish to come.

*Are you mainly working with your assistant we saw today or are there other people working for you office?*

Under me I have five experts, 3 women and 2 men. One woman is on maternal leave.

*Are they all Afar?*

The three women are highlanders. My assistant you saw today, even though he is a highlander, he feels very strongly about women's issues, the only thing is that he is

not a woman, but he feels very strongly for them. Sometimes he is even better than me in defending the women.

*Working with the highlanders in the cases of the Afar women is not causing problems due to the different cultures?*

Our office is small. My assistant works with guidance; he does what he is supposed to do. Sometimes when I am away, and there are issues coming up, he will call me because I am his boss and I will give him advice.

*I would like to come back to the income earning activities we talked about earlier. Does this change something in the power relation between men and women?*

In the past the main responsibility of women was to perform household chores and sometimes also to look after animals. But because things are changing over time, women now also become bread winner like men. They now also have to worry about sending children to school it's also becoming more and more the chore of women. They are becoming more and more independent. Women are also getting involved in petty trading and then they are the once who are bringing income, money into the household, it's not longer only the men. This increases the responsibility of women. Men and women are sharing responsibilities now a day.

*I would like to talk with you about the charcoal business. Have you heard about the rape cases?*

Yes, there are some rape cases of Afar women being raped by the Wolaytas. Even for myself I don't want to walk by myself. There were cases when Afar women were raped and nobody was caught, they just went into the forest and disappeared. There were some who were captured and taken to prison. Who ever told you about it was not lying. It is a serious problem for Afar women.

*Is this also a problem inside or close to the cities?*

Near the towns and cities it is not a problem. They come here to enjoy themselves, to get intoxicated. In the towns there is police. The biggest problem is deep inside the rural areas. Sometimes the Afar women come here to buy there things, while walking here, they can be attacked. The biggest problem is deep in the woods where nobody can see them.

*I would like to talk to you about the migration to Djibouti. What can you tell me about women who go to Djibouti?*

There is a big change. In the past when Afar women didn't know about their rights here, they went to Djibouti because they thought everything is better there. But with the changing knowledge about their rights they stay here because they can do things here. With the overall change they can see that they can do things here and they can

change their lives. They can do what they want, they can make money here. Of course, in the past because of these forced marriages, women used to go to Djibouti. Even now, there might be a few who are still going there, girls from deep rural areas who don't know about their rights. But generally I can say that it is decreasing.

*The women who still go, do they come back after a certain time?*

Those who went a long time ago, they could have established a family there and stay there. The ones who went recently, they might come back to Afar.

*I could keep talking to you for hours, but we have to stop because I need to go to Molale. But maybe I can ask one last question. When was your office first established and when did you start to work there?*

I started working there more than three years ago, but the office has been there since the regional government was established some 20 years ago. Before me, there was an old woman uneducated. There is a big change. You don't have to believe me but you can ask people. I am sure when you went to my office there were tables and chairs, before there was nothing, I am trying my best. Everything that concerns women is my issue as well. I want to thank you to come here and talk to me.

*I thank you for the time you took to talk to me. I wish you all the best and a lot of strength for the great work you are doing! Gadage.*

### **Annex 3: Interview with Arbai Ali Kamil, settled, living of petty trading and livestock**

The interview was conducted on the 9<sup>th</sup> of April 2014 in Arbai's Afar ari in Adgora in the morning. The interview was translated by Abdulkadir Hassen, it was the first interview we conducted together. Arbai is living from the gedayta mats she produces and livestock. Her household is fairly rich with a monthly income from her husband, her engagement in petty trading and the camel, cattle and shoats which found the livelihood basis of the household.

*My name is Helena. I came here to talk to you because I am interested in the life of Afar women. Can you tell me about your life? Where are you born? What is your name? Everything you can think of is interesting for me.*

I was born in Amasaburi<sup>12</sup>. My name is Arbai Ali Kamil. I was born and raised here. I have a husband. He just had breakfast, and then he went to work. He works at the Cobony<sup>13</sup>. I can talk about the Afar women.

*How old are you? In which time were you born?*

Ohh, I don't know. We don't have a calendar like the Amharic people. I must be around 45 years old.

*Can you describe a "normal" day in your life for me?*

We do everything without a rest. The only time I get rest is at night, when I go to bed, when I sleep. To make the gedayta mats, we have to cut the gedayta grass first. We have to climb the hill behind the house to find fire wood. We have to go to the Awash River (2 to 3 km) to fetch water. We don't have a bore hole or hand pumps. Other things are simple, like cooking and the household. The hardest thing is making the gedayta mats.

*Do you collect fire wood only for yourself or also for selling?*

Yes, only for the cooking. We do not sell it. Women suffer from the heavy weight of the gedayta, the fire wood and the water that we have to carry on our backs. Many women suffer from back injuries and kidney injuries. Some of the women even die because of that hardship.

*Do you go several times a day to fetch water and find fire wood?*

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<sup>12</sup> Another name of Adgora

<sup>13</sup> Meaning the investor

This depends on the situation, between two and three times. If we have to wetted the mats or wash clothes we have to go more often.

*How many jerry cans can you carry at once (5 liters)?*

Three on the back and one in each hand.

*When do you make the gedayta mats?*

During the day we have to make the little robes we use to connect the gedayta stems. We do this in the shade. Usually it is better to do it in later afternoon or at night in the shade where it is cool.

*What do you use to make the robe?*

(Showing how she makes the robes on her legs, twisting with her hands. They take the skin of the gedayta grass, its twisted together and used as robe.)

*How long does it take to finish one gedayta mat?*

It depends on the strength of the women. Some are stronger and faster than others. For me, I need two days to finish one. In a good week I make three. A woman who is able to make four in one week is very efficient and fast.

*In between you have to cook for everybody?*

Of cause, the big problem with the gedayta mats is that they need a lot of water; we have to wetted them all the time. When they get to dry they will break. The water is not only for drinking but also for other things like the gedayta.

*How many jerry cans you need every day?*

In a given day, I need at least seven. Sometimes, when we have enough money, we buy water from Mataka, a 25 liter jerry can for three Birr. They bring it to Amasaburi by horse.

*You have to go at least twice a day to fetch water then?*

Yes.

*Do you live with your husband in this house?*

I do not have my own children. But my husband has children from his previous wife. My husband has four sons. One of them herds the camels, one has an amputated arm, and one herds the shoats (the youngest one).

*So, your husband has two wives?*

No, not anymore. His first wife left and went to Djibouti about ten years ago. She refused him and left. When my previous husband died, I had to marry my husband's brother or his closest relative, this is Afar culture. So, I married my husband's cousin, he is now my husband. The idea is that the children still have a father and do not have to live with a stranger.

*Why did your first husband die?*

Of natural causes. We used to have a lot of livestock. In the drought/ famine of 1984 (Matalea), foreigners began to give us food aid. But my husband could not get used to that kind of food; he was used to drink milk from our livestock. He was not sick for a long time. He just could not eat that kind of food, he was not used to it and he could not get used to it.

*Are there other things you can think of that you do during the day, besides the gedayta mats?*

The gedayta mats are my only source of income, so this takes most of my day.

*When did you start to make the gedayta mats?*

I have always made gedayta mats. At the place where we cut the gedayta, the swamp is this high (pointing just over here hip). We have to go deep into the swamp. But the gedayta mats are my only source of income. It takes a lot of time, it is labor intensive. It is no easy task.

*How much money can you earn with one gedayta?*

Sometimes 150 Birr, sometimes 140 Birr, it depends of the time and the buyers. The reason that we sell it for such a high price is that we are at high risk when we are cutting the gedayta grass; we are at risk to get attacked by the crocodiles or pythons. All kinds of dangers are out there. This is why we have to sell it for such a high price.

*How many do you sell per week?*

The process of making the gedayta mats takes long. First we have to cut the gedayta grass, then we have to dry it, we have to make the robes, it takes about two days. It also takes a lot of strength. Some women are stronger than me. It depends on the strength of the woman. But I can sell three per week. Some women who are stronger they can sell four mats or more.

*How do you organize the gedayta making and selling, do women work together?*

No, every woman works for herself. Selling the gedayta mat is by luck.

*If you put the mat in the road, how do you know if someone wants to buy it?*



There are women along the asphalt. If someone stops and likes my mat, they will take the money and give it to me.

*Can you keep the money for yourself?*

Besides the money I spend for the household, I give the money to my husband. My husband chews khat, he needs money for this.

*Why does he not use his own money?*

Because we chew together, I also chew khat. I will not hide that I am also chewing. When I chew khat, I feel energized and I can work faster and more efficiently.

*Some money you take for your own khat and some you give to your husband?*

As an example, if I get 150 Birr from selling one gedayta mat, than I use 50 Birr for the household, things like sugar, salt, flour and *hashera* (tea from the shell of the coffee bean). The 100 remaining Birr I give to my husband.

*Do you use the 50 Birr also to buy khat for yourself?*

No we buy the khat with the remaining 100 Birr. Those 100 Birr have to be enough for several days.

*What kind of livestock do you own?*

We have 24 shoats. The youngest son of my husband takes care of them. About 40 camels, praise Allah, my husband's oldest son and my husband's brother take care of the camels. We have between 10 and 15 cattle, we do not count.

*You said your husband is working for the investor, so he is not taking care of the livestock?*

He is a guard at the sesame farm. He protects the farm. He receives a monthly salary.

*Do you also sell livestock?*

We sell mostly shoats. They are easier to sell. We buy food from the money. We sell them in Mataka. We buy sacks of wheat from the money. Recently, we have not sold any camels.<sup>14</sup>

*Do you have to buy additional food or can you live from your livestock?*

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<sup>14</sup> Comment Abdulkadir: shoats are easier to sell because there is no market for camels, they have to go to Chiffra, and shoats can be sold in Mataka. Camels are normally only sold when the household wants to buy something really expensive like weapons

We mostly buy maize; there is a grind mill (machine) on the other side of the road. We can go there so they make maize flour out of it. We use the flour to make Afar Gaambo.<sup>15</sup>

*What are the main problems for women today?*

Fetching water is a problem, because the river is far away. Collecting fire wood from the hill is also a problem. The production of gedayta mats is very hard work, especially when we have to go to the swamp. But even afterwards it is a lot of work, we have to dry the gedayta, we have to trim it. Sometimes the conflict between Issa and Afar is causing problems for us, when you go and search for fire wood.

*Is the Issa-Afar conflict a problem right now?*

In Gewane area there is a peace agreement between the Afar and the Issa. But in this area, there are still problems. It is not peaceful.

*What other problems can you think of?*

We have a lot of problems. We have a huge problem, because of the food shortage. As pastoralists we used to make our living out of the livestock. But today there is less pasture, because of the droughts. In the mountains there is not enough grass anymore. Our livestock does not have any milk anymore. There is a huge shortage of pasture land.

*Is this a permanent settlement?*

Yes, it is a permanent settlement. Most of the time, the camels are not coming close to the settlement because of the conflict between Issa and Afar. They only come during the rainy season when there is enough pastureland. For the rest of the year they go far away in the south until they find pasture land. We only get camel milk when they come here during rainy season.

*What are the main health issues among the Afar women?*

Malaria, Typhus, Ulcer. In the old good times, we did not have any disease like Ulcer; it is caused by the food we have to eat now.

*Did you hear of the Prosopis tree? If so, what can you tell me about it?*

Do not start to talk about the Woyanne Harar. It is like a curse from Allah. Because of that tree the Afar became poor people. There are many Afar people who are without livestock today. Not like my family, many Afar do not have any livestock anymore.

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<sup>15</sup> traditional Afar bread

*Does the Woyanne tree affect you when you collect fire wood or fetch water?*

In my case, it is not blocking any roads. The investors clear the pathways.

*What about the livestock? Is the livestock affected? And are there any risks for human beings?*

The thorn is poisonous. One time the foot of my husband got infected. It is a very dangerous tree. It does affect us. The thorn is dangerous for us. The animals are also affected, they get Harmaku.

*How do you treat the infections?*

We go to the health center, they treat it with antibiotics. Other than going to the clinic there is no other treatment.

*Are you affected by the charcoal business?*

The only way we can directly benefit from the charcoal business is when my stepson helps to load and unload the ISUZU trucks. He is paid for it. Besides that we are not part of the charcoal business. For my stepson it's a daily labor. Besides that there is no benefit for us.

*You said that your husband's first wife went to Djibouri. Why did she leave?*

Most of the women they hear that they can earn money in Djibouti so they go out of a desire. My husband's ex-wife, she did not like my husband, so she left. She is a money-woman.

*Your husband did not try to stop her?*

He couldn't. She did not like him. She is a woman of money.

*Are there women who go to Djibouti and return back here afterwards?*

I can only think of two women who returned. Most of them they just leave. My husband's ex-wife she got married in Djibouti and had kids. Many of them stay there.

*Do most of the women go before or after they are married?*

Most of them go after they have been married. From my clan there are not so many women who go to Djibouti. But in general a lot of women go after they have been married. Mostly, they go there refusing the early marriage. Also, they go to Djibouti so they do not have to marry so early, this is what we hear from Awash. The women refuse to marry there Absuma.

*What do you think is the women's work harder than the work of the men? What do you think about the work of the men?*

Of course, the burden is on the women. What do the men do? They come and eat here; they go and hang around in the towns. When the khat time comes they just sit around and chew khat. What else do they do? Then when they come back, all they say is "Ey, woman, can't you give me some water?" Only the men who go with the livestock, they are also working hard.

*What role do women have in the decision making? Who decides for instance what the money is used for?*

(Abdulkadir explains the word *decision-making* to her) Livestock is protected by the fence. Women are protected by their husbands. Therefore, decisions are taken by the husband. Our husband is our shield. We will obey to what they say. A respectful Afar woman, if she wants to go somewhere, she has to ask permission from her husband. If he says no, she cannot go.

*What do you think about women who are moving to the cities?*

In the city there are no women who own shops or hotels. There are only highlander women, they are not Afar women. There are some women like me who sell gedayta mats.

*Gadage!*

#### **Annex 4: Interview with Detona, Mohammed's father, well respected Afar**

The interview was conducted on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 2014 in Detona's house in Gewane in the afternoon. The interview was translated by Abdulkadir Hassen. Detona is a well respected Afar man in Gewane. Many Afar come to his house to find advice. I lived in Detona's house during the time of my field visit.

*Detona, within the last three weeks Mohammed explained to you what I am doing here. To tell you personally, I came here out of research reasons. First, I was mainly interested in the gender aspects of *Prosopis juliflora*. But, I am especially interested in the lives of Afar women and the changes they are facing. But I am also interested in the men's lives and their opinions about ongoing changes. So, I would like to talk to you about your life, if you are willing to talk to me.*

Asa Medina<sup>16</sup>, I am ready to talk to you about anything.

*Please tell me everything you would like to tell me about yourself and your biography.*

I was born and grew up in Zone 1 in Afambo woreda in an area that is called Gamri. I was born and raised there. As a young man I was a player, I was a womanizer. And then I got married to my absuma. For reasons that I don't understand, she hated me. She refused me. I was so upset; I was wondering what was wrong with me so women don't want to marry me. I decided to leave the area where I was embarrassed. My own absuma refused to marry me, everybody knew that and they thought there must be something wrong with me. So I decided to go somewhere where nobody knows me. This is how I came to Baadu. At that time Baadu was an unbelievable place. When I came here I didn't have livestock, all my livestock, and my pastoralist history stayed behind me. When I came here, I started to sell khat. At the time I had some money, when I came here first. Women didn't know me when I came here, they used to like me, and they called me Yina Detona, meaning something like Detona the great. I was involved in the khat business. Men also used to respect me. When they complemented me, when they said something nice to me, I sometime gave them khat for free or on a loan thinking that they would pay me back. This is how I got bankrupted. After that I started selling the owners khat. I used to get paid 5 Birr per day. But that 5 Birr at that time was worth the 500 Birr of today, because of the inflation. There was this guy named Ali, who was married to my wife. They had a daughter together. At that time, she was a very strong lady. That Ali guy, he started to run around messing with other women. She started getting jealous. One day, because she expected him to fool around, and she was about to kill him, she was really tuff. He ran away and then she got divorced. But she went with her daughter to

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<sup>16</sup> Detona called me *Asa Medina* throughout my stay in Baadu. It is my local Afar name which was adapted by the neighbors. *Asa* is the Afar word for *red* and refers to my skin color, while *Medina* refers to the holy Islamic city of *Medina* in Saudi Arabia.

her family. I married her afterwards. His daughter became my daughter. She didn't even know him, she never called him daddy. Until this day, she calls me daddy. What she has done for me, she never did for her biological father. She helped me raising all these children calling me daddy. Thanks to my Sarah, she helped me raise all these children. I never owned any livestock, because it stayed back when I moved to Baadu. I earned my life by selling khat.

*I heard that you were also involved in the government sector and that you used to teach Afar language.*

You are right. What happened is that I was employed by APDA by Malika. Some 10 years ago she came and she wanted to teach Afar language. I was given training in Adgora and I started to teach Afar alphabet and language. I was pretty good at it, but the salary was only 300 Birr per month at that time. Malika used to have a great deal of respect for me because I was doing a good job. But after a while, I decided to work in Djibouti for some personal reasons. So I asked my son Mohammed to replace me at my work. After a while Malika heard about it and she came asking 'Where is Detona?' but I had told Mohammed to tell her the truth don't lie to her in case that she would be asking for me. When she was asking for me, there was no way they could have hid my absence. She became so upset that she fired me. She gave me the termination letter. When I came back, the woreda people were really upset because they couldn't think of anyone better than me to teach Afar language. They tried to support me. They had a budget and they opened an education bureau and they hired me to teach the Afar language. At the time I used to get paid 300 Birr, today I get 800 Birr.

*Do you still work?*

Despite of my health I try to go and work. Thanks to what I did in the past, I was a pioneer in the teaching of Afar language in this area back then. Although these days I am physically not fit to go to school and teach I receive my salary. But the woreda people they know what I distributed so I still get my salary. They say that there is no way they can stop to pay me even though I am not working anymore. When Malika first came here she told me as an outreach school, I should teach Afar language, it was not an official school. She told me to teach under a tree. But I told her why don't we teach in the school after the regular school time is over? Malika didn't think this would be possible, but I started teaching in the school after hour. One day Malika came with all these white donors, more than 20 of them. They were so happy, they took picture and everybody was very happy. When I was teaching the kids the Afar language they used to laugh about me, when I said 'a' they used to say 'e'. They never thought this was real. But today they are very grateful, some of them have high positions, they are grateful whenever they see me.

*To me it seems like you are a much appreciated man in the society with a lot of knowledge. I would like to ask you what kind of changes you can observe in the Afar society that are affecting the people?*

That is a good question. When it comes to the history of Baadu, I cannot tell that in a short story. Baadu had brave leaders. People used to love each other, they were so brave and they were such brave worriers, their forces used to go as far as Gobadi and Djibouti to fight the French colonialists in Djibouti. In histories they write about the forces of these people. At that time people had love for each other. The history of Baadus braveness is exceptional, not even Awsa or any other region has such a history like Baadu when it comes to bravery. Because they have a unity, they have love for each other; they have respect for each other because they have such strong and brave leaders. Today people have become materialists. When people become materialists the love that used to bind them together gets broken. They have become materialists to the point where they fight against each other. I am really sad that things have changed for the worse.

*What does that change do to the relation between men and women?*

To be honest with you, I noticed some changes when it comes to the rights of women. In the past women when they gave water to their husband they would never pass it to him standing, she would always sit down to pass it on to him. Women in the past were not allowed to inherit their father's things, except maybe when their father died they may have a little bit. For me today, I see women enjoy better freedom than in the past. I see that as a positive development.

*(A break is taken because Detona leaves to go to the mosque for his prayer. The interview is continued after two hours.)*

*We were talking about the changes which can be observed in the Afar society and about the influence of these changes on women. Can you tell me about changes you can observe in the Afar society which can be related to Afar women?*

The other change I can speak of when it comes to women's rights is that in the past women absolutely had no say when it came to their marriage. It was either her father or her uncle who decided. No one would ask them about their willingness or their consent who they are supposed to marry. In the past that was purely the decision of someone else. Today that has changed. In the past, women were forced to marry someone who was older than them. Today, that has changed to some extent. Today women are asked whom they want to marry, they are asked about their consent. They know more and more about their rights, there are places they can go to where they can fight for their rights.

*Do you think this is a good development? What is your opinion about the absuma tradition?*

The good thing I like about absuma is that everybody regardless of their wealth status can get married. Even if he is poor he can still have children. Being poor does not mean that a man can't get married, he has his absuma and then the clan tributes for him and he can have children. And in that sense it is a good thing. People who otherwise would never have had children, because of their absuma they can have children. Having children is very important for the continuity of the Afar tribe.

*What about your own daughters, will they marry their absuma?*

Now it is no longer my decision, my hand is out of it. When I was young I had the opinion that I have to decide. But things have changed, I have changed. The good thing about absuma is that it makes the family strong. If I let my daughters marry their own cousin then the family bond gets stronger. But when she marries someone from the outside, he will not care and the bond loses strength. If she brings someone from the outside, he is not your relative but illo, not your relative. I know with times things change. For my own daughter I chose someone I thought was suitable for her. She accepted my will and she had my grandson Ali, he is living with us right now. After that she said she didn't like her husband. So I had to allow her to leave her husband, I couldn't fight her anymore. Even when he came here to negotiate with me, I told him that it is no longer in my hands; she has to decide on her own.

*Did she get married again?*

See, that is the problem, now she is without a husband. She has problems finding a husband. In the past people always wanted to have family of their own. It was the nature of them wanting to have children. Now things have changed and people care more about other things. Nobody is coming after my daughter even though she is still young.

*What is it they care more about today, instead of caring about having a family on their own?*

In the past we always wanted to start a family. Now, people are turning into materialists, they are after money.

*I know from my past interviews that it is not only men who engage in income-earning activities but that it is also women. What do you think about this development?*

For me that is also a sign of development. In my view it is a good thing that women start to contribute to the overall income of the family. For me, this is a good thing.

*I would like to change the topic and talk to you about Prosopis. What is your opinion on Prosopis? Does it have different affects on men and women?*

Since the implementation of Woyanne tree, just until now, we always had the feeling that it is a bad tree. It has no good, absolutely no use, except of destroying all the



animals. First when the animals ate the pods, the dung of the animals made the tree spread really fast. We always felt there is nothing good with that tree. But recently, the tree of which we always thought had only negative aspects, we can see today that there are also some positive things. People started to make charcoal out of that tree. People who are making charcoal, those who have totally lost their livestock, they use the tree to make charcoal. They use the money to buy new shoats, guns, houses like this or trucks. Things like that are changing the view. Instead of thinking that this is an evil tree, there are also positive things about it. The perception about that tree is changing in that sense.

*Is it only individuals who can benefit from that tree?*

I mean the majority of the Afar is still pastoralists living out of the animals. In the past all the Afars thought this tree doesn't have anything good about it. But at least some people started to take some benefits out of it. Of course there are those who are selfish and they don't care about their relatives, but the majority of the Afar keeps their culture of sharing. There are some good Afar who help at least their closest relatives. So at least in that the perception is changing. But the majority of Afar is still pastoralists.

*What kind of future do you see for those who are still pastoralists?*

For as long as the Afars keep their animals, pastoralism I think will continue. The reason I say so is that if peace could be established between Afar and Issa, the peace is very important for the Afar. If a lasting peace could be made, Afar could make a good living out of their animals. It is *haram* for Muslims to kill each other it is *haram* for Muslims to steal from each other. If they make peace there is enough land and water for both of them. Whatever money is coming out of charcoal, the Afars would be better off in pastoralism. A lasting peace needs to be achieved between these two brothers.

*What do you think this will do to the society if one part of the society keeps engaging in pastoralism and one part is moving to urban settlements or start to engage in agriculture? How does the diversification of livelihoods affect the Afar society in general?*

I think there are some changes that nobody can stop. In my view, pastoralism should exist within the Afar community. In order to be food secure, they should also engage in agro-pastoralism, like they are starting to do right now. For Afars it is also time to put their children into school, that is also important, but Afar also need to go with the time so they also need to have some urban settlements, we also need some urbanized Afar who live in the city. But that balance can be found, it is just a matter of adaptation to the new reality.

*I think I covered all of my questions, but if you have something you want to tell me that I didn't ask but you feel is important for me to know, I would like you to tell me about it.*

Like I said, I came from a faraway place. After living here for so many years, after I had all these children, my sister came looking for me. She was searching for me and searching for me and somehow she heard that I went to Gewane. Her husband he went here sometimes for the cattle market, because Baadu was well known for its cattle herds. So, when her husband wanted to go to Gewane, she came together with her husband. When she saw me she started crying and she kissed my hands and she asked me where I had been. Both her and her husband stayed with us for one week. And then she told me that she had to go back to the herds, but she said that she was going to take her nephews with her so they could take care of the livestock. I didn't want to disagree with her, so I said ok. That night my wife she had this nightmare. Whenever she woke up she asked 'Detona, she took all of them, right?' and when she woke up again she asked 'Detona, she took them all, right?' I told her 'but Fatu you agreed'. Also that night, Hussein, he was very close to his mother, he was very scared so he became sick. In the morning, when I came to say goodbye to them, Hussein stayed behind and she only took Mohammed and Jamal with her. Three month later I went there to see how they were doing. My sister asked me 'Why did you come here?' And I told her 'To be honest with you, in my heart I felt bad, that I let them go. I am a blind person because I never went to school; I am like a blind person. And I am afraid that my children will be blind just like me.' My sister felt really sad. But she was a wise lady and she understood what I meant and that education was something very important. And she said 'Ok, go ahead take them with you.' I did my best, except for Jamal who is in Djibouti and who is useless, I did what I could and I think they are alright. Now it is up to them they can take a job with the government or work for a NGO, they can do what they want. I am grateful for Allah and that they turned out the way they did, I like that. That is the interest I had for their education and that is what I wanted to tell you.

*It seems like everything worked out very well. Mohammed told me that people in the village (Gewane) say that if you want to see children who turned out well and you want to know how to do that you have to ask Detona, because his children are exceptional.*

Without having a proper job, I never had livestock. The only livestock we owned was hundreds of kilometers away. I raised my children selling khat to others. In that time khat came by bus, if I heard that the bus was broken for one day, I was scared. It is the work of Allah. All boys require is the strength of their parents, their love and discipline, they have to be disciplined. So today, I don't have worries. Today, not only me, also my sister is proud of them. She went to Djibouti, when she went to Djibouti even the useless Jamal and Sarah they took her with open hands. Look at them now she tells them 'Although my brother was lost, it turned out into something good.'

*I am very thankful for everything you just told me and I want to thank you from the bottom of my heard that you allow me to be part of your family. Gadage!!*

## **Annex 5: Citation Statement**

Ich versichere, dass ich die Arbeit selbstständig verfasst habe, dass ich keine anderen Quellen und Hilfsmittel als die angegebenen benutzt und die Stellen in der Arbeit, die anderen Werken dem Wortlaut oder dem Sinn nach entnommen sind, in jedem Fall als Entlehnung kenntlich gemacht habe. Das Gleiche gilt auch für beigegebene Zeichnungen, Kartenskizzen und Abbildungen.

Bonn, den 19. November 2014