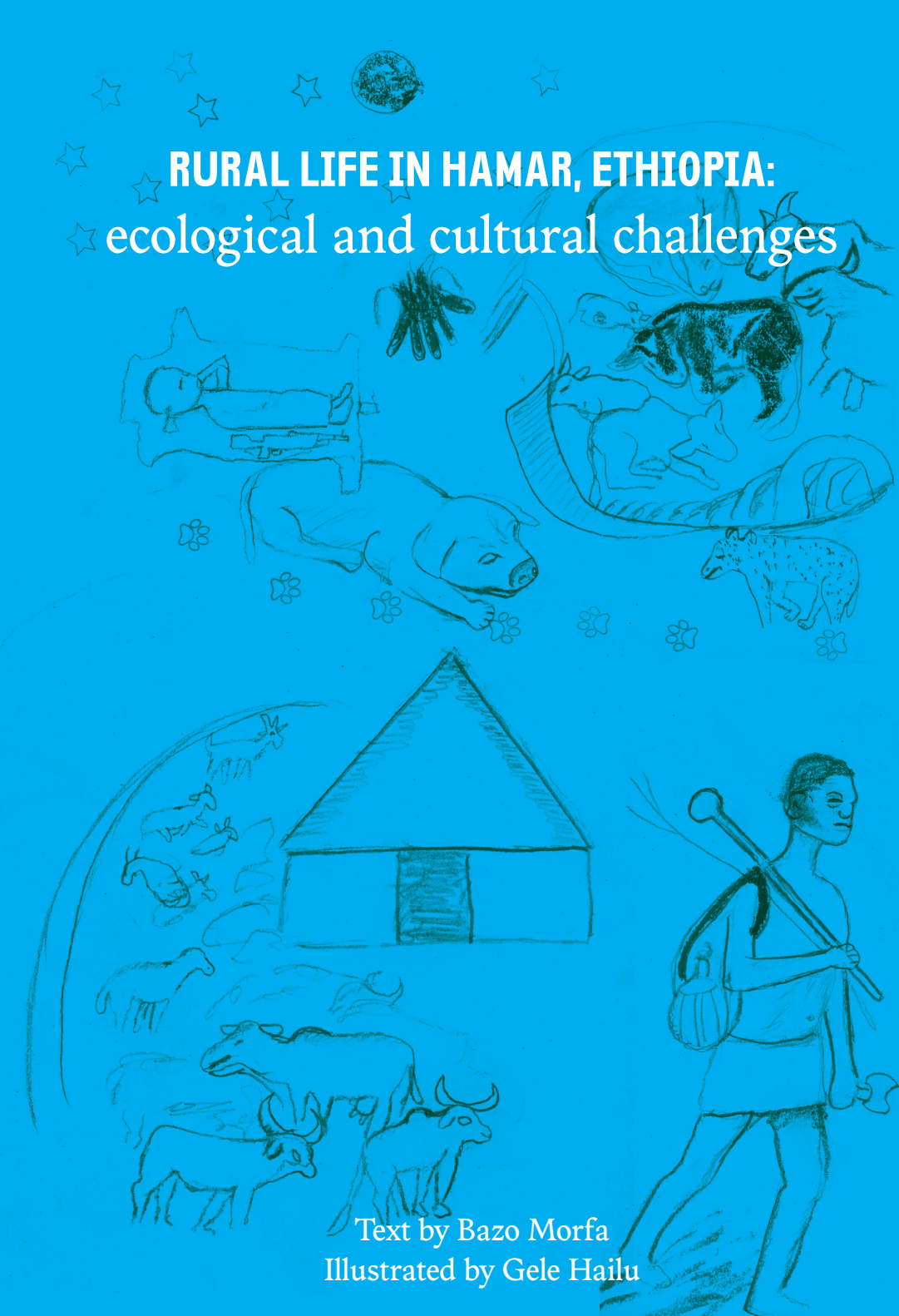


RURAL LIFE IN HAMAR, ETHIOPIA:
ecological and cultural challenges



Text by Bazo Morfa
Illustrated by Gele Hailu

INTRODUCTION

Bazo Morfa tells a story of the challenges that his family and the Hamar tribe face in Lower Omo Valley, Ethiopia. He comes from the Hamar community, however, he didn't follow the traditional path of pastoral life, and instead gained education and eventually left as a refugee.

He tells about the challenges that are brought by drought, climate change and conflict in the region. All of those add fuel to the local conflict between the traditional customs and demands for change. On the one hand, resistance to change has made Hamar one of the last and most well-known pastoral communities with vibrant local traditions and rituals. On the other hand, according to Bazo, it makes the community inflexible and unable to change in the face of changing circumstances and challenges.

Bazo was introduced to us via his Hamar friend Gele Hailu. Gele works as an artist in Rotterdam in the Myvillages studio. The Myvillages co-founder and artist Wapke Feenstra runs that studio and one day invited Bazo through Gele's smartphone to write about his current concerns in relation to the Hamar. Gele was asked to make drawings to illustrate the text and thereby teach us more about herding cows as that was his daily work as a youngster.

I kept the voice of Bazo in the text. The beautiful and peculiar way Bazo writes is a source of a lot of insight, too. He makes sharp observations of Hamar ways of life and current challenges. However, in order to navigate the text better, I added an index and subchapters.

Indra Gleizde
for Rural School of Economics by Myvillages
Rotterdam, 2022

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Bazo in an email to Wapke introduces himself, his conditions living as a refugee In Kenya.

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5 LIFE IN HAMAR, ILLUSTRATED STORY BY GELE HAILU

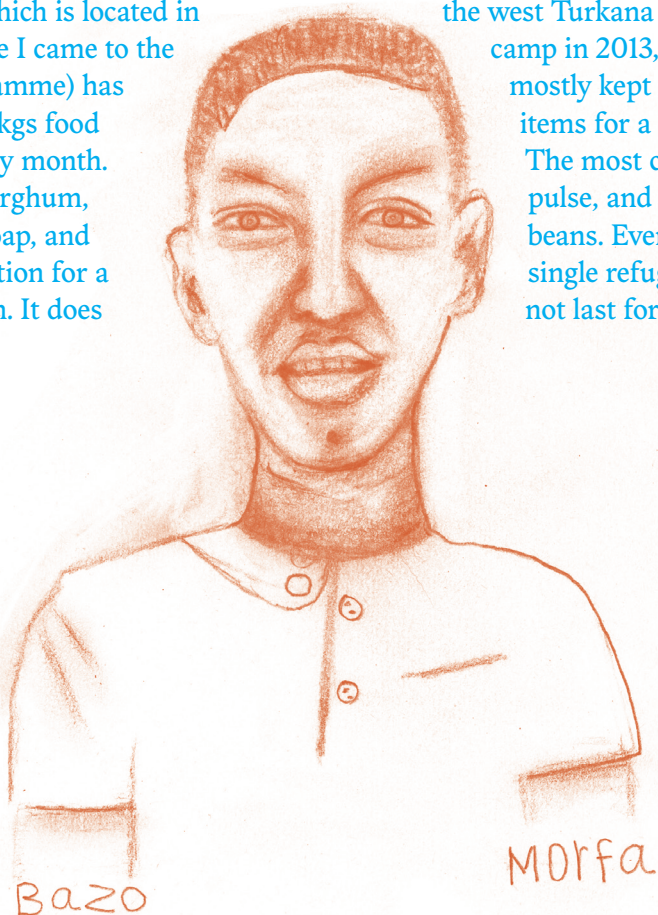
Gele illustrates Hamar customs and challenges through drawings, Bazo wrote captions that unpacks what we can see in them.

1 LIFE ON HOLD

I am Bazo Morfa Dalme, an Ethiopian national, currently staying in Kenya as a refugee. On 1 January 2013, I arrived in the camp and I was registered under UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees). It has now been eight years in Kenya as a refugee.

Due to protracted years in the camp without a durable solution, I am now desperate to leave, but nowhere to go. There is no difference between a prisoner and me. Life of difficulty, insecurity, protracted periods in the camp or Nairobi, stormy dust, extreme sun beating on head, frequent sickness, depression, recurrent hunger and alienation from home and family has taken me to misery and loss of hope. Now, my case is in progress, but slowly.

Regarding the camp situation, Kakuma is one of the biggest and known camps in Africa, which is located in the west Turkana County, Kenya. Since I came to the camp in 2013, WFP (World Food Programme) has mostly kept giving out three or six kgs food items for a single refugee like me every month. The most common food items are sorghum, pulse, and flour for soup, one soap, and beans. Every 3 kg is a weighted ration for a single refugee like me not last for even a week actually. It does actually.



Using and managing my ration is the biggest challenge that I cook little meals a day and eat little once or twice a day most. Sometimes I eat once a day. Some other days, I skip cooking or eating breakfast and lunch and eat only dinner in order to save and manage my little rations and use them until the next ration month. WFP provides refugees with rations. In the middle of a month or end of a month, my ration often run out and I face hunger in the camp. That is painful. At the end of every month, I sometimes feel sick because of hunger or shortage of food, gastritis, and accumulative stress etc.

Due to the deficiency of a balanced diet, my palms are sometimes cracking and removing their cover. Absence of firewood is another stress because my single bundle could not last for a month. Alternatively, I should buy some charcoal if I finish my firewood, which requires money. In general, lack of food is very bad because as I have observed that some more refugees have become very sick and passed away in the past years, and many refugees have been involved in unwanted activities such as theft, robbery and drug or alcohol dealing etc.

I feel blessed when I now recall what happened to many refugees who lost their lives. I mean that the unknown burglars and robbers attack many refugees in the last few years. Many people died and others become disabled forever. Scorpion bit me three times and I killed several of them. Again, I killed three snakes and rescued my life. However, God protected me from any temptation and I am still alive and strong. After arriving in Nairobi, when I recall those years, I really feel long-lasting person. That is one of my hopes.

When life is becoming a big learning curve for me, I have felt bad and become desperate and there was a time when I decided to dare to Mediterranean Sea to get to UK or Italy or commit suicide in the camp. For being in the refugee camp, I have really wasted my life and age as a young man due to no connection with potential helpers. These days, I am now trying my best to get out of the refugee life and be a man of dreamful in the future.

Due to this, I am tearfully seeking for parents like kind sponsors in the outside world. Regarding life in Nairobi, it is also hard for me to afford a comfortable and stable life. According to my dependency on a friend covering only my rent and food accommodation although it is hard and costly, I cannot enjoy enough meals such as meats, vegetables and fruits as they are expensive according to

my pocket or my living standard and this is another obstacle in life.

Besides, life in Nairobi is again difficult and expensive because of the foods, rent, and more emergency expenses related to medication and transportation within the city for case and process purpose and complaint, which are all costly and stressful. I am now staying in a cheaper room (bedsitter room), but depending on a friend every month is painful. My money for food is little and I do not have a job in Nairobi because the host country does not acknowledge refugees' identification documents for working in the country as citizens. All I can say is a refugee life means half-alive! I am not quite sure of my future. Because I have no power, nothing and I am not a decision maker in all my process and endeavors.

Family

My family is one of the extended households of the Hamar community in the South Omo Zone or Lower Omo valley in the southern region or Southern Nations Nationalities Peoples Region (SNNPR) in Ethiopia. This family has two divisions: children of the first and children of the second wife. The children of the second wife, including me, are the most vulnerable and discriminated against in the family. The young sons of the second wife, who are not economically firm, are leading this extended family, but they are currently unable to assist and feed all family members during this stressful time during drought.

Our father, Morfa, head of a bigger household passed away because of Anthrax disease fifteen years ago. He had two wives then. Quarreling and conflict is common among sons of two different mothers in Africa. The eldest son of the first wife took advantage of the small stepchildren from the second mother. The eldest son early and forcefully controlled all properties and inheritances, and he refused to share with the small stepsiblings from the second mother.

The eldest son moved to another settlement village with father's properties and inheritances (such as cattle, goats, sheep and beehives) and dumped us before we reached maturity age. These days, nothing has remained in the hands of my old mother and younger siblings.

As the family is still living under the illiterate, traditional, and academically undeveloped community, it is extremely tough for the young brothers (boys) to equally manage, inherit and share all properties and inheritances with the powerful eldest son or even resist and survive the recurrent drought and acute hunger in the area.

Regarding food concerns, our old mother and all smaller siblings are in an immediate need of continuous support or food relief until I get to Canada or start supporting them from Canada or until the Hamar area becomes rainy with ripe grains in the farms. However, for now, the family members are victims of both food and life insecurity in the area.

My Political Dissidence

My family has been under the pressure of local government officials since I politically fled the country. The local government leaders target my family

members and have prejudicial hatred towards my siblings and me due to my political disagreement with them. Mostly, my school brother has long been under threats and investigation of the law enforcement bodies due to my case and ideological difference.

During the day of election, the local police arbitrarily arrested him for a day and extensively interrogated him, but soon after hearing the news via messenger, I disclosed the conspiracy and fabricated case to all my favorable friends and I managed to drop the case through my own friendly connections and networks back homeland. The challenges are not always easy for my family members. It means that without my presence and support, nobody will care for my family in the area.

Drought, Climate Change and War in the Area



The major reason why my family has no food now is the recurrent drought, ongoing economic crisis, and war. Because of war, the price of food and grains has increased in the market and it is currently unaffordable by the poor and vulnerable people like my family. In Hamar, recurrent drought and hunger have sustained in the area for a decade-exaggeratedly more than fifteen years, but the drought along with hunger exacerbated in this year the most.

Almost all Hamar livestock (both cattle and goats including sheep) died in 2017 due to the severe acute drought that took place before and now causing scarcity of grass and green plants in the entire Hamar area.

This year, the extreme temperature is rising beside war and economic crisis. All over the regions and country, the number of internally displaced citizens from their residential area is rising in many more millions. The hand of the government for supporting these citizens

becomes short and the government seems to be running out of funds. Due to these general problems in the country, previously marginalized, neglected, and disintegrated pastoral communities like the Hamar existing in the far or outskirts called South Omo Zone or Lower Omo valley are intentionally dumped and ignored by the government.

Apart from this issue, global climate change and war has also influenced the availability of food for my family as well as the community. The Hamar territory had moderate weather in the past, which was conducive to better cultivation and plowing fields many years ago. Recently over twenty years ago, after global climate change occurred all over the continent and world, the low land part of Ethiopia, where pastoral, illiterate and minority communities are existing, became severely dry or drought or hunger prone in the region in particular and in the country in general. This unexpected change has drastically affected the lives of previously and economically vulnerable families like my family in the area. We do not have a good source of income from month to month or year to year. Both animals and humans are in danger in the area.

Concerning the rain seasons, there used to be an erratic rain once a year, but recently the rain has stopped dropping in the area. Formerly, the entire community used to rely on relief aid from the government sometimes, but since the government has been in a war while facing economic crisis in the last three years, life has been a big hurdle for the vulnerable and poor families like my family. Changing living conditions in Hamar land have been a big learning curve for the pastoral and illiterate people along with their upcoming students at primary and secondary levels.

The Ethiopian government has been busy in a war for the past three years. As Ethiopia's war rages, the pastoral area is still under the frequent drought and hunger. These days, the government does not have time to support hungry and needy pastoral people or victims of war because the war has taken all the allocated resources to defend the country from invaders and rebels going to collapse the country. Thus, the country is slowly sliding into hallowing and hell as many hectic situations are still taking place over there.

The Hamar Land

The Hamar land is full of hills and plains with rugged lands, chained mountains, and Stream Rivers. The Hamar land requires energy and labour

to develop agriculturally and academically. It is impossible to use irrigation in Hamar land unless irrigation works in two places where some Hamar clique usually cultivate with Kara tribe in Omo river and some other groups of Hamar access the small Woito river because the Stream Rivers are not continuous. Rather they come once the day when the rain dropped and wiped away in a day.

The overwhelming number of the livestock (such as cattle and goats) died in the year 2017 and tens of hundreds of the Hamar people lost their domestic animals. Still now, the majority of the community are in a grave life and they have not yet recovered their animal economy in the region. As illiteracy is at a rampant stage, people are in a danger zone if the global climate change persists in this way or if they do not find outside intervention.

Hamar Economy and My Family

In Hamar, the typical pastoral people, they don't keep money in the bank as the majority are still illiterate, who have difficulty in counting more money or have no trust in the Bank. This shows the Hamar are one of the last frontiers in this world. However, I have ended my precious life in a refugee country and do not have access to a better world like abroad.

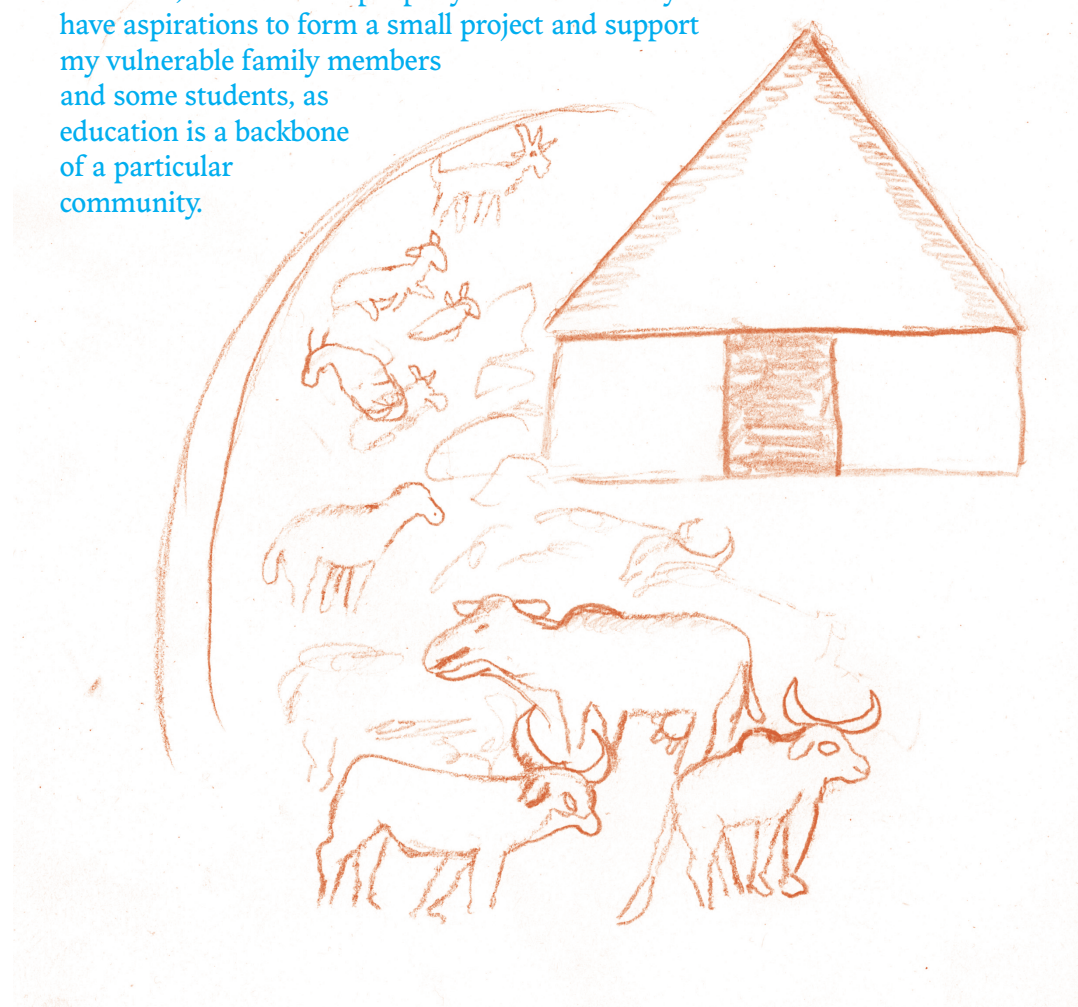
Differently, domestic animals mainly cattle, goats and sheep are their only assets or resources that they use for purchasing grains or exchanging goods during hunger and market days. Due to this setback, their only savings are domestic animals, but not Ethiopian currency. Once they lose domestic animals particularly cattle, goats and sheep, they will be economically and socially in danger. Nowadays, too many people have run mad, they are bewildered right now, and one of my brothers was to commit suicide last year due to the drought that wiped away all their livestock and left him in misery.

Uniquely, cattle are central to the Hamar economy. My mother and school brother are still tearfully pleading with me to raise more funds to purchase some female cattle such as calves, heifers and cows so that those young cows could breed more for my family in a few years. That sounds like a great idea, but I am financially broken these times as a refugee.

Recently, almost all cattle or cows died and the remaining few do not give milk to the family. Nevertheless, the remaining few cattle belong to our eldest stepbrother, who controlled all livestock and refused us our father's

inheritances. However, my mother, younger siblings, and I do not have cattle or cows because we have never inherited any property or asset from our father as he passed away suddenly.

The entire family members are still illiterate except one younger brother who is now at primary school while following my footsteps through school life. Suppose I am there or I am in Canada where I can work for daily wages, I could have assisted my family with my little salary or wage from the government or companies in some ways, but now I cannot at all. Because refugees like me are idle here unless they have a blood relatives living in abroad, who can set up a petty business in Kenya. I have aspirations to form a small project and support my vulnerable family members and some students, as education is a backbone of a particular community.



LAND USE AND OWNERSHIP IN HAMAR, ETHIOPIA

Traditional Pastoralism and Marginalization

To begin with, the Hamar is one of the typical pastoral communities in Ethiopia. Among other things, the Hamar is widely known by their fascinating ceremony called bull or cattle jumping and its rituals. As for lifestyle, they mostly depend on livestock rearing in their region, but cattle and goats are central to their economy and assets in general. According to their culture and custom, they do not count their livestock (both cattle and goats) in number. Because they historically believe in or think that counting, domestic animals cannot breed their livestock or counting domestic animals brings out poverty in general.

Until now, the Hamar exist in the outskirts of the old country where there is less or no access to development and civilization in the community. This means that the Hamar live in the remote area where they have long been marginalized, neglected, disintegrated, and impoverished in their region and country. Concerning farming, in the past, they used to cultivate their fields by using digging stick with their hands.

However, in this present day, they are less well familiar with improved plowing methods like plowing by using oxen or bulls as they use subsistence farming most. This is little improvement in lifestyle and farming methods is one-step and change in the community.

The major Hamar occupations are livestock herding, subsistence farming, and beehive keeping. They have remained as livestock keepers for many generations and centuries and their pastoral way of life is not conducive to the land use and ownership rule and program. Until today, the Hamar are moving from one place to another with their cattle, goats, and sheep in search of grazing green land and water.

This unstable and mobile lifestyle is resistant to the modern ways of lifestyle, that is, “land use and related techniques” used by developed and advanced communities or nations in Africa as well as in the world. Another factor that does not allow the Hamar community to adapt land use and ownership is, the community’s strict and tight culture, which is change and education resistant in the country.

Land Ownership and Management Through Discussion

Since the government demarcated the borders with the neighboring communities, the Hamar community has been under the arbitrary and free land only in their territory and they do not cross the borders of their neighboring tribes compared to the northern, eastern, and south central little developed nations in the country.

For centuries, the Hamar has not allowed either the government or themselves to own their land individually or communally as other developed communities. Instead, the land is free for any one. Having free farmland, free grazing land, free hunting land, free bare land, and arable land. The Hamar ever wish to live in their land freely. In relation to the rest of the world, they are not intact with other nations in the country let alone with the outside world, and they have long lived all alone in the corner of the country.

The Hamar has long scattered settlements that most homesteads or huts are set up alone in the bushes and shrubs in the commons area while other villages densely gathered in one area. Depending on their resettlement and accessibility of fertile land, any family can clear up nearby fields for cultivation. Unless it is reserved field by another family, any one is free to cultivate on any fields around or even graze the livestock in the surrounding areas of his/her homestead.

The rural village settlement in Hamar is not restricted by anyone or even by the government. A set of extended families can move from one area to another and set up their homes and cattle compounds there. One or more family can migrate to anywhere and build their homes in the mid of the forest as long as it is still the Hamar land. This internal migration shows there is no use or ownership of the land in Hamar territory.

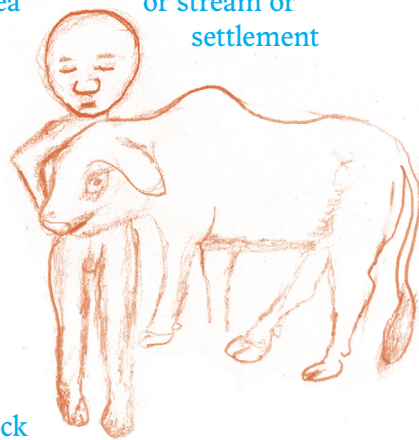
Not only setting up homes and clearing up cattle camps, the community is generally mobile and free in their territory. Regarding minor dispute issues at family or village level, unless the newcomers or new settlers make their homesteads on the gate or route of another existing family or on the way of a particular family, no one can prevent the newcomers or settlers from staying in or joining that area. This welcoming habit depicts freedom of movement and free use of land in their homeland. As far as I know so far, in a very rare case, existing settlers can refuse newcomers from staying anywhere in their area.

In this case, both groups prefer negotiation or discussion to agree on their differences and misunderstandings. It means that existing settlers or elders direct any newcomers to a right place where they can stay in or where they should take part.

This pity arrangement and designation happens when all existing villagers stay in one side in a particular area and leave the other side of the area for domestic animal rearing only. This is another way of designating and using land for settlement and grazing purpose through dialogue and discussion. This time, most elderly members of the existing villagers of that rural village can stand up for assigning, arranging, and designating the new settlers to stay in one side with the existing villagers.

The designation of a grazing land or farm fields for newcomers in a particular rural village can ever be considered as mutual understanding and reciprocity in the same community in order to use land and natural resources in proper manner and even set up settlement in appropriate way too. This way of arranging, assigning, and designating in among the different local residents is a land management and regulation through discussion and agreement among settlement elders and newcomers.

Other than existing village settlement issues made through discussion and agreement in rural villages, if the existing settlers also settle nearby or according to their interest spot in the area, where settlement along with livestock stall lined up one side in a particular area or stream or riverside, then newcomers should follow up the line of existing residents. In this rare case, the local residents can have their fields' or farms in one side. Moreover, any newcomer who wants to set up his/her homestead or join existing settlement with his/her cattle and goats stall must approach the existing settlers or residents mainly influential elders or orators. Then, when newcomers approach local residents, newcomers get a chance to reside in or join the commons settlement or local huts rather than having a livestock base near the farms with his/her livestock herds. This kind of arranged settlement helps the existing residents and newcomers to protect their common grains or farm plants from their livestock



and avoid any conflict among neighbors or village members. They usually use this method for land purpose for peace keeping among all residents including newcomers.

The Hamar are not familiar with the improved or modern land use and ownership system practiced by the developed communities and nations. Even the government raised this topic in the community a decade ago, but there was no practical rule. Instead, the land use and ownership technique used by the Hamar may still be based on negotiation and general norms of reciprocity. Having a vast land, the community depends on unregulated and unmanaged situations and seemingly demands to have open access to grazing land and natural resources ever. This means that the absence of rules for land and resource issue is in practice.

Access to grazing land and resource is very inclusive and communal in the community. For instance, the Hamar and Bashada, a dialect of Hamar, which are linguistically and culturally related community, use mutual understanding and agreeable management for grazing land and natural resources in Bashada territory. Besides, the decision making for this access to grazing land and resources can be decided and designated or can be put in practice through powerful chiefs, elders, and orators.

Sometimes, those individual chiefs and powerful elders can sanction newcomers seeking for joining new settlement site or grazing land if existing residents and newcomers do not come closer to each other in a peaceful dialogue. However, the main characteristic of the land issue resolution is through negotiation and dialogue process rather than using firm rules. Again, using interplay between individual elders is most accepted way rather than using strict rules again.

Conflicts Emerge Due to Lack of Fertile Lands

Some years ago, Bashada residents in particular had established and set an area that was conducive to grazing during the dry and drought season, but the majority group of the Hamar community living in other far settlement sites refused such issues and ideas, and pursued to graze their livestock in the protected areas. Nevertheless, this unethical habit created mild clashes between the Hamar herders and the government. In this case, there is a clear problem happening between the residents and newcomers. Mostly, physical conflict or stick fighting can happen.

HAMAR WOMEN'S RIGHTS OF INHERITANCE AND PROPERTY OVER MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

When local residents deny newcomers access to the grazing land, sometimes livestock holders (newcomers) may graze their livestock without permission. In this case, there is a clear problem happening between the residents and newcomers. Mostly, there may be physical fight or conflict. Others may involve in stick fighting which is harmful. Very rarely, there may be shooting. In this occasional conflict, someone can lose life if he is unlucky. However, in many cases, the community solves their misunderstandings and clashes through local elders.

Nowadays, productive land and existing forest in the area have drastically declined due to the recurrent drought, land degradation, soil erosion, overpopulation, lack of land conservation skill and so on. Most people are migrating from one settlement site to another in search of better productive land for grazing and crop yielding. However, it is very tough for illiterate communities to manage such natural calamities and other issues.

In Hamar, arable land cannot provide sufficient foods for the entire community because of the erratic and fluctuating rain caused by the unpredictable global climate change. In my view, a vast land is productive and fertile, but it lacks only abundant rainfall.

To fill this gap of marginalization and neglect along with mobile pastoralism, any humanitarian organization is highly invited by the Hamar people in order to come up with new techniques that could work on “land use and ownership rules and programs” in the Hamar community!



Traditions, Local Customs and Bull Jumping

The Hamar is one of the largest and widely known pastoral communities. Moving from one place to another seeking for grazing land and green grass is their lifestyle. They are much better known due to their ancient and impressive traditional ceremonies, rituals, and practices for centuries in the region as well as in the country.

The notable Hamar ceremony along with its rituals is the cattle jumping or Bull jumping or also called the leap over cattle ceremony. This generational ceremony is a rite of passage when an initiate (a boy or young man) passes from childhood into adulthood after leaping over a number of cattle lined up in order to go through intricate rituals and process and finally marry a wife. It is compulsory for any Hamar boy or young man to go through this funny process as long as he is with his family and community and pave the way for his younger brothers.

This rite is the most impressive and fascinating one that ever attracts the overwhelming number of tourists across the world and other interested citizens from other regions of the country including other Africans. Because of this leap over cattle or cattle jumping ceremony and interestingly well-decorated leather dress of women, the Hamar still becomes one of the top ten iconic and fascinating African tribes in the world.

Besides, another joyous characteristic of the Hamar is through their small local ensemble and their music, dance, or play. The evening dance or play is, Iban Gadi in Hamar language and sometimes called Ivan Gadi by non-native speakers. These music groups enjoy during the interesting harvest season when youths including small boys gather, dance, and play their traditional songs at night. The gathering for dancing is regardless of gender, but mostly young and adult groups come out daily. Only harvest season older groups and all groups gather and appear in dancing fields to exchange their long suppressed joyous, happiness and stories with every one coming from different distant locations.

Each Hamar village has its own ensemble called Gadin Ena meaning people of the music, dance, or play in Hamar language. If one village ensemble wants to hold a dancing race with another village ensemble, they usually exchange

pieces of rope knots and fix the day and time. The purpose of the appointment is that both groups share experience of music composing to be better off, songs' talent, and creativity during harvest and joyous seasons. In these seasons or even dancing days, the Hamar share favorite dance songs and public songs, stories, plays, funs, hunting campaign, any news, and war related events and so on.

Patrilineal Inheritance and Women's Status in Hamar

Practicing and experiencing the Hamar culture and overall lifestyle has highest value in the community. Due to this, any boy and youth is obliged to respect the culture and rituals. Regarding rights of inheritance and property, the culture has a male dominance in the entire community.

To begin with, all parents and children property inheritance is historically patrilineal system in the entire community. The boys inherit property and assets of parents in case one or both parents die, but not girls. As the Hamar is a traditional and livestock-rearing community, their main properties, or assets are cattle, goats, sheep, beehives, and subsistence farming. In addition, local trading is not widely common in Hamar.

However, a number of youths involve in petty trading such as domestic animal exchange, selling honey with calabash or other heavy containers, selling butters and milk. Other than this, few Hamar youths-both literate (primary school dropouts) and illiterate groups participate in transporting passengers or riding motorbike for daily business income and so on. Nevertheless, motorbike riding by local and illiterate youths for little business or daily income is a recent trend in the community after the major road infrastructure extended up to the countryside. This trend has brought up many incidences. For instance, several youths collided with trees and other obstacles and lost their lives in the last few years while training a motorbike at the beginning. Therefore, it has some risks for illiterate riders as I predict it.

When I come to the major standing point, which is women's inheritance and property rights in Hamar, it is the most problematic and complex issue in the entire community. Hence, compared to youth or men activities, most women are sadly vulnerable and victim. Illiteracy is one of the major factors for women remain in miserable condition in the community. A few illiterate women from the mountainous parts of the area are engaged in some petty

local trading such as selling some fruits such as bananas, pawpaw, sunflower, sesame, pumpkin, sorghum, maize, eggs, chicken and related items. Yet they still do not know how to count currency.

Other keen women existing in the mountainous area more tend to farming activities due to the rainy, and conducive and favorable climate to cultivation and farming activities. In addition, they have less well contact with few neighboring agriculturalist communities like Aari and Maale staying in the south Omo high lands, they share with their neighbors about farming, and marketable grains experience. However, the overwhelming numbers of Hamar women are widows after their husbands passed away. Only illiteracy, change resistance culture, disintegration, marginalization and extremely poor education system and lack of exposure to the outside world have long eroded their energy and potential to the last people in the world.

Historically, a single family or parents' use patrilineal system. In lineage and patrilineal system, the eldest son would be a head of the household in case one or both parents' pass away. Mostly, parents consider boys as pillars of the household and ancestry while the family or community regard girls as outside seeds germinating or breeding elsewhere for other male family or ancestry. Nevertheless, this does not mean those family or parents' and even community hates their girls.

The parents also unconditionally love their girls, maintain their lives, and fulfill their demands as long as they are part of the family and parents. In Hamar culture, girls are highly useful than boys in terms of being high income sources like bride-price and dowry, and even by increasing income of parents. This manifests that parents who have some more girls can gain more bride-price or dowry and improve their livelihood quicker than ones who have no girls. The eldest son would be a head and protector of the family or household only if one or both parents' die.

Gendered Inequalities and Violence in Families

Many short-tempered and aggressive husbands dump their women after disagreements and complicated relationships due to some reasons such as both parents disagreement after engagement through parents' consent, forced engagement, or marriage without parents' consent, early marriage, or age disparity, husband's threats on wife, etc. Moreover, after a wife is brutally and

severely beaten and in turn, the husband can rarely be severely beaten and attacked by her brothers and relatives and so on.

In this above case, separation can happen between husband and wife, but full of altercation and quarreling throughout their lifetimes of both parents. For instance, my father's brother-in-laws from his first wife severely attacked him, as they needed more bride-price or dowries from him. I was not born that time, but he used to keep telling us and he did not like brother-in-laws from his first wife. Only he liked brother-in-laws from his second wife-that is my mother.

Nevertheless, regarding sudden separation due to parents' interference or disagreement, both husband and wife appear in any ceremony and ritual that takes place in both parents. Despite the fact that they are separated, husband can declare to orally hand over her for his close male relatives or any man she likes to stay with. In this case, husband has no chance once he disagreed with both with her parents and his wife too and if her parents are in favor of her. Due to these and related engagement and marriage complications, most women have suffered abusive marriage and life complications.

Conversations About Gender Equality Among Hamar

In Ethiopia, there has been a growing attention to women's inheritance and property rights, but no proper implementation fully. The government's effort to eliminate discrimination and stigma against women has reached out to the Hamar women at local administration level in some ways, but it has not been in actual practice at far village or rural levels most. Two major reasons for this failure are marginalization from the present and past regimes and community's resistance of change and education. Due to this, many violent incidences and abuses have long taken place in the remote villages where the ritual chiefs, powerful orators, and dominant elders govern the entire community.

Almost in all rural areas, gender equality is not in practice yet and the women seem to be second-class groups in the entire community. From thirty years ago, the women issues have put emphasis due to the increasing number of discrimination and atrocities against the women in the community in particular and in the country in general. Particularly in Hamar community, gender equality issue is ever controversial and paradoxical because of the

ongoing cultural impacts. The male community elders and the government authorities and NGOs have long carried out many intense dialogues and debates, but they have still failed to curb and eradicate these harmful traditional practices.

Here is one real story: I still recall one of the heated community dialogues about men and women equality conducted by local government authorities. In that gathering, one of the hilarious argument I have ever heard about is, cock and hen analogy. At the last minute of five-day training and meeting, one fanatic and rigid elder, who is male dominance extremist, got a chance to talk on this hot issue.

These are his own words: "I was a male cock in my house and I used to crow first at midnight and then my wife got up and started making coffee for my honored elders coming from far and also my young children got up early and raid little calves and kids to connect with their mother cows and goats". "Now if the government brings such an unprecedented and complicated gender equality story to our honored traditional community, who will crow first then?" "Because every creature has a head of family or community, who are supposed to crow first and this seems naturally designed by God, but not by human beings like us," he added.

This analogy confused all government trainers and everybody paused for a while. Nevertheless, all local participants applauded high and they reaffirmed, "Yes, yes, yes, yes even animals and other creatures have naturally arranged a head or leader like cock, who is a head of family or household, often awakens the entire family or gives alarm voices first." When the trainers paused while meditating to answer the question logically with simulate saying, the local participants confusingly said, "The trainers or government bodies seem unable to answer this intriguing question so we better leave for our homes." Afterwards, very quickly the participants reluctantly dispersed themselves from the meetings and left the issue pending. This story manifests how the community is really challenged with their local indigenous knowledge and some trivial local analogies in order not to admit official mission of the government although the government officials come up with some stimulating dialogues and communications.

The government endeavors and community awareness to increase gender equality has not worked well at grass root level because the entire community

is illiterate and mobile pastorals in the region. Despite the government effort, after improving some of the harmful traditional practices over the past a decade, most of the listed out harmful traditional practices such as denial of women's inheritance and property rights, child abandoning, women beating during leap over cattle ceremony, early marriage and others are still relapsed in the community. This is a big challenge and concern in general!

Sporadically, the government and community involve in clashes and conflicts, one of which began in the recent year 2015. It was a few months tough conflict, which caused casualties from both sides. The underlying cause of the conflicts was the contradiction of the government law with the community customs and norms. For instance, the community norms support abducting women even from a town whereas the government laws don't allow such forcible habits.

Social Status and Circumstances of My Sisters

Despite all this, women including four of my sisters still head their households at this time. You cannot imagine! Only my eldest sister, who is a widow, is lucky in some way, as she has inherited most properties of her husband after his death. This fortune happened to her because all her husband's brothers died earlier. Despite her inheritance, she lost most of her livestock during conflict with the neighboring tribe at the border and acute drought year in 2017. These abrupt cattle raiding and drought have taken her down to poverty line.

Unlike my eldest sister, my second elder sister has still suffered threats from her husband's younger brother and she lost most inheritance and properties after her husband died. To make it worse, she lost her cattle and goats in performing some culturally divine rituals, which require celebration every few years. What helped her to gain few livestock was her husband passed away after two children were born. However, those divine based beliefs and celebrations consumed most of her cattle and goats over the past few years and she is now under a tragic situation.

A third one is my first younger sister, who married to an old man at the age of 13 and then reaching approximately 15 years, she encountered abduction and brutal beatings several times. Finally, she refused to stay with him and she ran away to me to the town administration where I was working with the local government by that time. Then with the help of me and some

cabinet members, she managed to stay alone although she separated with her boyfriend due to his alcohol drinking habit, but she finally fell in the hands of our poor mother. She has nothing with her and she lives life near our mother. Suppose I am there, I can assist her in some ways, but now she has ended up her precious life as a hustler. However, she still shows up smiling, loving and interesting faces and manner. I really like her very much. Even now, neither her husband nor eldest stepbrother supports her. Except my little younger brother, who is now under elementary school, and I. Our eldest stepbrother and other brother hate her for refusing her husband because they also lost bride price and dowry from her husband.

The Faith of My Mother - the Second Wife

Untold real story and tragedy of our family: The most epitome and exemplary case is our mother's one. My mother is the second wife of my father. Before her marriage, my father had a first wife who had two sons. The first son, who is our eldest stepbrother, is approximately around 45 years old. His younger brother, who is our second stepbrother, is around 40, but he passed away 14 years ago due to meningitis disease when the entire community faced an outbreak in the area. Actually, he was a good one, caring and loving than the one who is alive now.

When our father suddenly passed away due to anthrax disease some years back, we had everything or assets including enough cattle, countless goats and sheep, many more beehives kept on the trees, most of which were ready with honey. Only before my father passed away, had I enjoyed that incredible, healthy, happy, and lovely childhood with my parents and siblings. Soon after our father died, our eldest stepbrother forcibly inherited and controlled all the properties of my father and chased away my mother (second wife of my father) and all the children including me. I am the first son of my second mother, but a small child during that time.

Sadly, I had been in hunger and misery for more than ten years. That is the time when I hated my stepbrother and realized the negative side effects of being a child from second wife. My younger siblings kept crying throughout months and years due to hunger and stepbrother's routine threats. I was almost to hate being created and alive. Our stepbrother bribed all the villagers and controlled everyone so we were voiceless and weak deeply.

My mother focused on her hand-to-mouth cultivation for sorghum, maize, beans, and pumpkin while my illiterate younger siblings started cracking huge dry trees like acacia. They used to sell cracked long dry woods cheaply for town traders in order to earn little quarterly cash money while I knuckled down on my studies at primary school. That is how we have long survived and even reached today although I am still suffering in exile.

When daily threats and beatings affected my younger brother and abusing my mother was beyond my tolerance limit during my primary school years, I organized my poor mother and younger siblings to react and free ourselves at least from the eldest stepbrother's threats so we could face only hunger and poverty, but not human mistreatment.

My genuine reaction worked out and we managed to shake him successfully. Fortunately, a government administrator of the day was in a good mood with me so I reported the cases to government authorities and police and afterwards, the authorities separated us from our oppressive stepbrother. However, we are still together for households' ceremony and rituals, but no more support materially and financially. Still now, our reaction and misunderstandings are arising and existing.

My Dilemma Between Getting Education and Staying in Community

Eventually, I freed my mother and younger siblings after graduating from university in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. By that time, my mother was extremely shocked, heartbroken, sad, silent, weak, and humble as a poor woman. I was grade 9 student in Ethiopian education system or form one in British system, but unable to challenge traditional norms and customs.

During those years, even the community had less esteem for students because the community considered students including me as children or boys who denied the culture

of the community and assimilated into the others' culture and custom, lifestyle, and occupation. This was another influence on learners by those years. Only before did my father invincibly resist any sort of discrimination and pressure in order to educate me through school and modern life in town. That time I was in dilemma between traditional and modern life.

As for our eldest stepbrother behavior, he is extremely outrageous and wild in some ways and he does not even like education at all until now. Personally, he is extremely anti-education and change resistant. He had long kept threatening and abusing my mother. There was also a time when he cruelly pointed a gun at our mother and all of us, and threatened us deeply. We were small children and we were all scared of him. He has no love for us as we are from different mother and he thought that we might inherit or share some of our father's properties. His hatred towards education and change and his high demand for father's property let him feel more enemy and jealous of us.

Being our stepbrother was arrogant and cruel; he used to disagree with our father even when our father was alive. However, we had never thought of losing our famous father and falling in the hands of our cruel stepbrother. I still recall how he beat me with rough tree switches around my left breast and shoulder. One of the reasons why he threatened us most is because he thought that our father loved us and was in favor of us (small children from our second wife).

Only younger siblings and I also did not complain to our father and we ever love both our parents equally and praise them equally. Thus, our stepbrother felt jealous of our love with our parents. This story is too long, but this is the highlight of it. As I cannot narrate all stories, my mother's sufferings along with us can be an exemplary case for most women's denial of inheritance and property rights by their brother-in laws, step sons, uncles and any other close male relatives in the entire community.

Other Issues That Women Face

An unequal inheritance and property rights increase women's vulnerability to HIV. In rural areas, too many women remain in abusive marriages with little power to negotiate safe sex because many women often are forced remarry their brother-in-laws or close or distant male relatives and powerful elders in many cases. For instance, my second elder sister remarried her brother-in-law after her husband died.



Traditionally, the heads or powerful person of the households usually order widows to remarry or co-habit with other close or distant male relative after the death of their husbands. An example, our eldest sister co-habit with a relative. In this case, women can face even greater risks than men can. She is still staying with her arranged distant husband who is now father of some of her recent children.

In some cases, either households or clans blame women for the deaths of their husbands under some circumstances. I used to hear about a neighboring woman who was blamed for that case during my childhood. She was given a negative title throughout her lifetime in the village and community. This act can ever bring a life complication, everlasting anxiety, and physical and mental misery.

Furthermore, they can be married off to the uncle, brother (another close male relative). In this case, this practice can be “wife inheritance.” In most areas, they also practice widow cleansing that if women’s husbands die either households or husbands. Extended households or clans force women to co-habit or have sex with close male relatives in order to have children on behalf of the first. That is one of the worst cases. At much worst, they are then dumped destitute and victims of hunger and diseases including HIV and other affiliated diseases such as gonorrhea. Once husbands die, most women become submissive, subordinate, victim and vulnerable in the community and ever remain in the household as servants.

My Sisters Stood up for Their Rights and Faced Consequences

Most women cannot fight for their rights due to the fear for not to be shunned and stigmatized. One exemplary case is about two of my younger sisters who refused to marry their arranged husbands through both parents consent. My first younger sister refused her old husband, her action caused long-standing conflict, life complication in our family. Her old husband and our eldest stepbrother, who is change resistant and highly bride price or dowry seeker, brutally beat, threatened, tortured and harassed her.

She is still victim and vulnerably isolated until today. The case was beyond the capacity and power of mother, young siblings, and I who are still well-wishers and loving ones except the aggressive and energetic stepbrother and her old

husband. Even now, her case has still created a big misunderstanding and conflict among my stepbrother, her husband, our clans, and me.

Our stepbrother and clans came up with customary law and norm and then seriously challenged me. Then I am the first target for not showing up any interest in sending her to her husband home. Sticking in between two morale decisions of whether I could forcibly send her to her husband home for the sake of our community custom and norm or I should freely leave her to stay with our mother at home for the sake of her interest, I finally determined to face any pressure and curse from our clan and community to fulfill her interest as a less learned person. This means that by breaking the community custom and norm that I eventually aggressively interfered in the case through local law enforcement bodies and pressed on my stepbrother and her husband not to mistreat or forcibly send her to her old husband by force.

Forcefully and lawfully, I attempted to let her be free in some ways for the sake of her interest. That time I was a mini cabinet member and somehow influential in the local administration, but now, my stepbrother and her husband who are against me seem to revive and get advantage over me and abduct her with the subtle help of corrupt local police and administration because most existing officials and their ally police are against me and are even in favor of my stepbrother and her husband who are still interceders. That is now abuse of power and political cannot defend her from refugee life.



Only now, my little school brother tries to complain on behalf of her to the local administration. Beside me, he is now under threats from our stepbrother and her husband along with their ally local officials and police.

My first younger sister, recently our stepbrother and her husband beat her brutally, they hit her on the chest, and she got severe chest pain until her admission in the hospital. I am so sad and irritated!

While my first younger sister's case is still pending in our households, my second younger sister refused her adult husband because her husband was ill and was allegedly suspected as an HIV victim. Refusing arranged engagement and marriage is a recent culturally impactful trend in Hamar community after women and girls in the most rural villages were brainstormed by little awareness raising campaign and dialogue, and lawful solutions about women's gender rights and their inheritance and property rights. My family members and her husband have not solved the issue yet.

These big clashes and conflicts, which are now sliding our family members into break up. I am even afraid of the cases here. These two cases of my two younger sisters have struck an awful tragedy in our households and my great mother and all younger siblings become speechless and heartbroken. Two sisters of mine are now staying with our poor mother and hustling a lot on their own.

As the country is now in war, economic crisis, and recurrent regional drought, they have currently been under severe hunger and impoverishment. This is one of my outmost concerns causing severe stress. In general, instead of mentioning the names and cases of a number of women and girls who have been victimized and traumatized by their husbands, I have decided to take and brief the cases of my two younger sisters whom I know deeply as sample cases in representation of all women's inheritance and property rights in the entire Hamar community in Ethiopia.

LIFE IN HAMAR: GELE'S ILLUSTRATED STORY WITH BAZO'S CAPTIONS

A young lady standing is a bride (*Uta*). She has shaved off her hair, greased with red ochre (*Asile*), butter (*Wakati*) and a gum-like black resin (*Kunya*). Once a girl is handed over to her husband, she is no longer a girl (*Anza*), but as She is now a bride (*Uta*) and quickly her traditional costume (*Ayzi*) varies from girl (*Anza*) and other married woman (*Gol*).

As a rite of passage, she spends 4 months alone in the house or on a house tower. She is not allowed to meet her husband during that time, but she can interact with husband's family members. All female members of her husband take care of her by cooking food or providing her with milk or water or everything she needs. As Gele drawn in the picture, a bride can also collect some sorghum or any grains from the small granary or grain store (*Coda*). After 4 months of being greased or covered with red ochre, butter and resin that a bride is allowed to meet her husband and sleep together. She is slowly turning into a married woman (*Gol*) status.

Besides, she starts decorating her with a new traditional costume, beads, bracelets and so on and then she wears a different hairstyle as Gele demonstrated in the picture. If she is the first wife (*Binyare Maa*), then with the help of a blacksmith they usually fix or fit a necklace (*Binyare*) on the top of two collars (*Esante*). The necklace (*Binyare*) is made up of some iron rings and a thick piece of leather, which has a phallic-shaped end. However, note that this jewelry can only be worn by a first wife. At the top this necklace means she is a first wife and she has a higher status in the society.



After 4 months of solitude, a bride (*Uta*) is now a married woman (*Gol*). In the drawing, she has joined her husband and both have their house and they begin living together. She has a right to decorate herself at this stage. Accordingly, she is well decorated and looks beautiful in the picture. She is in charge of her daily house chores such as cooking, making coffee, fetching water, obeying words and orders of her husband.

She has long red buttery ringlets (*Layso*) that depict that she is a young married woman who is first wife (*Binyare Maa*) for her husband. As Gele focuses on the Hamar hairstyle and jewelry, she wears some collars (*Esante*), necklace (*Binyare*), shells (*Kibo*), plant seeds (*Kuz api*) and other decoration stuffs on her neck.

The husband has also decorated his hair in some ways. For instance, his head is with a clay cap and he puts an ostrich feather (*Tuti*) on his clay cap in order to show off that he is a man of a young woman who completed her bridal process recently. They build their hut and begin their independent lives from scratch or zero, but they don't have children yet.

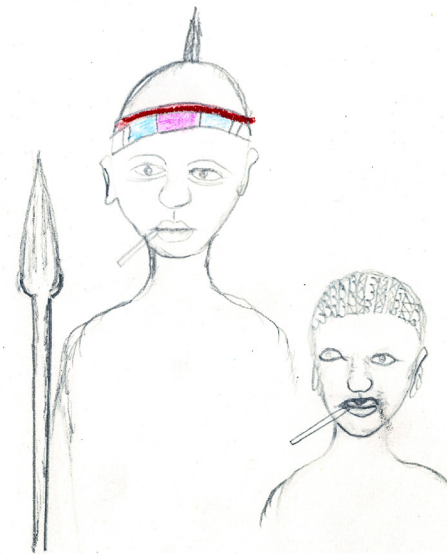


This drawing demonstrates the Hamar couple now has a big homestead, children (boy and girl), cattle, and a compound for cattle. As for boys' hairstyle, a little boy leaves a dot of hair (*Wombo*) on his forehead. This means that he is the youngest boy in the family and is waiting for a younger brother or sister to be born. Regarding a little girl's hairstyle, she normally has red buttery ringlets or backward braided hair, or parents shave off her forehead hair until ears and even back hairs until back of ears and then they leave middle head hair. According to the Hamar culture and norm, when a father dies, all livestock is inherited by the oldest son.

Some groups of Hamar near the town and highland areas live a settler life and they have a permanent settlement site while other Hamar groups in the low land area are completely pastoral or nomads moving from one place to another in search of green pasture and water with their livestock. This drawing depicts the Hamar people living in a permanent settlement site because the house is well built and bigger along with its door. In the lowland area where some Hamar group is unstable, armed and powerful warriors, they build smaller huts.

A drawing of an older brother and his younger brother. Assume after the father has died, if older brother dies too and a younger brother or children remain in the homestead. In this case, all livestock including cattle, goats, sheep, beehives and other properties can also be inherited by a younger brother who was born after older brother.

What is in the mouth of two brothers is a local tree brush called *Rigima* in Hamar. Most cattle or goats keepers (boys or youths or adult men) chew a *Rigima* while keeping the livestock in the forest or along the roadsides. It is like a tree branch, which is favorable and suitable for cleaning and whitening teeth in the Hamar community.



In this image, the husband has already died and the visible man is her husband's younger brother. After the death of her real husband, husband's younger brother co-habits with his brother's wife and controls cattle and all properties including children. According to the norm, once her husband dies, wearing a necklace (*Binyare*) is prohibited throughout the rest of her life and age. If the husband remains alive, the only other time when she wears no *Binyare* is when her son goes through the initiation into manhood rite called bull jumping ceremony. When oldest son grows up and turns up 25 years, controlling cattle and all assets falls in his hand and he becomes household head, whereas a girl can get engaged by a husband at early age through both parents consent and then she goes to her husband home after growing up.

This image also demonstrates the hairstyle of a man who has recently killed a fierce animal (*Shurte*) such as lion, tiger, elephant, buffalo, hyena and so on. This young man shaved off his forehead only and put wet red ochre mixed up with butter on his forehead in order to have high status or show off that he is a killer of a fierce animal. More significantly, a gentle Hamar man can solidify his high status in the community by killing a man from enemy tribes on a raid.



As demonstrated, image is all about a green pasture and fertile land. This topic is a bit broad. The recurrent drought and lack of fertile land is the main reason for tensions and conflict between neighbors, other settlements or villagers and tribes.

During the rainy and green season one man may fence his compound properly and reserve his grass and grazing range land for his cattle for the forthcoming dry seasons, but another neighbor may settle in difficult terrain and may not fence his compound and range land well. Unfortunately, when recurrent dry and drought seasons suddenly occur in the area, the one who doesn't fence his compound and range land can face lack of grass and more challenges with his cattle.

Due to this plight, one can release his cattle into the compound of another neighbor. However, if a neighbor who has a fenced compound and range land is not kind, there is a fight between the two neighbors. But this clash between the neighbors happens very rarely in the community.



To answer "why do your cows eat my grass?" A neighbor who releases his cattle into other neighbor's compound can answer that it is because my cattle are in hunger and are about to die due to the lack of grass. He can also add that we are one Hamar and we better cooperate during this difficult drought and dry season. At this stage, if the one who make mistake is not patient or if he doesn't admit his mistake or if the one who has grass in his compound or range land is not kind, helpful, they can most definitely fight.

This means that one can begin smacking with hands by fiercely slapping or wrestling on a dry field. But the most common fighting means hitting each other by using long and thick sticks. They can seriously hit each other on their heads until one or two of them get admitted in the hospital or until one man picks gun and shoot his neighbor to death at which point other family members involve in the fight. However, a fight occurs very rarely among the neighbors and community. Both neighbors deserve patience and cooperation at this level.

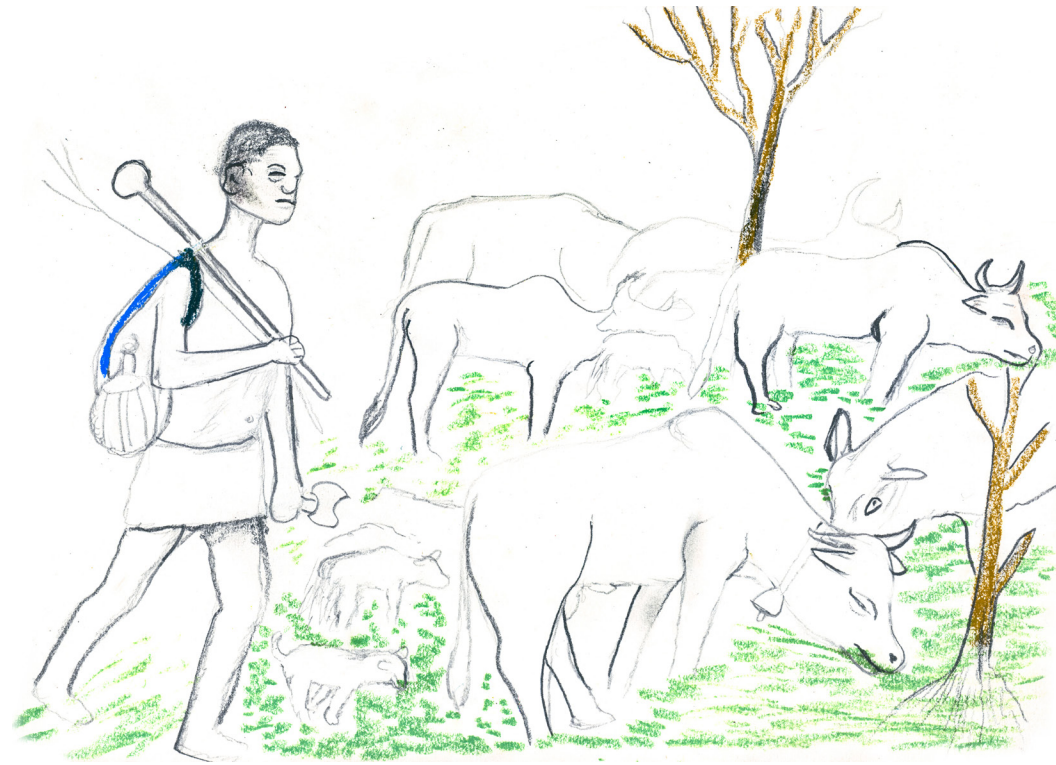
This image shows two neighbors' dispute over the fertile field. Gele draws fields of farm land and grazing land. Basically, a field is used for cultivation of grains and cereals, but it also provides grazing service for cattle and goats around the compound and edge of the fences. In this image, luckily one neighbor occupies much more productive land to grow sorghum or other grains and green grass land for grazing domestic animals.

As he acquires vast land, he can build two grain lofts called *Bara*. *Isin Bara* means grains loft and *DoreBara* means grain heaps or piles loft. *Bara* can also be a shelter. Regarding other neighbor, he is unlucky and builds only one *Bara* because he acquires less fertile land in the area. One condition whereby two neighbors can become involved in conflict is when less lucky neighbor keep pushing initially demarcated common boundary of their plot or land or field with lined up fences and poles.



As drawn clearly, two people appear in this image. A woman is milking a cow. A cow is called *Waki Ma*; milk is *Ratsi*; milking is *ratsi tsa* and a child is *nasi* in Hamar. A woman can't milk a cow in Hamar culture and norm except unmarried young girls, but all male people can milk regardless of age.

In the illustration, a woman is milking a cow by holding a wooden milk container with her both knees while a child is holding a calf away. On top of the front leg, a cow has a brand or mark called *Guyo*. Each cattle owner has his own brand or mark for his cattle and this mark is used by the entire family members including fortunate woman (who owns cattle and all properties) in case father or husband passes away. This mark signifies ownership of the cow or cattle so that a cow or the cattle can be easily recognized when they get lost or how far they go up to other distant resettlement sites.



During day time, Hamar men have their own daily routine activities, whereas women have their own routine chores. As for this image, a man is herding the cows or cattle to graze or feed in the bush. In his right hand, he holds a tree branch switch or stick called *Michare*, which is cut from a birch tree. According to the illustration, he uses this switch to whip cows or cattle. Very rarely, in case he gets angry at anyone, he can instinctively whip them.

In his left hand, he carries a wooden headrest (*Borkoto*), which helps youths and men as a wooden pillow everywhere they move. What makes this wooden headrest different from other urban pillows is that this wooden headrest is very light and portable. Hamar youths and men simply carry it every day and move far distance whenever they feel going somewhere. They never move without this headrest. A gentle man moving without headrest is laughed at and considered as a woman by the entire community. Only abnormal or seriously sick people or learners in the town or big city cannot be mocked anymore.



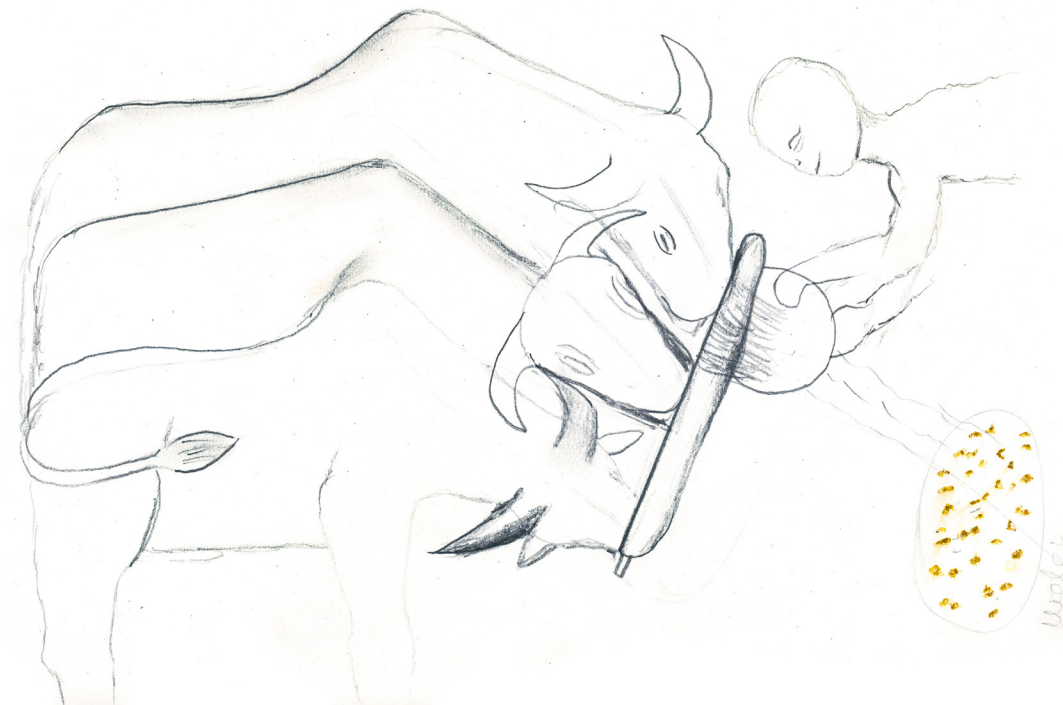
In the image, a man sleeps outside the house to protect cattle from hyenas and other dangerous wild animals intruding into cattle or goats' fence or compound so as to snatch a goat or calf or even small heifer and run away to the bush.

In particular, hyena is foremost among other wild animals for snatching goats or calves at night. As shown in this image, a man sleeps on cowhide or cattle leather. Beside a man, there is a fireplace or kitchen along with some properties such as oven, calabashes or gourds, pots, wooden milk containers and so on. In addition, a dog also stands near a man sleeping outside the house in the compound.

In Hamar land, most people have guns except some group staying in the middle and peaceful places of the Hamar territory. The availability of guns in the area increased after confronting dangerous wild animals in the bush; breaking up sporadic severe war with neighboring friendly-like enemy tribes and facing long-standing threats by oppressive regimes in the country. Nevertheless, for twenty years, the governments have long been attempting to mitigate some unwanted wars in the valley.

In this illustration, a man scratches or digs sandy well (*Tula*) to access water for his cattle or cows. This means that the image shows cattle are drinking water in the river (*Bayti*). A man carves a long wooden boat (*Gongala*), especially made from fig and acacia trees and he uses an open calabash to pour water in the boat.

The boat fits three to four cattle for drinking water at the same time. Therefore, one more person is needed to keep other cattle until first ones are served. It means that it is impossible for one person to pour water in a boat and serve many cattle alone. Other than that, the sorts of rivers available all over the Hamar territory are flash flood and streams. The omo river, which flows round throughout the years, is located at the outskirt of Hamar territory between the borders of Hamar and other neighboring tribes and some pastoral Hamar group migrating from place to place with their overwhelming number of herds (such as cattle, goats and sheep) access the river throughout the years.





The Hamar people gather together once every year or more often in order to foresee the future. In a gathering, a local ritual chief (*Bita*), a local leader (*Hayo*) or maybe most eldest local leader (*Edi Gari* or *Edi Gecho*) or maybe expert of rituals (*Gilo Edi*) goes around the age group holding either spear or bunches of sacred plants in his hands and keep praying, blessing or getting rid of diseases or bad luck.

In general, Prayers are recited, blessings are performed and rain is invoked. A local leader tells fascinating stories, shares rich experiences and insights. Countless people gather together in order to discuss hot issues and come up with outcome driven-remedies.

A foreteller sometimes goes to sit on high elevations or mountains and predicts sun in relation to its color. He also watches the moon and predicts consequences or effects of full moon or half-moon in Hamar land in a short or long run. The Hamar categorizes stars into male and female stars. Even rainy and sunny or dry seasons are determined by watching and predicting these stars. War and famine can be predicted thoroughly and carefully more often. More importantly, the old people narrate the history of the Hamar community.

During dry and drought season, the Hammer recite prayers for calling rain by the name of natural God (*Barjo*). Some of traditional figures perform different rituals such as reading intestines of specific goats and cattle. These high profile figures are *Halfa Mashe* (intestine reader), *Gudili*, and *Parko* and so on. Sometimes experts of intestine can order people to slaughter over 20 goats for the purpose of foretelling the future.

The most common gathering events are conducted during harvest season, warfare, burning political issues season, high poaching season, immoral or grossly unfair clashes happen between youths or individuals in the community etc.

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