

Ethiopian Village Studies II

(Designed and edited by Philippa Bevan, Alula Pankhurst and Tom Lavers)

Yetmen

Enemay Wereda

East Gojjam Zone

Amhara Region

researched by

Agazi Tiumelissan and Kiros Berhanu (2005)

and

Tassew Shiferaw, Berihun Mebratie and Gebrie Bedada (1994)

February 2006

One of a series of six studies edited and produced by the Ethiopia Wellbeing in Developing Countries Research Programme, based at the University of Bath, UK, and financed by the Economics and Social Research Council, UK. The rural Village Studies II are updates of four of the 15 Village Studies I published in 1996 (Dinki, Korodegaga, Turufe Kecheme and Yetmen). The two Urban Studies I cover new sites in Addis Ababa and Shashemene.

Foreword

The reports in this series are outputs from the Wellbeing in Developing Countries (WeD) research programme organised and coordinated by the University of Bath, UK and financed by the Economic and Social Research Council, UK, between 2002 and 2007. Ethiopia is one of the four countries selected for the research.¹ The aim of the programme is to develop a conceptual and methodological framework for studying the social and cultural construction of wellbeing in developing country contexts, and thereby investigate linkages between quality of life, power and poverty in order to contribute to improving policy and practice.

WeD Ethiopia selected twenty rural and two urban sites for its WIDE² research. Community profiles for fifteen of the rural sites had been produced in 1995 and 1996 (WIDE1)³ and five new sites were added in 2003, when further community level research was undertaken in the twenty sites (WIDE2), involving exploratory protocol-guided research during one month in July and August 2003 by teams composed of one female and one male researcher in each site.

Six sites were selected for the DEEP⁴ research, including four of the rural sites and both urban sites.⁵ In-depth fieldwork was carried out between July 2004 and November 2005 by teams composed of one female and one male researcher spending about three weeks of each month in their respective sites. The four rural sites were chosen from the two largest regions: Oromia and Amhara. In each region one of the selected sites was more remote (Korodegaga in Oromia and Dinki in Amhara), and the other closer to market and state influences (Turufe Kecheme in Oromia and Yetmen in Amhara). The urban sites, Kolfe in the capital city, Addis Ababa, and Arada in Kebele 08/09 of Shashemene, a business city in the south, were selected on the basis of the research team's interests in market areas, community-based organisations and urban-rural linkages. One of the rural sites, Turufe Kecheme, is close to Shashemene town.

Profiles are available for the following six sites:

Rural sites:

Dinki, Ankober *Wereda*, North Shewa Zone, Amhara Region

Korodegaga, Dodota-Sire *Wereda*, Arssi Zone, Oromia Region

Turufe Kecheme, Shashemene *Wereda*, East Shewa Zone, Oromia Region

Yetmen, Enemay *Wereda*, East Gojjam Zone, Amhara Region

Urban sites:

Arada, Kebele 08/09, Shashemene, East Shewa Zone, Oromia Region.

Kolfe, Kebele 10/11, Kolfe-Keranyo Kifle *Ketema*, Addis Ababa City Administration.

¹ The other three countries are Bangladesh, Peru and Thailand.

² Wellbeing and Illbeing Dynamics in Ethiopia.

³ The 15 Village Studies were produced by the Centre for the Study of African Economies, Oxford, UK and the Department of Sociology, Addis Ababa University and financed by the UK Overseas Development Administration and can be obtained from the web-site (www.csae.ox.ac.uk)

⁴ In-Depth Exploration of Ethiopian Poverty.

⁵ Likewise the other countries in the WeD project selected a similar number of urban and rural sites.

The (DEEP) research involved a Resource and Needs Survey with 250 households followed by in-depth process research involving monthly community and household diaries with households differentiated by gender, wealth and size, life histories of children, adults and old people, and modules exploring thematic research topics including community institutions, elites and destitution, poverty dynamics, migration, intergeneration relations, collective action, and a quality of life survey. A research database has been produced including data at individual, household and community levels which is being used to produce a book and research papers.

The rural village studies were produced starting with the 1996 community profiles, which were constructed from a background paper based on secondary sources, rapid assessment material collected by site managers and enumerators involved in the three rounds of a household economic survey (the ERHS⁶), a field visit during one month by an anthropology student, a questionnaire completed by the enumerators at the end of the household survey and a community economic survey administered by the site managers.

The 1996 profiles were updated, and revised with a focus on the major research interests and approaches of the WeD programme. The new versions are largely the product of insights from the researchers who carried out intensive fieldwork in the sites over 16 months from mid 2004 to late 2005.

Many people participated in the construction of the profiles, the most important being the people in the villages who answered questions, raised issues we had not thought of and provided hospitality to our fieldworkers. The site managers, enumerators, and anthropologists involved in 1995 played a vital role. First drafts of the 1996 profiles were constructed by Etalem Melaku-Tjirongo and Joanne Moores, and backup in terms of translating, editing, word processing and map-making and was provided by Tina Barnard, Ziggy Bevan, Girma Getahun, Haile Redai, Sarah Smith, and Ruth Tadesse. Economist colleagues at Oxford (Shukri Ahmed, Stefan Dercon and Pramila Krishnan) and Addis Ababa (particularly Bereket Kebede, Getinet Astatke, and Mekonnen Tadesse) were influential in shaping our ideas, and the administration in the Economics Department at Addis Ababa University was extremely supportive.

The 2004-2006 research design benefited from the inter-disciplinary discussions and debates of the WeD research group in Bath, including anthropologists, economists, psychologists, and sociologists, and the research teams from Bangladesh, Thailand and Peru. A number of the core Bath team provided intellectual stimulus, advice and support, and several members collaborated in various aspects of the research design and/or visited Ethiopia including Allister McGregor, the director of the project, Ian Gough, Sarah White, Suzy Skevington, Bereket Kebede, Laura Camfield, Susan Johnson, Julie Newton, Andy McKay, Catherine Dom, Virginia Williamson, and Anne Yates. Logistical support was provided by Becky Lockley, Jane French, Diana Duckling, Emer Brangan, Teresa King, Mark Ellison and Jun Zhang.

The project benefited from discussions and collaborations with John Hoddinott, from the International Food Policy Research Institute, Marleen Dekker from the Free University in Amsterdam, Luc Christiaensen and Caterina Ruggeri-Laderch from the World Bank, Pramila Krishnan from Cambridge University, Stefan Dercon from Oxford University, Charles Schaefer from Valparaiso University, Nuala O'Brien and Kevin Kelly from Development Cooperation Ireland, Simon Winetraube from the British Council and Claudia Fumo and Laure Beaufils from the UK Department for International Development.

⁶ The Ethiopian Rural Household Survey involves a panel survey carried out by the Economics Department of Addis Ababa University in collaboration with the Oxford Centre for the Study of African Economies in 1994 and the International Food Policy Institute in 2004.

A local NGO, PADET, and the Learning Centre provided office space for the project.

In Ethiopia the main members involved in the research design and management were Feleke Tadele, Yisak Tafere, Bethlehem Tekola, Solomon Tesfay, Ashebir Desalegn, and Theodros Wolde Giorgis. Members of Addis Ababa University Department of Sociology who took part in the project at various stages included Ayalew Gebre, Melese Getu, Derese Getachew and Asrat Ayalew (the last two of whom went for graduate studies to Bath). The project benefited from support from the Economics Department of Addis Ababa University particularly in carrying out the Resource and Needs Survey. The project also benefited from advice from a network of advisors from various disciplines who are too numerous to mention.

The following researchers took part in the 2004-2006 research in the six sites, although most of the drafting of the rural profiles was carried out by one female and one male researcher, generally those who spent longest in the site or were the last researchers involved, whose names are on the front of the profiles and are italicised in the list below. The urban profiles involved more researchers, with greater input from the field coordinator and editors.

Arada: Abebech Belayneh, Abraham Asha, Bethlehem Tekola, Demissie Gudisa, Habtamu Demille, Mahder Tesfu and Rahwa Mussie

Dinki: *Damtew Yirgu*, Kiros Berhanu and *Tsega Melesse*

Kolfe: Bethlehem Tekola, Demiye Tefalet, Eyob Mhreteab Rahwa Mussie, Tigist Tefera and Yisak Tafere

Korodegaga: *Aster Shibeshi*, Tsega Melesse and *Workneh Abebe*;

Turufe Kecheme: *Bizuayehu Ayele*, Demissie Gudisa, Tsega Melesse and *Yohannes Gezahegn*

Yetmen: *Agazi Tiemelisan*, Asham Asazene, Hiwot Atfraw, *Kiros Berhanu*, Leleena Aklilu and Lewoyehu Ayele

Most of the editing, standardisations, formatting, improvement of the maps, photographs, seasonal calendars etc was carried out by Tom Lavers.

Further information about the Wed-Ethiopia project can be obtained from the web-site: www.wed-ethiopia.org. The Bath University WeD website www.welldev.org.uk provides overall information about the project worldwide.

Further information can also be obtained from:

Dr Philippa Bevan
Ethiopia country coordinator
(pbevan@bath.ac.uk)
Wellbeing in Developing Countries
ESRC Research Group
3 East 2.10, University of Bath, BA2 7AY, UK

Dr Alula Pankhurst
WeD Ethiopia team leader
alulapankhurst@ethionet.et;
P.O.Box 1896,
Addis Ababa,
Ethiopia

Contents

1. Locating the Site in Space and Time.....	7
Geography and Population.....	7
Climate and Weather.....	8
Farm Production	8
Infrastructure.....	9
Social Structure.....	9
History	10
2. Seasonal Activities and Events	12
3. Farm Economy.....	12
Crops.....	12
Livestock.....	13
Land	14
Farm Labour	16
Interlinkages.....	18
Farming Technology.....	19
Farming Innovations	20
Common Property Resources	20
Environment.....	20
4. Off-farm Activities.....	21
Communal Work.....	21
Household Off-farm Activities	21
Occupational Structure.....	22
Migration	22
Rural-Urban Linkages.....	23
5. Reproductive Activity	23
Housing.....	23
Domestic Technology	24
Household Management	24
Fertility.....	24
Childbirth and Childcare.....	25
Socialisation.....	25
Education	27
Training.....	29
Health.....	29
6. Consumption	32
Food	32
Saving, Investment and Credit.....	32
Household Assets.....	33
Local Services.....	33
7. Local Institutions and Organisations.....	34
Households.....	34
Marriage.....	35
Divorce.....	37
Inheritance	37

Kinship.....	38
Ethnicity, Clans and Lineages.....	38
Life Cycle Changes and Rites of Passage.....	39
Friends and Neighbours.....	39
Citizenship.....	39
Markets.....	40
Social Security.....	40
Redistributive Mechanisms.....	41
Local Organisation.....	42
Disputes and Resolutions.....	42
Local Government Organisation.....	43
8. Social Inequality, Conflict and Politics.....	44
Poverty and Wealth.....	44
Economic Mobility.....	45
Status.....	46
Social Stratification.....	47
Social Conflict and Politics.....	47
9. Beliefs and Values.....	49
Land.....	49
Religion.....	49
Explanations of Misfortune and Illness.....	50
Community Values.....	50
Political Beliefs and Attitudes.....	51
10. Relationship with Other Communities and the Wider Society.....	52
Ethnic Groups and Clans.....	52
Relations with Other Communities.....	52
Relationships with wider Ethiopia.....	52
Effects of Government Policies.....	52
Government Development Activities in the Community.....	54
NGO Activities in the Community.....	54
The Future.....	54
Bibliography.....	56
Glossary.....	56
Acronyms.....	57
Appendix A: Ethiopian calendar.....	58
Appendix B: Seasonal Calendars.....	59

1. Locating the Site in Space and Time

Geography and Population

Yetmen is situated at the southern end of Enemay *Wereda* in East Gojjam Zone, an administrative unit in what has become Amhara Region. Rural Yetmen used to be a *kebele*⁷ but, following the local government reorganisation, it is now one of three areas constituting Felegeselam *kebele*. The other two are Zebch and Yemrit. The urban Yetmen *kebele* is responsible to the *wereda*. Yetmen town is the second urban centre of Enemay *wereda*. It is located about 248 km northwest of Addis Ababa between the towns of Dejen and Bichena. Dejen is 17 km south of the *kebele* and Bichena is 15 km north of Yetmen. There are two rivers surrounding the *kebele*: the Muga is perennial while the Yegudfin flows only during the wet season.

The Amhara are the most prominent group in the Gojjam comprising 87.4% of the total population in the 1984 population census. *Amarigna* (Amharic) was the single most important language which was spoken at home by 95.5% of the total population. *Agewigna* occupied the second position and was spoken by 8.1%. In 1984 about 95% of the Gojjam population were Christians and only 4% were Muslims. Traditional religious groups accounted for only 1.2% of the total population. Among the urban centres, the highest concentration of Orthodox Christians was found in Debre Work (98.4%), followed by Debre Markos (97%) and Finote Selam (93.1%). Muslims account for 41.6% of Motta, 39.8% of Bichena, and 35.9% of Dejen (Report on the Housing Census: 33).

The total area of Yetmen *kebele* is estimated to be 9.3 km². In 1994 about 87% was under cultivation and about 9.2% was communal grazing land. During the 1997 land redistribution some grazing land was distributed for agriculture. None of the land is forested or uncultivable. People plant trees in their compounds. The total population of Yetmen *kebele* in 1994 was 2,482, more than 52% of whom were women. Table 1 gives the age and gender distribution.

Table 1: Population of Yetmen, 1994

<i>Age</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
<7	256	307	563
8-14	230	345	575
15-20	230	115	345
21-30	77	269	346
31-45	192	154	346
46-65	115	77	192
>65	77	38	115
Total	1177	1305	2482

Source: the *Wereda* Agricultural Office

⁷ The term *kebele* during the Derg period referred to the lowest administrative unit and was translated as "Peasants Association". On average three former *kebele* were regrouped into one unit under the EPRDF. The new larger *kebele mestedader* with salaried leadership is translated as "*kebele* administration". Since these studies relate to both periods for simplicity we have used the term *kebele* to refer to the study community.

Climate and Weather

The altitude of the settled area is between 1,800m and 3,500m, which include the three local altitudinal zones: *wurch* the coldest highlands; *dega*, the cool highlands; and *weyna dega*, the warm midlands. The plateau experiences an average annual temperature of between 15⁰C and 18⁰C. The warm months, March through May, come before the main rainy season which starts from June and continues through the end of September. In 2005 residents of Yetmen said that there has been a slight increase in the temperature.

In Yetmen scanty small rains occasionally fall during the period from January up to April. In practice there is often one long rainy season, from March to mid-September, with maximum precipitation between June and August. The rains reach their peak between early June and mid-September; the period known as *Kiremt*. According to the rainfall records of 1993, the minimum and maximum rainfalls ranged between 11.2 - 39.0 mm respectively. The coldest season comes between early October and early December. Since wheat is sown in early August, and since it is seldom cold in September, this crop is rarely affected by frost. In general, there is no significant problem in the village that is caused by heat or cold. On the basis of the temperature record of the year 1993 (except the months of September, October, November and December for which there are no records since the thermometer has been stolen), the minimum and the maximum temperatures were 5°C and 25°C respectively.

Farm Production

The Amhara, are generally a sedentary, predominantly agricultural people. A common form of plough cultivation is practised for the production of all staples. The principal subsistence crops grown in this region include maize, millet, sorghum, several varieties of wheat, *tef* and numerous varieties of barley, broad beans, grey beans, lentils, onions, garlic, red peppers, potatoes, chickpeas, peas and cabbage.

In addition to these crops a number of pulses, oilseeds, vegetables and spices are grown in most parts of Gojjam. In the extreme lowlands, there is a little sugarcane, banana, peach and lemon trees. There is considerable inter-regional trade in cereals and as a result the diet of most families is not strictly limited to the local crops. Most of the crops are grown in the *meher* season with secondary crops planted in February or March before the *belg* rains. For the major season the time of planting varies from the beginning of June to the end of September depending on altitude, drainage, crop, and annual variations in the beginning of the rains. Harvesting begins in mid-September and continues until after Christmas.

In Yetmen people grow *tef* and wheat, much of which is transported to markets in Addis Ababa. They grow maize for home consumption, and pulses and oil seed such as lentils, chickling pea, chickpeas and niger seed. Women extract oil from niger seeds. They also use niger seed as a spice. In Yetmen *meher* is the major harvesting season during which all crops except maize are grown. Maize is the only annual crop grown during the *belg* season. Agriculture is mostly currently rain-fed although there is a great potential for irrigation because Yetmen is situated on a plain. Currently there is one private farm cultivating onions, tomatoes and potatoes. However, this is opposed by many people in Yetmen, as the volume of water in the rivers is decreasing. They are worried that their livestock may die due to lack of water. Other villages have irrigation and in 2003, 80 people tried to organise themselves following a directive sent by the *wereda*. They made a dam with sacks filled with clay and ploughed the land, but many older people with more cattle resisted; then *wereda* officials came and stopped the project.

Respondents report that *tef* production per unit of area is decreasing, because the farmland has got used to the use of fertilisers (which they use only at the end of *Sene* when sowing *tef*). Thus, the farmers have to keep applying more fertiliser. But this is more than what many people can afford, due to the ever-increasing price of fertilisers. In June 2005 urea cost 160 *birr* and DAP cost 180 *birr*.

Infrastructure

Shops and other services are found in Yetmen town at the centre of the *kebele*. There is a private clinic which many people cannot afford since the price for medication is expensive. So people have to make their way to Zebch, which is under the same *kebele* with Yetmen, to get treatment in a public health centre. The cost for medical treatment is much less, but there is a meagre supply of medical necessities. Currently, the construction of a health post is underway and nearing completion. Thus the people are expecting to get services soon.

In 1996 the people in Yetmen got access to clean drinking water. Many people in the urban site have their own piped water supply, while many people in the rural site use their own water wells for many household chores. Others buy water from the urban site, if they are close to it, or from a common tap water supply, built in some places in the rural area.

In 1997 the townspeople and nearby rural houses got access to electricity. Some households without electricity get supply from those who have got their own, for 5 *birr* per month. An all-weather road crosses Yetmen; it heads north to Bichena and to Dejen in the opposite direction. There is no problem regarding transportation to the immediate urban centres. It costs 3 *birr* to go to Bichena or Dejen, which are roughly 15 km from Yetmen. It takes about 4 hours to walk.

Yetmen serves as a major marketplace for the surrounding area due to its central location. Unlike the other rural areas which have no or one market day, there are three market days in Yetmen on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, to which a multitude of people from surrounding areas converge. Several mill houses have been built in the urban site since 1994, and this is a great relief for the women in Yetmen who had to undertake the painstaking task of grinding which used to take much time.

Social Structure

All the people of Yetmen belong to the Amhara linguistic group. The overwhelming majority of them are peasants practising traditional farming. However the importance of merchants in the town, who are by far fewer in number, must not be ignored. Many of them are involved in selling *tef*. These are people who can influence the price of both agricultural outputs and other commodities. Most of them have their own trucks to transport goods to and from other areas. They have a strong linkage with merchants in other major cities like Addis Ababa, and they determine the price for products based on the information they get from other merchants. Merchants have mobilised the people to contribute money for bringing electricity, telecommunication service and the like. Very few of the migrants to Yetmen town are from urban areas; all are Gojjame and most come from surrounding rural areas.

Even though there are some artisans in the community, each peasant is expected to build his own dwelling following commonly known technology and house designs. The majority of the houses found in the community are tin-roofed but some of the houses of poorer households and the kitchens have thatched roofs. Cooperation for certain activities such as building houses, farming activities and the like is a common cultural practice of the *kebele*. Members of the community share values, customs and beliefs. Houses in the rural part of Yetmen are built in a rudimentary design and hence need no specialised skill. But for making the roof, door and windows, a person with basic skill of carpentry may be needed. There is no difference in house designs in the urban site, although there are a few houses made of bricks.

Since there are no people from other ethnic groups in the village, no ethnic conflict has arisen. However, due to ethnic conflicts created elsewhere some people who lived in other parts of the country returned to the region in the early 1990s. The majority of them are ex-soldiers. Most of the returnees have obtained land to cultivate, others have become wage earners and a few others have become dependents. Lineages are becoming less and less important. There are two: *Gubya* and *Wudemit*. The ancestors of the former were considered to be superior. Immigrants are known by the pejorative term *mete*. There is an area of Yetmen town known as *Densit* which is occupied by weavers, potters, blacksmiths, and the descendants of 'slaves' brought from the South in imperial times. In the past, farming families have not wanted to marry them, but now that landholding is getting smaller they are relatively rich and can sustain a livelihood if agriculture is bad. As a result there has been some intermarriage on both male and female sides but they are few and those involved are stigmatised.

History

Yetmen was first pioneered by a warrior woman named Atedua Kombolish. She lived in an area called Aroge Amba. The story told was that she fought to control the area including fighting a 'brother', Abuledis, who was accepted by their uncles. This 'brother', whose mother was from Gondar, did not live in Yetmen; his descendants started to live there after the death of his sister. Current descendants are now very rich. Most landlords in Yetmen are descendants of Atedua and her brother Abuledis. Atedua's father was living in Zebch. The respondents could not give a specific time when the woman started to live in Yetmen but it might have been before Emperor Menelik II, because even the elders who are Atedua's relatives do not know anyone of their age who knew her.

The town was founded around 1968 with the establishment of a Swedish-built elementary school which was later upgraded to a junior high school. According to elders, many peasants started settling around the school with the hope that it would bring some new changes in their lives.

Table: *List of main events*

1957	the main road was built
1970	the school was built
1976	a service cooperative was established; fertiliser was introduced; and agricultural extension services were provided
1978	the national literacy programme started
1979	veterinary services were provided
1982	the producer cooperative was established; and a new type of agricultural implement locally known as <i>mensh</i> (equipment for throwing up grain during threshing) and a new <i>tef</i> variety were introduced
1991	a clinic was constructed; a new variety of <i>guaya</i> chickling pea was introduced for animal feed; and the village was connected to electricity
1996	Yetmen, especially the urban site, was provided with a clean drinking water
1997	Yetmen was connected to electricity from hydroelectric power. In the same year land was redistributed
2000	The credit and savings association was set up
2001	A veterinary clinic was built
2005	A health post is under construction and nearing completion; There are now more shops with a wider range of goods than in 1994.

The earlier land tenure pattern, which was based on the *rist* system, was replaced by "land to the tiller" in 1975. The *rist* system provided equal access for individuals in receiving plots of land by tracing descent to their ancestors. Members of the community fought with the *Derg* regime to preserve the customary

land tenure system. However, they gradually accepted what was imposed. They were organised in a *kebele* and later on established a co-operative society through which they obtained some advantages such as basic literacy, improved agricultural techniques and inputs, and a shop in the town. Notwithstanding these advantages, the peasants disliked working for the cooperative because it involved hard labour and they had to work from dawn to dusk, to the detriment of their individual priorities.

The peasants in the area were happy that the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) helped them in getting rid of the *Derg* regime. However, in 1994 they showed strong signs of discontent with the following political and economic measures of the government:

1. The EPRDF forced them to pay the debt that the Producers' Cooperative (PC) incurred for agricultural inputs. (When the PC was disbanded all the property was distributed among members). Because of this all the people in Yetmen were forbidden to get any credit facility from the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA). Other government organisations provide for the purchase of agricultural inputs. The villagers suggest that this was contrary to the initial promise of the EPRDF to write off the debt. In addition, they consider that the EPRDF betrayed them by breaking the promise. They believe that the promise was simply a pretext for getting popular support in that critical time when they were coming into power.
2. The tax for a plot of land increased from 7 *birr* to 20 *birr* per holding.
3. The propaganda of alleging that the Amhara were responsible for past bad deeds and turning the traditionally praised name *Neftegna* into a nickname for them, and the ethnic politics followed by the EPRDF, were resented by the villagers.
4. Some of the peasants of the community were interrogated, harassed and imprisoned on the pretext that they support opposition forces.

The *kebele* officials served the community in collaboration with local elders until they were imprisoned (1994). By 1994 the *kebele* officials had not been replaced.

It was reported in 1994 that no-one had suffered from considerable hardship during the previous 10 years with the exception of a few individuals who were reduced to eating chickling peas instead of *tef* during the drought of 1985.

During the 1997 land redistribution, '*Derg* bureaucrats' did not get the land they deserved; it was given to female-headed households and the younger; most were happy. 'Feudals' got land back from the PC during EPRDF.

In 2005 it was reported that in the past those people who have two ropes or more were paying a tax of 20 *birr*, and those with one rope were not paying tax. This payment system was changed three years ago.

Land holdings in rope	Tax payment in birr
1,2	20
3,4	25
5,6	30
7,8	35
9,10	40
11,12	45
	=

In 2005 people came to measure land with a rope.

In 2005 individuals who were involved in the different activities of the Derg regime complained that they did not get equal rights during land distribution, and after that they were not allowed to participate in public meetings. In recent times they have come to participate in public meetings called by the *kebele*, but their ideas or comments are not welcomed by *kebele* administrators. At this time most people who were serving the Derg regime are supporters of the main opposition parties group the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD).

2. Seasonal Activities and Events

Calendars can be found in Appendix B. There are a few specific seasons of sickness and treatment among members of the community. *Meskerem*⁸ and *Tikimt* months are known as times when a sickness locally known as *mich* is common. This is caused by strong heat after the rainy season. This time is called *Saten*. In 2004 the site was struck by malaria for the first time; in 2005 the community was organised to drain the ponds and there had been no malaria by the end of the fieldwork period. However, it was still raining so there was still a possibility that it would appear this year.

Credit was not recognised as very important in 1994, although some men without farming equipment tend to borrow money around late April and May in order to be able to buy the necessary items for cultivating the land in June. This is the duty of men. In 2005 it was reported that credit had become very important. Many people take credit in the form of cash, seeds and fertilisers.

There is no specific time for breeding livestock. Just after the rains, in the first half of *Hidar*, the militia stop animals from grazing by Muga River; then access is opened at once and all the grass is consumed. Around late August and September, pests sometimes appear. The agricultural extension agents usually give the necessary advice as to how to use agricultural inputs such as fertilisers, herbicides and pesticide. Thus, pests are not usually a major problem. More fuel is needed during June, July, August and October since these are the coldest months. The commonly used fuel is *kubet*, animal dung, and small amounts of firewood.

Since the people of Yetmen are Orthodox Christians, there are festivals on all major Christian holidays of the country like *Meskel* (the day for the commemoration of the founding of the True Cross), *Timket* (Epiphany), *Genna* (Christmas), *Fasika* (Easter), etc.

3. Farm Economy

Crops

In Yetmen crop cultivation is the dominant activity and source of livelihood. Closely linked with agricultural activity, livestock, petty cash grain trading, and collecting and selling dung also play a vital role in the area. The principal crops grown in Yetmen are *tef* (mostly white *tef*), wheat, chickpeas, *guaya* (chickling peas), and maize. The two principal crops are *tef* and wheat, which, in 1994 together took up roughly 55% of the total area under cultivation (source: MoA office). These are the only crops on which fertiliser is used. Among the various factors which diversely affect agriculture the most conspicuous is scarcity of land. The type of crop grown heavily depends on the size of farmland a farmer possesses. Those farmers who have access to large farmland tend to diversify the crops, while those who have small amounts of land sow *tef* because its price per quintal is better than other crops and it is the major crop preferred for subsistence. Land disputes are one of the frequent form of disputes and they are resolved by

⁸ Details of the Ethiopian calendar can be found in Appendix A.

friends, relatives and social courts. They are taken to *wereda* courts if they are very serious.

Livestock

The principal livestock reared in this region include cattle (the short-horned zebu type being the most appreciated); mules; donkeys; horses; chickens; sheep; goats; and bees. Cats and dogs are found everywhere. Sheep and horses predominate on the grassy highlands of Gojjam, while goats thrive in the lower country. In addition to their use as a source of food, the hides and skins of cattle and sheep are used in making leather products. In the past people were using hides and skins of cattle and sheep for making leather products like *jendi* (bed sheet), *akmada* (container of grains) *mechanya* (rope), and *agoza* (spread for seats). Nowadays these materials are being substituted by other materials intruded from urban areas. Only *jendi* and *agoza* are very common as before. In the past sheep's wool was woven into blankets, *bernos* (cloaks), and rugs. However, these days (2005) many people prefer to sell sheep skin because it is very expensive; its price is up to 40 *birr* and merchants collect it and sell it in urban areas.

Horses, mules, and donkeys are raised mainly for transport. In former times, horses were used almost exclusively in warfare, each local chief commanding his own personal cavalry. In more peaceful pursuits, a well-bred mule represents a mark of status for those who ride them. But the most important animals for the Amhara, since they are subsistence farmers, are cattle, without which a man cannot cultivate his land. Herds are usually small. An ordinary man who has two pairs of oxen and three or four cows is considered wealthy in cattle in Gojjam.

Table 2: Livestock in Yetmen in 1994

<i>Type of livestock</i>	<i>Number</i>
oxen	589
cows	624
heifers	115
young bulls	209
calves	312
horses	6
mules	1
donkeys	290
sheep	940
goats	35
hens	844

Source: MoA local office

Table 2 gives an estimate of the livestock holdings in Yetmen in 1994. The common livestock found in the Yetmen are oxen (farming assets), cows (milk), sheep (meat), donkeys and horses. Mules and goats are rare. Though crop cultivation is the pivotal activity of Yetmen's economy, livestock are closely linked with agriculture and play an important role in the economic activity of the society. The importance of raising livestock lies in its use as a source of oxen (for ploughing), pack animals (for transportation), dung (the major source of fuel), dairy products, meat and hides and skins.

The total livestock population is very small compared with 25 to 30 years ago. This is because an

enormous part of communal grazing land has been taken for cultivation. Other problems affecting livestock holdings are shortage of feed, drought and animal diseases. Given the dominance of crop cultivation, ploughing, which is the pivotal productive activity, gives oxen a central role. This means that in the area oxen are one of the major attributes of wealth. Table 3 shows the approximate distribution of oxen by households in Yetmen in 1994.

Table 3: Oxen in Yetmen in 1994

<i>No of oxen owned by household</i>	<i>No of households</i>
0	85
1	104
2	218
3	15
4	2
4+	0

Source: interview with a key informant

There have not been changes in livestock holdings since there is no new system in breeding livestock. Vaccination services are provided every year by the MoA. There are no regular major livestock disease outbreaks, although there is often some sickness during September when cattle eat the grass called *magatt*. Cross-breeding is not practised in the community. There has never been any time when a lot of people had to sell their livestock because of drought. However, considerable numbers of livestock died during the 1985 drought, and livestock trading was profitable for a brief period immediately after the drought of 1985 as a result of high prices.

There is a normal practice of buying and selling of livestock in the *kebele*, especially oxen for farming and other livestock to overcome financial hardship. People sell livestock during holiday and wedding times because they get more profit at these times. Some people keep livestock in their houses. Those peasants who have a large number of livestock build barns for them. All the local grass in the village and the sediment of *tella* are fed to animals. Manure is used only to fertilise crops in the backyard, *gesho* and eucalyptus. Most families keep cattle separately, although some households together hire herdsman at the cost of 20 *birr* per household plus meals.

Land

Before 1974, land was allocated following the *rist* system. In the *rist* system, an individual received land by tracing descent to an ancestor who owned a certain plot. This system was replaced by the government declaration of "land to the tiller" in 1975. Since then, the peasants have had land use rights. There were two types of land rights before the revolution: *gult* and *rist*. *Gult* (fief) rights provided economic and political support for the elite and in their territorial aspect constituted the framework for the administration of the peasantry. *Rist* (land-use) rights, on the other hand, played an important role in the social and economic organisation of the local community. *Gult* rights over land were given to members of the ruling elite as a reward for loyal service to their lords, and to religious institution endowments. The individual or institutions that held land as *gult* had the right to collect taxes from those who farmed it and also had judicial and administrative authority over those who lived on it. *Gult* rights were thus far more than just a type of land tenure. They were an integral part of the Amhara feudal polity; they represented the granting away by a regional ruler of an important part of his taxing, judicial, and administrative authority. Virtually all arable and inhabited land was held by someone or some institution as *gult*. There

was "no land without a master".

Rist rights in contrast to *gult* rights, were land-use rights. In principle they were hereditary and could be held by lord and peasant alike. *Rist* and *gult* are not different types of land but distinct and complementary types of land rights. Usually they extended over the same land.

"A single rate of *gwilt* [*gult*] comprising a few square miles, included within its boundaries strip fields held as *rist* by scores or even hundreds of farmers. The *gwilt* [*gult*] -holder might also hold some fields as *rist* within his estate of *gwilt* [*gult*] land" (Hoben, 1973: 6).

But the *rist* system, which an Amhara used to describe his membership in a descent group and its consequent rights, was of central importance to the social organisation of the Amhara community (Hoben 1963:106; 1973:7). In its most general sense, *rist* referred to "the supposedly inalienable rights that accrue to every living descendant of the chief father of a maximal house". When an individual referred to his *rist* in this general sense, he referred to all the lands which he felt he must have rights in by virtue of his many ancestral affiliations, most of which he would admit that he himself could not trace. In this sense, *rist* remained for most people more of a value than an economic or political possibility. By contrast, in a more limited sense, *rist* referred to primary land divisions where his known ancestors in recent generations had exercised their land use rights. Therefore, here *rist* referred to the "land over which an individual has effective control by virtue of his recognised claim to membership in the appropriate ambilineal descent group" (Hoben, 1963: 107).

Therefore, the most immediate meaning of *rist* is land over which an individual has effective control by virtue of his recognised claim to membership in the appropriate ambilineal descent group. As Hoben stated, though *rist* rights were held by both men and women, men performed almost all of the work on the land and thought of their wives' *rist* along with their own. Thus the Amhara speak of three categories of *rist*; namely father's *rist*, mother's *rist*, and child's *rist*. The third type refers to the rights that a man had to use his wife or ex-wife's *rist* if he has children by her who are living with him (1963:107-112).

Dessalegn also explained that under the *rist* land tenure system each member of the society was assured a piece of land, however small it was, since any legitimate member's claims were always considered. This had led some to argue that the system minimised landlessness, for "it was effective in allocating land to people and people to land". Because of the practice of such a land tenure system, tenancy was not widespread in Gojjam and other northern Amhara regions. However, a small percentage of tenants did exist in the Amhara society and in Gojjam they were estimated to be 13%. It is important to note here that the extent of tenancy varied from region to region as well as within regions and localities, although detailed studies on various regions are not available (Dessalegn, 1984).

This land tenure system society was practised until the 1974 social revolution. The land tenure system was especially affected by the land reform proclamation of 1975, which is, according to Dessalegn, the first and central legislation which set off the process of land distribution and the organisation of peasants in *kebele*. In James McCann's words the proclamation:

"ended landlord-tenant relations, restricted private landholding to ten hectares, and forbade the hiring of agricultural labour within the private sector. Large private concessionary farms became state farms, and the marketing of grain by private traders was curtailed in favour of a national marketing parastatal. Land distribution and judiciary powers below the subdistrict level devolved to peasant associations, which elected their own leadership and took on many of the duties previously held by local *chiqashums* and *balabats* (McCann, 1987).

The institutions of *rist* and *gult* were found in Yetmen prior to the revolution. The provisions of the land

reform proclamation were implemented by *kebele* which were organised on an area of 800 hectares of land. Initially the major function of these *kebele* was to implement the land reform. But they were also given a wide range of functions and responsibilities, including the administration of public property, the establishment of judicial tribunals which are autonomous rural courts dealing with disputes among peasants, the establishments of service co-operatives, and the building of schools and clinics, and since 1985 also villagisation programmes. In Dessalegn's view "in the *rist* areas, the abolition of recurrent land claims and therefore of the 'corporate' family system... is bound to have profound social and familial implication..." (1984: 39). The first act of implementation of the reform was the organisation of *kebele* and the distribution of land within each *kebele* area (i.e. 20 *gasha* or 800 hectares). But the method of land distribution, and the criteria used varied not only from one locality to another but also within each locality as well. As a result, as Dessalegn indicated in his statement about the condition in Adet (a district of Gojjam) the implementation of land reform was slow. According to Dessalegn, "...it was only in 1980 and 1981 that some form of land distribution was carried out. This is true of the *rist* areas, in some of which actual large-scale land distribution had not taken place by 1981..." (1984: 46-47). The land allotment adopted in the *rist* tenure areas was made on the basis of family size and the quality of land. Each household receiving land had a share from both the good as well as the poor land available for distribution. And also a minimum ceiling of a unit of land was set for a household, and any addition over this was based on the number of household members (Dessalegn, 1984: 47).

Every household, except those formed since the last land distribution, is entitled to at least 1,000 sq metres of land at the backyard of each house. This land is mostly used for growing *gesho*, eucalyptus, maize and vegetables. It is enclosed by a fence and trees. Those who were not in the PC and who had no land before the recent land redistribution still have no land. Sons who want to get married must show their strength and capability in ploughing land. Since land has never been sold in Yetmen, or in Gojjam in general, we cannot know the price of an average holding. There are some women divorcees and widows who own a piece of land. The villagers prefer to resolve disputes through the local institution of *Shimgilina* (council of elders) rather than going to government courts.

The last land distribution was in 1997. The land distribution was not fair to those who were in power during the Derg regime. Land was given by considering the type (fertility) of land, it was given by mixing fertile and less fertile land. Irrigated and the best type of land were given to those who had a good approach to the people doing the land distributions. Women now have equal access to land and they can take their share when they get divorced. Urban people get land like people living in rural areas and many of them rent land and use it to produce different types of grain.

Farm Labour

The allocation of labour in the area is usually determined by the composition of the household. Gender and age are the major determinants of the division of labour. Ploughing (*kocha*) is a male activity. Men are also expected to lead the daily activities of the household. Other agricultural activities such as weeding, harvesting, and transporting crops, and livestock activities are usually carried out communally within the household and can be done by men or women. Activities solely performed or managed by women include processing of grain, preparation of food, rearing of children and other domestic activities. Boys/girls of age 6 to 12/10 are locally called *leffo / ligoch* and are involved in herding of livestock and in helping parents with domestic work. Boys of 13 or more usually help with farm work, while girls of 10 and above assist with domestic work and the collection of dung.

Apart from household labour, there is also traditional wage labour and labour sharing, in the area. If it rains during harvesting farmers cannot use the traditional work group methods since it is vital to get the harvest in as soon as possible. In this situation they use wage labour. There are different types of jobs for which wages are paid. The nature of these jobs is varied, in that some are short-term and casual or

seasonal, while others are long-term. Wages are largely paid in kind in the form of grain. Labour is hired for herding, ploughing, harvesting and building. There are other activities like baby-minding, well-digging and wood chopping carried out through wage labour. Table 4 shows an estimate of the percentage of households employing wage labour in 1994/5:

Table 4: Wage labour in Yetmen in 1994

<i>activity</i>	<i>% of households employing</i>	<i>time</i>
ploughing	3%	mostly July
harvesting	25%	December and January
carpentry/building	6%	March-May/Oct-Nov
farm servant	50%	March/April
babyminder	2%	
herder	20%	May/June
well-digging	15%	Dec/May
wood chopping	12%	March/April

Source: interviews

Rich rural people can afford to employ servants to help them in farm and herd activities; women are not employed as servants in rural households even in the rich ones. In the urban part of Yetmen young women are employed as servants in a few households. Labourers are also employed on a daily basis to carry quintals of grain and to move the grain by car; this for merchants living in Yetmen.

There is a shortage of labour for harvesting in January and February, and for ploughing in July. There are migrant workers coming from neighbouring *kebele* to perform these activities (except ploughing). People in Yetmen also migrate to the neighbouring *kebele* for wage labour. Hard work, trustworthiness and responsibility are the principal criteria used in the area to identify the right person for the job.

Agricultural wage labour is known locally as "labour for crop". It takes a number of forms as described below:

Be-kurt: this is an arrangement whereby *bale kurt arash* (the farm servant) works for an individual landholder at a predetermined wage. In this arrangement the farm servant (*arash*) lives with the employer's household and is provided with food and a sleeping place. The hired tiller is requested to perform other activities over and above the farm-work. Payment for this kind of work currently ranges from 15 to 20 *dirib* (5 *dirib* = approx 100kg) of crop per year, in addition to board and lodging. *Be-kurt* is an arrangement when a given household does not have any male member to assist the father in farm work, or when all children, especially male ones, are sent to school and their parents want them to give emphasis to their education, or when children are self-sufficient and when parents have no one to support them.

Ke-arat (one-fourth): this is an arrangement where by a servant is employed in the household for doing farm activities and other activities in the employer's house. His shelter and food is with his employer. He take $\frac{1}{4}$ of his employers yield at harvest. This arrangement is similar with *be-kurt*.

Siso (one-third) is a common arrangement for wage labour. Under these arrangements all the necessary inputs except labour are provided by the plot owner. Unlike the other two arrangements the hired tiller does not live and eat with the household and does not perform any other activity

other than farm tasks. The wage payment is determined by the yield on the plot. The yield is divided in the ratio 1: 2 in favour of the landholders; i.e. they take $\frac{2}{3}$. The tiller's wife also works on the land with her husband and she also takes lunch when they work on the farm. She takes lunch once for each time the land-owner's wife take lunch twice. When the arrangement is *siso* the owner of the land pays tax; in return for this the sharecropper does additional work (also called *guluma*) for not having to pay the tax. *Siso* is also an arrangement between son and father; a married son who has no land receives $\frac{1}{3}$ of the produce, while working as a full-time farmer on his father's land.

Labour sharing is the other major form of pooling of labour in the area. There are different forms of labour sharing, viz. *debo*, *wenfel*, and *guluma*. *Debo*, another name of which is *jige*, involves the labour of many people on the land of an individual villager, who has good relationships with the would-be participants, usually for ploughing and harvesting. *Debo* is usually called when the peasants are exposed to natural, social or political disasters and need additional labour at the right time. The one who calls *debo* usually prepares food and drink for the participants.

Other group activities are carried out through another form of collaboration called *wenfel*. This is an arrangement whereby an individual owner of land and an ox gets a partner of similar ownership status. They combine their oxen and their labour and work equal amounts on each landholding. Obligations are reciprocal. *Wenfel* is usually formed by individuals who are related to one another either by consanguinity or affinity. Food and drinks may be provided by the person who has the work to be done in cooperation. In *wenfel* the person whose work is done must help those people who helped him. In *debo* the person whose work is done has no obligation to those people who have helped him.

Guluma is another form of labour-sharing, usually used to help elderly and disabled people. This is usually practised among relatives. The farmer does all the farm activities and other tasks without any kind of payment.

Interlinkages

It is a tradition in Yetmen to share labour, oxen, and different farm implements among the residents. Sharing and borrowing is also common in the non-agricultural life of the community. With regard to agriculture the following arrangements are common:

1. labour for crop (described above under *Labour*)
2. labour sharing (described above)
3. labour for oxen
4. *mekenajo* - oxen sharing
5. sharecropping (*abel* or *yeikul ihil*)
6. *arata*
7. *kend be kend*

Labour for oxen: under this arrangement the individual holder of land works for those who own oxen in exchange for the use of the oxen to cultivate his land. An individual should work for two days for the oxen-owner in order to use a pair of oxen on his land for one day.

Mekenajo: this is an ox-sharing agreement whereby an individual farmer working only a single ox pairs it with another farmer owning an ox and they work their respective fields taking turns.

Abel or *yeikul irsha*: this is a sharecropping arrangement under which an individual farmer cultivates the farm of another and they share the products on the basis of their agreement. People who have a plot but do not have farm implements and oxen enter into an agreement with those who have them. Those with the implements may cover the expenses of fertiliser, seed, herbicide and fulfil whatever

is required to produce the crop. If the arrangement is *yeikul ihil* they share the yield equally.

Arata: this is a traditional form of credit. The word *arata* signifies the amount of interest an individual has to pay for a certain amount of borrowed money or grain. In Yetmen repayment of the loan (principal plus interest) is often in the form of grain. For example, for borrowing 100 *birr* someone will pay 100kg of *tef*. Hence the interest payment varies with fluctuations in the price of *tef*.

Kend bekend: This is another type of labour sharing that was common in earlier times, though not now. In this case persons with the same number of oxen and the same land size enter an agreement and work together on both lands and share the products equally.

Due to the fear that disputes may arise between relatives, most interlinkages are not based on kinship relations. The main criterion for interlinkages is the will of both parties to enter into an agreement. The employer has to supply the necessary farming materials while the individual to be hired should be energetic and has to fulfil the agreement.

There have been four recent community works: maintaining the road to Zebch; emptying ponds where malaria mosquitoes might breed; building terraces on the slopey area near the church; and building the compound of the police station. The work is organised using the *mengistawi budin* system (see below); it is controlled work at given times and if people do not go they are fined.

Farming Technology

The peasants, who are always males, use the ox-plough farming technique. The farm implements involved in the preparation of land includes *maresha* (plough head), *mofer* (plough beam) and *kenber* (yoke), combined and pulled by two oxen, and manual implements such as *mekotkocha* (forked hoe) (MoA, 1984:19). They use sickles and forks and spades made of wood during the harvest season. The harvesting of grain, which is principally men's work, is carried out with farming implements for cutting such as *machid* (sickle). Women and children assist by collecting the tied bundles of cut grains in the field and transporting them to a threshing ground (an earthen floor usually polished with cow-dung). Threshing is either done by beating with sticks or continuously driving a team of several oxen (or other animals) over the harvest. Winnowing is done by tossing the grain into the air using a *mensch* (a three tined wooden or metal pitch fork) or *layda* (a wooden spatula or shovel).

There are different kinds of storage facilities. Among these, the following are important in grain storage.

1. *gotera* is a grain store kept outside the living rooms of the farmers, big in size, mostly made of wooden frames and plastered with mud.
2. *dibignit* has a similar shape to *gotera*, but is smaller in size and usually kept inside the living rooms. It is usually made of mud only.
3. *gudguad* is a pit dug underground; and
4. *gota* is like *dibignit* in size but made with similar construction materials as *gotera*.

Grain is transported to this store by donkey and human labour. The villagers contend that they are very careful not to lose grain. That they value it highly is shown by the saying *ihil nigus new* ("grain is a king"). In 1994 it was reported that most individuals do not have enough containers for transporting the yield and have to borrow *akmada* (sacks made from hides) from fellow villagers. Since the sacks may be torn, considerable amounts of grain may be lost on the way from the threshing field to the store. In 2005 many people did not use *akmada* to transport their grains. They are using the containers that they buy together with fertiliser. There is also a loss of grain in the process of winnowing it from the husks.

Farming Innovations

In 1994 it was reported that the following innovations were introduced in the community:

Tef: A new variety of *tef* was introduced in 1983 in order to increase production and productivity. The new variety was proposed and introduced by the development agents and was tried first by the PCs. This variety of *tef* was successful and adopted by all the peasants. The long-term effect of the new variety is good.

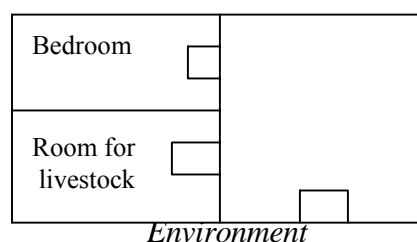
Guaya: In 1994 the researchers reported that *guaya* (vetch) was first introduced in 1992 to substitute for the other pulses growing in the area, (horsebeans and cowpeas) which were not doing well. It was introduced by the development workers from the MoA and the best farmers tried it first. It was not so successful and adopted by about half of the farmers in the area. Some farmers opted for producing *tef* which gets a higher price rather than wasting their resources on producing *guaya* which sells for low prices. The long run effects were not good. The land has not been very suitable and farmers have not got as much harvest as expected. However, in 2005 women told a researcher that people have been cultivating *guaya* for a long time.

Fertiliser: The soil has been losing its fertility over time and the farmers were looking for solutions. Fertiliser was introduced in 1969 in order to improve soil fertility and increase yield. Development agents proposed it and the farmers who could afford to tried it first. It was not successful at first. It was not suitable to the crop varieties grown then. It was adopted by relatively richer farmers who could afford to buy it. The long run effects are both good and bad. Good because now it gives good yields; bad because the land is getting used to it and cannot give any yield without the use of fertilisers.

Mensh (three-pronged fork; made of metal): the *mensh* which was in use before was made of wood. The metallic one was introduced in 1983 as it is more durable, and easy to handle and use. It was proposed by development agents and tried by the PCs first. It was better than the previous one. About a quarter of the farmers in Yetmen adopted it. Farmers who were not producing pulses did not adopt it for it is most useful for pulses. The long run effects are good.

Common Property Resources

Compared with 30-40 years ago more than 50% of the common grazing land and all the forest land has been brought into cultivation. There is now not much common grazing land; everybody has equal access to it. The use of the common grazing land may be banned during the wet season if there is too much waterlogging. Drought has affected the growth of grass and the land has been overgrazed. This has caused a lot of cattle to die every year. In the past there was widespread livestock theft because people used to keep their livestock in the field by making a communal fence. At this time thieves came and took many livestock. Nowadays people keep their livestock in their houses. Their house is designed with a room for their livestock. The entrance may be on the right or the left.



There is an insignificant amount of erosion, since Yetmen is located on a plain. The site is suitable for agriculture. Soils have varying fertility. Soils of the Blue Nile valley are said to be extremely fertile while soils are less fertile on the lava plateau. The soils of the Bichena region are of three major types, namely sandy in the lowlands, black soil found scattered here and there and red soil characterising most of the region.

The fertility of the soil seems to have been decreasing. In 1994 it was reported that peasants use fertiliser and crop rotation to get a better amount and quality of output. Most of the peasants do not use dung as a fertiliser for big farms but only for horticulture (*yeguario atikilt*) planted around homesteads. In 2005 respondents said that peasants can't use their land without fertilisers and crop rotation is not common because peasants sow the same seed which can generate more cash.

Until the late 1930s about 25% of the land was covered with trees. Yetmen is the only local *kebele* with no communal forest. In 1994 small amounts of eucalyptus trees were found in the centre of the village; otherwise people bought wood from surrounding *kebele*. In 2005 it was reported that many people have many eucalyptus trees in their compound and they use these trees for various purposes. Dried animal manure is the main source of fuel. Wood is also used as a fuel but it is mostly used for constructing houses.

There is no water pollution problem in Yetmen.

4. Off-farm Activities

Communal Work

Individuals usually build their houses by getting together with other people; men and women work together. Women fetch water and daub walls with clay. People call friends and relatives for cooperation. Women do the cooking for feasts that are prepared to celebrate holidays or other festivals. They fetch water, chop meat and onions, and burn wood and the like. Sometimes men assign who is to do which work; nobody is excluded from this work but people are assigned based on their ability. Community work organised by the government is discussed below.

Household Off-farm Activities

Women often bake *injera* and bread and prepare *wot* and other food items. They are also known for their basket (*sifet*) weaving. They make baskets for different household purposes including *lantika* (for decoration), *massobe-work* (eating basket), *saffed*, and *wenfit* (sieves). One of the units of measurement known as *dirib* is a container made by women. Also, women spin cotton and give it to the weavers to make *shemma* out of it. A woman who is good at spinning is accorded respect; and her daughter is given a praised appellation known as *yebalemuya lij* (a daughter of capable woman) and she will get a chance to marry a respected and rich husband. Women distil *areke*.

Almost all peasants of the village construct houses and make fences. Some are engaged in selling crops in the village and supply major towns like Addis Ababa occasionally. Some women in Yetmen town sell local drinks like *areke* (distilled liquor), *tella* (local beer), *birz* (honey drink) and *tej* (mead). Women in the rural part of Yetmen make *areke* and sell it either in the market or to the women who sell it in the town. Women are also engaged in petty cash trading and in collecting and selling dung-cakes. Poor

households play an active role in these activities. They spend the profit they earn for household purposes. However, their husbands might instruct them on how to spend it.

Farmers were not used to trading 20 years ago. This became common when most of the agricultural land was taken by PC and the landholdings of each household declined. Involvement in trade was begun by farmers whose land was taken by the cooperatives. It was profitable before more people were engaged in it: in 1994 about a quarter of the people in the area were involved in trade, including farmers and unemployed high school dropouts. The two groups who have failed to participate are those who are rich and those who are too poor because of lack of capital. The long run effect has been good, in that the profit can be used for household expenditure rather than selling stock.

Occupational Structure

The people of Yetmen are predominantly peasants, but there are other specialised occupations to be found in Yetmen town. In 1994 the following occupations were found in the *kebele* including the town: peasant, trader, blacksmith, artisan (for building houses), weaver, mason, potter, tanner, diesel engine operator for generating electric light, flour mill operator, agricultural extension agent, elementary and junior high school teachers. In 2005 there was no need for a diesel engine operator and there were also drivers who drive all the rich merchants' cars; there are about 15 merchants. The younger energetic rich are seen as selfish by many in the community; some have businesses in Addis and are not concerned about the community. Priests are very powerful and people listen to what they say, which is not the case with government officials. They can order people not to work for a week (*gizit*) for undeclared reasons. Priests are educated and people trust them.

In 1994 women's occupations were limited to teaching and pottery. In 1994 there were 23 teachers of whom 9 were women. In 2005 women also ironed clothes, and the current telecommunication operator is a woman. There are many school drop-outs in the *kebele*.

Migration

Migration is not common in Yetmen though there is a pattern of occasional migration to Addis Ababa and other major towns which involves both men and women. Young women usually migrate to urban areas to be employed as servants in hotels or households and also to be involved in petty trade. Men usually migrate to work as daily labourers. Some people from the *kebele* may go to other places for seasonal wage labour. Small numbers of villagers migrate to major towns like to Addis Ababa due to the apparently glamorous town life.

Merchants travel to major cities like Addis Ababa repeatedly for a very short period of time, in order to sell produce from the rural markets, and to take in return other consumer commodities. However, it is mostly young men, and sometimes male household heads in poor households, who migrate seasonally to large sugarcane, coffee and tea plantations in the south who need seasonal labour. They may stay there from three to six months. But in most cases they are unable to bring anything back because the wages they get are very meagre to support even oneself. It is again the poor who mostly resort to longer-term migration. Some migrate when agriculture fails to support their family, while others hear the success of earlier migrants and want to improve their lives too. Here again the direction of migration is to the south, and they may be engaged in daily work or be hired as a guard. A few successful people may run their own businesses. However, this group of people may not return to their home village again, even those who have their own households, and only a few people send money and other goods even once.

Rural-Urban Linkages

The rural areas that have strong linkages with Yetmen are, Zebch and Yemrit which constitute Felege Selam *kebele* with Yetmen, Debissa, Enajima, Yeziba, Dibbet, Agunchit, Sebshengo, Berch and Tirch. The people in Yetmen are tied with people in these areas through marriage, and hence they share the farmlands that are situated in the middle. They also jointly use the grazing lands. The other thing that links these areas is the market. The relatively central location of Yetmen gives it unique importance as a market place. The market is held three times a week on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays. Young people, who are engaged in small-scale trading also go to the market places of other areas. In the above site areas there are different churches named after the arks they possess, and which holidays are observed monthly in the churches on the saints' days to which the church is dedicated. So people observe the holidays with their relatives in different areas. Some well-to-do farmers hire young men who can work on their farmlands on a contractual basis usually for a year or two, to be paid in kind based on their agreement. This arrangement known as *kurt* has been described above. The hired person resides with the employers until the contract ends or until they disagree about the terms.

The two urban areas to which the people in Yetmen have strong linkages are Dejen and Bichena. The people in Yetmen depend on these urban centres for their medical needs which cannot be met locally. Students are also supposed to make their ways to these urban areas, if they are to attend their secondary education. They usually rent a room in groups, while their parents send them food, so that they pursue their education. The other group of people who have strong urban linkages are merchants. Since the two areas are the immediate urban centres there is a strong trade linkage with them. Although the intensity, frequency and the number of people linked is less, there are links with Debre Markos and Addis Ababa. Court cases that cannot be settled at the *Wereda* level in Bichena are sent to Debre Markos. There is also a trade link with it because it is the major urban centre in the area. In addition, merchants have strong trading linkages with Addis Ababa.

5. Reproductive Activity

Housing

The types of house found in the *kebele* are tin-roofed and thatched huts (*gojjo*) varying in size. In 1994 55% of the houses of the *kebele* were tin-roofed, while the remaining 45% were *gojjo*. The most fascinating brick-built house in the community has 5 modern rooms with a tiled floor, ceiling, shower room, bedrooms and other facilities. This house cost about 30,000 *birr*. To build an ordinary zinc-roofed house, which would have 40 sheets of tin, would cost about 4,000 *birr*. To build a big *gojjo* may cost up to 8,000 *birr*, whereas to build a small one costs around 500 *birr*. A hut lasts for 10 years; and a tin-roofed house excluding the special one may last for 30 years. Most houses at this time include a room for livestock. People use animal dung to polish the floor and paint the walls.

The houses of the richest people are larger in size, and better in condition than that of the poor. But they mostly have insignificant difference with middle-income people. However, the richest people in the urban site have big houses built of bricks and their compounds are built with stones and some have satellite dishes. But the houses of the poor people are usually *gojjo* which are not properly maintained, and if they have any livestock, they spend the night together in the same room or in a barely separate room.

People get access to land for housing during land distributions; however since land distribution has not taken place since 1997 there is no access to land for housing for young people. They build houses in

either of their parents' compound, usually that of the parents of the bridegroom. Because there is a shortage of land in the community there is no scheme for allotting land for housing. Young people with new households may live with the husband's parents for a long time.

Domestic Technology

People use dried animal manure and charcoal and firewood for cooking and heating purposes. Many people living in the urban part of Yetmen use wood and charcoal together with animal dung, while most people in the rural part use animal dung by collecting it from the field or from their cattle. Crop residue is rarely used, as it is usually used for animal feed. Occasionally during ceremonies, wood is used. For lighting most people use oil lamps and there is electric light in the centre of the village.

The dung-cakes mostly used as fuel for cooking are made by women, who also fetch water from wells, taps or the river. There are two rivers surrounding the *kebele* (Muga and Yegudfin). The former is perennial; whereas the latter exists only in the wet season. There used to be plenty of springs but the drought dried them up. There is no problem of water availability in the *kebele* since there are plenty of water wells, though they are not purified. They also dry up during hot summers and crumble. When some of the wells dry up during dry seasons, the villagers fetch water from other wells further away and people who live near the river Muga fetch water from it. There is piped drinking water in the town and some water points in the rural area.

In 1994 it was reported that there were some latrines used by enlightened people. However the villagers, for the most part, did not use latrines. It was estimated that there were about 15 latrines in the *kebele*. The importance of the latrine was taught by the elementary and junior high school of the village. The usage and building of latrines was effected by the now dissolved cooperative society with the educational support of the previous government. In 2005 officials of the current government (EPRDF) were also teaching about the importance of latrines and instructed people to dig holes. They were told they would be punished if they did not and those convinced that this would be the case did dig holes, though they have not been used.

Grain mills are easily accessible in Yetmen town. A few rich people have refrigerators.

Household Management

The people of Yetmen have a division of labour on the bases of gender and age. Tasks are shown in the table in the Appendix. Major decisions are mostly made by husbands / men. Sometimes wives / women discuss things with men and they argue raising points but ultimate decisions are mostly made by men. A main household task is the allocation of resources.

Fertility

In 1994 it was reported that the fertility rate was high, while the death rate was very low. Contraceptives and family planning were not used by the villagers. However, a few prostitutes selling alcoholic drinks, coffee and tea in the so-called tea houses, did use contraceptives. In 2005 respondents said that the desired number of children is four for most people and this is regardless of their status. Women avoid having more children by using contraceptives. Family planning is easily available in a private clinic found in Yetmen, a clinic at Zebch and other nearby urban places. The contraceptive they get is in the form of pills and syringes (needle). Condoms are commonly used by prostitutes. Abortion is not easily available. Women usually give birth even if it is an unwanted baby. Most people are convinced of the need to use

condoms due to the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Yetmen. Many people have died of HIV/AIDS. This is recent and now people are becoming afraid of it. There is a change in knowledge and attitude towards HIV but there is no significant change in the people's practice.

Infertile women are despised because they are considered to be cursed. There is no identified infertile man in the community. Women who do not have children go to holy water (*tsebel*) and traditional healers; women's infertility sometimes causes divorce.

Childbirth and Childcare

Most pregnant women do not receive any care; they work till they give birth. After giving birth they stop work for 40 days. This is because it is believed that evil spirits may cause harm to the woman and the newly born baby if they go out of the home within 40 days. The woman is expected to resume her usual tasks after this time. Pregnant women are given food that they like to eat because the baby will have some kind of mark on its skin if the mother didn't eat what she desired during pregnancy regardless of their economic status. They usually give birth at their house but are taken to health centres whenever a serious problem happens. Men and women prefer to have boy babies. Babies born disabled or very weak are treated better than the healthy ones because babies with disability need more care and attention.

Socialisation

Qualities desirable in men include being a hard worker, patience and being sociable. They believe some people are born with these qualities, others learn them starting from childhood, but there are still some people who cannot develop one or more of these qualities. When socialising, children parents, kin and educators try to achieve responsible, self confident and good citizens, who will support themselves, their parents and their community alike. Children are advised to conform to these objectives starting from their early childhood. But when they fail to adhere to this, they are ridiculed and punished. Children are socialised to be hard workers, honest, heroes, etc. They are expected to respect their elders. A male elder is referred to as *gash*e by younger persons; or this term may be added to his name as a prefix. Similarly, for female elders the term *itiye* is used. For older people *aya* or *aba* is used as a polite designation, the terms may also be added to their names as prefixes.

In 1994 it was reported that, since guests are highly respected, sons or daughters have the moral obligation to wash the feet of visitors. They would be appreciated and blessed; which is called *mirikat*. A son or a daughter who does not behave properly will be cursed, which is known as *irgiman*. The villagers believe that this will create misfortune in the violators' future lives. It is believed that children, including young people who are socialised in this manner, will be good members of the community. They are also expected to resolve disputes through the institution called *Shimgilina* (local council of elders) and they will be given priority in participating in *equb* (local saving and credit association) and *iddir* (funeral association). These duties are left to males.

In 2005 respondents said that although guests are still highly respected; nowadays children do not wash their feet, nor do the guests demand that. But when children behave as desired by their parents they will be appreciated and blessed, otherwise they will be cursed,. Mothers and fathers may bless or curse their children, but the people believe that it is the fathers' blessings or curses that have greater influences on the lives of the children than that of the mothers. This is because when fathers say those things they really mean them, but mothers do not utter all the things they feel.

According to a group of women in 1994 qualities desirable in women include being good with their

hands, a hard worker, and good at house management, respecting their husbands by engaging in some kind of income-earning activity, decency, cleverness, kindness, generosity, obedience, sociability and agreeableness and loving her husband, home and children. Girls should help their mothers by performing household tasks. They have to learn everything such as cooking various dishes, cotton spinning, brewing local drinks, particularly *tella*, how to take care of children, etc. An adolescent girl who fails to fulfil these duties may not get married; and she will be given the nickname *geltu*.

A successful farmer is a hard worker, but hard work alone cannot guarantee a farmer to be successful, because farming is dependent on many other variables such as the weather, crop and animal diseases and fertiliser availability. And if any agricultural misfortune happens, farmers having other skills like weaving and blacksmithing can cope better than those who totally depend on their farms. A successful farmer is a hard worker. Education also helps some to be successful. The most respected technical skills are carpentry, tailoring, building, blacksmithing and weaving. The qualities that are not desirable in men are drinking, scolding, backbiting, stealing, lying, cheating, being self-centred, and lacking respect for elders. In the case of boys, undesirable traits include crying, lying, stealing, quarrelling with other boys, not attending school regularly and not obeying orders. Qualities that are not desirable in women include, fornication, backbiting, quarrelling with neighbours, and not respecting her husband and her work. In girls the undesirable qualities are not assisting the mother in domestic work, and not being interested to learn how to be a good wife or woman.

A group of men and women said it is important to be able to read, write and do sums to be a successful farmer. It enables people to engage in off-farm activities. The skills most respected are those of the lawyer and orator. At primary school, children learn Amharic, English, mathematics, social sciences, physical education, agriculture, technology, geography, art, handicraft, music and home economics. At the church school they learn the Amharic alphabet, *Dawit*, *Ge'ez*, *Tsomedegua*, *Kinnie*, *Kidassie*, *Meraf*, *Digua*, *Zimarie*, and *Akuakuam*. It is important to be able to read, write and do sums to be a successful farmer and it enables the farmer to manage his house economically. It also enables the farmer to engage in off-farm activities especially in trading. Those people who are engaged both in farming and in trading and who are successful are respected, because they have a diversified income source. School is useful for being a better farmer. It makes a difference to stay longer at school but not in the same class.

In 1994 it was said that an informal education, and learning by doing, help to be a successful farmer's wife. The successful farmer's wife has good house management skills. The most respected technical skills for women were making good baskets and spinning. According to the women, education does not help to become a successful farmer's wife, or to engage in off-farm income. They said that about 20% of the children were at school. In 2005 it was reported that most farmers in Yetmen do not have any formal education and even younger boys who have formed their own households do not pursue their education; either they terminated attending class at some stage or they have never been enrolled in school. And those students who are currently enrolled in school do not want to be farmers because farmland per person is failing to support families. But they want to continue their education as far as they can and they want to have other opportunities. And for the wives, besides having an informal education acquired through socialisation, basic knowledge of reading, writing and being able to make simple calculation helps them to manage their households successfully and to be engaged in small scale trading or helping their husbands who are engaged in trading.

The elementary and junior high school found in the *kebele* plays a tremendous role in socialising students by inculcating societal norms including national values. A boy or a girl who is able to easily learn the expected roles described earlier is considered as intelligent. Individuals who go to school and who achieve higher educational levels and those who are good at dispute settlements are regarded as intelligent. Deceitfulness, dishonesty, theft and other distasteful things are labelled as wicked deeds and are highly frowned upon.

Education

In 1994 it was reported that an active boy or a girl starting from the age of 5 was sent to *ye kes timihirt bet* (local priest school). After the completion of this education, he or she was sent to elementary school. Those sons or daughters who do not show competence, and who are considered as passive, would not be sent to either of the schools. They remain at home and herd livestock; and when they grow older they will become peasants. There is an elementary and junior school in Yetmen. Table 5 shows some details for 1994. Of the 263 of pupils in Grades 1-6, 132 were girls (50%). There were 20 teachers for grades 1-6. The nearest secondary school is in Dejen. It has a total of 564 pupils in grades 9-12 and 27 teachers (1 female).

Table 5: Numbers in Yetmen school, 1994

	<i>grade 1</i>	<i>grade 2</i>	<i>grade 3</i>	<i>grade 4</i>	<i>grade 5</i>	<i>grade 6</i>	<i>grade 7</i>	<i>grade 8</i>
pupils	108	45	32	25	24	28	41	34
teachers	13	8	8	7	6	8	20	6
classes	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Source: field interviews

In 2005 respondents said that, unlike earlier times, it is only a few children who attend local priest school before they start attending primary schools. Mostly these children are the ones who help their parents by looking after cattle and by performing other duties, and who attend the priest schools simultaneously. But when their parents decide to send them to school they start learning formal education. However most children at ages of six or seven are sent to school after their family members teach them the Amharic alphabet. The school enrolls students from grades 1 to 8.

Table 6: Numbers in Yetmen school, 2005

Grade	Students who were registered			Students who completed			Number of Teachers in each grade
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	
1	126	142	268	113	126	239	4
2	78	103	181	87	90	167	3
3	80	90	170	72	90	162	3
4	79	69	148	78	70	148	2
5	97	72	169	90	69	157	5
6	75	70	145	74	69	143	5
7	184	137	321	179	143	322	7
8	170	151	321	155	154	309	7
Total	889	834	1723	848	809	1657	29*

* The total number of teachers was 29 out of whom 10 were females. But the sum in that column is greater than 29 because some teachers teach in more than one grade starting from grade five to grade eight.

** Source: school list.

There are more girls than boys in Grades 1 to 3. Most households with one son will not send him to school as he will be required for cattle herding; daughters can help before and after school. The drop-outs were reported as being mostly boys.

Students from Grades 1 to 4 learn Amharic, environmental science, English, mathematics and (physical education, music and drawing- as one subject). They attend two classes a day which are two hours each, and it is mostly student-centred with active student participation. Students from Grades 5 to 8 take Amharic and physical education in common. But basic science, music and drawing which are taken by students in grade 5 and 6 are substituted by chemistry, physics and biology for students in Grades 7 and 8.

An average student reads and writes effectively at Grade 2. But if a student attended priest school before coming to school s/he might read and write well even in Grade 1. However, some students may not read and write effectively up to Grade 3. Students who complete their Grade 8 and pass the national examinations are sent to Bichena to attend secondary school. But for some students who have relatives in Dejen and want to learn there, a letter is written for the school to enrol them, because Dejen is not in our *wereda* and the school has no obligation to enrol students from Yetmen.

Many people in Yetmen want the school to run an evening programme for those who cannot attend day time classes, because they are engaged in farming or other income-generating activities, or who might not been enrolled to school at all. They also want the school to enrol students at least for grades nine and ten so that their children attend school living with them, not having to go to Bichena or Dejen.

It was reported in 1994 that there were unemployed school leavers. For instance, out of the 27 high school graduates (15 females and 12 males), only 1 individual was employed in a government organisation while 2 of them were employed in farming. There were 4 people who graduated from universities and colleges. Except for one individual, a diploma graduate of the Awassa Agricultural College employed under his father as a fully-fledged grain trader, the others were government employees. Four males and one female graduated from the teachers training institute. While three of them were serving as teachers, one of them died this year. Four community members were attending

higher education in Ethiopian universities and in an European institute. It was reported that it had become common for students of the *kebele* to become school drop-outs because many graduates were unemployed.

Training

In 1994 it was reported that four years previously, at the time of the cooperative services, two peasants were trained as tractor operators and used their training for two years until the cooperative society was dissolved in 1991. Four peasants were trained at the Agarfa Peasant Training Centre (in Bale province) in general agricultural techniques including proper use of land, modern animal husbandry, bee-keeping and the like. It was reported that these people used their training for their personal agricultural activities. In 2005 respondents said that there was not much training given to anyone in the last few years. But people in the administrative post used to be contacted by people from the *wereda* and they used to meet many times, mainly to discuss administrative issues and sometimes issues concerning health. One woman got training about gender equality. Some people came to the school to teach people about HIV/AIDS and warn them in meetings. There is an HIV/AIDS club which helps those affected in Bichena.

Health

In 1994 it was reported that the villagers used to get modern medicines from a drug shop owned by a retired health assistant. While respondents said that the shop was closed by the local EPRDF officials because the man has no license to sell medicines, therefore it was operating illegally. This private clinic had a regular supply of antibiotics, but irregular supplies of malaria drugs (although it was not a malaria area). It had a minimum supply of bandages and needles. There was no initial charge. A course of antibiotics cost 30 *birr*, and malaria treatment cost 6 *birr*. The clinic was legal in 2005. The initial consulting session costs 3 *birr* and to get an injection administered costs 0.50 *birr*. To get a blood pressure test costs 1 *birr*. For a pregnant woman who wants to give birth in the clinic 15 *birr* is asked. Family planning pills cost 1 *birr* while a Depo injection costs 3 *birr*. But most people say that it is very expensive to get treated here and they have to go to Bichena to get a laboratory test.

In 1994 the nearest public clinic was in the neighbouring *kebele* of Zebch involving a walk of 3km from the middle of the village. An initial consulting fee of 0.50 *birr* was charged, except that children and pregnant women were not charged. The cost of a course of antibiotics was 15.95 *birr*, while treatment for malaria cost 1 *birr*. The clinic lacked the necessary drugs or the drugs have expired. It had a regular supply of antibiotics and malaria treatment. There was no doctor or nurse. It was open 24 hours a day. The clinic had equipment to sterilise needles and cooling storage with backup. It did not have a minimum supply of bandages and sterile needles. In 2005 the nearest health post was the one in Zebch which is the centre for the administration of Felegeselam *kebele*. But the people are not satisfied with the services, because there are no qualified staff and most medicines have expired. Thus people have to travel to Bichena which is 15 km from Yetmen, to get a better service and, if their problem is severe, they are referred to a hospital in Debre Markos which is about 70 km from Yetmen. In 1994 it cost 5.70 *birr* for transport. The initial consulting fee for an adult was 1 *birr*, and for a child it was free. There was a doctor in Debre Markos who charges 10 *birr* for the initial consultation. There was a traditional nurse in Yetmen who did not charge.

Most of the people in Yetmen do not go to modern health facilities when they get ill. Firstly they try different roots and leaves thought to have medicinal values by themselves. And if this fails to work they go to herbalists and try holy water. And they keep trying until they get better or it proves impossible.

Some people do not want to go to modern health facilities no matter how severe their disease is, though sometimes local herbalists tell their clients that it would be better if they visit a modern health provider.

In 1994 a group of men ranked diseases as problems as follows: typhus; TB; haemorrhoids; rubella; FUO (unknown fever); venereal diseases; gastritis; anthrax; meningitis; diarrhoea; trachoma; arthritis; infection; elephantiasis; and leprosy.

A group of women ranked diseases as problems as follows: TB; breast cancer; haemorrhoids; typhus; FUO; venereal diseases; trachoma; arthritis; gastritis; rabies; rubella; anthrax.

Children's diseases ranked as problems by a group of women, included: diarrhoea; rubella; ascaris; amoeba; teething (gum problem); FUO; typhus; and trachoma.

People in the community listed the following causes of diseases and treatment:

- (1) *Typhus*: It is caused by "demons" and infection. Typhus is prevented from spreading by segregating those who are infected and a ritual (traditional ceremony) with the intention to pay the demon his due so that he will not harm the family. Some traditional medicines are also used to prevent the disease from spreading. Treatments used for typhus include treatment by witch doctors, prayer at the the church, and visit to the hospital as a last resort.
- (2) *Tuberculosis* (TB): TB is caused by cold, alcoholic beverages, and infection. It can be prevented by not being exposed to cold, not drinking much, and avoiding contact with infected people. TB is treated by traditional medicine, visiting a health clinic and also the use of *tsebel*. The traditional medicine includes a mixture of tea, honey, garlic and fenugreek drunk together.
- (3) *Yetut beshita* (breast disease): It is caused by undressing outside while it is hot and can be prevented by taking care when getting undressed and doing it only in the house. It is treated mainly by traditional medicine and going to the doctor if it does not get any better. *Tsebel* is also used.
- (4) *Haemorrhoids*: These are caused by infection, using *plantago* and using leaves from young eucalyptus, etc. for cleaning after going to the toilet in the bush, and sitting on warm stones. It can be prevented by not using some leaves and not sitting on warm things. Treatment for haemorrhoids includes mainly traditional medicine combined with *tsebel*. Witch doctor's treatment will also be used if they do not heal. They rarely visit the health clinic for this disease.
- (5) *Rubella*: This is caused by demons. It used to be prevented by vaccination. But nowadays, it cannot be prevented. The group of men believe that everybody sooner or later will pass through such a disease and no prevention method will stop it, since it is the power of the devil. It is treated traditionally.
- (6) *FUO*: This is a new disease and nobody knows its cause or the prevention mechanism. This does not give any time to go to a doctor or any other facility. It is treated traditionally.
- (7) *Diarrhoea*: It is caused by dirt and can be prevented by avoiding dirt. It is treated by traditional medicine, drinking a lot of water, and visiting a doctor if these do not work.
- (8) *Wosfat* (ascaris): The cause is eating sweet foods and bread made of wheat. It can be prevented by not eating too much sweet food, especially sugar and candy. It is treated by traditional medicine and sometimes by visiting the health clinic.
- (9) *Amoeba*: It is caused by drinking dirty water. Amoeba can be prevented by drinking clean or boiled

water. Children can be treated by traditional doctors or visiting the health clinic if they do not get better.

- (10) *Gig*: They do not know the cause and cannot prevent it. *Gig* is treated by traditional medicine and visiting the doctor if it does not get better.

There are a number of traditional medical practitioners who prepare medicines for some illnesses. They describe the main diseases as follows:

- (1) *Shiwttta* or *mich*: This illness may correspond to the English terms influenza or catarrh. A person who suffers from this illness should drink a sip which is prepared from leaves of a plant known as *yehareg-iressa*.
- (2) *Yebuda-beshita* (evil eye caused disease): A plant root which is known by very few individuals is blended by mixing it with another plant leaf known as *tenadam(rue)* and garlic to make a medicine for this illness. The medicine is put inside a piece of new cloth and worn around the neck like a necklace. There is also another treatment for *yebudda-beshitta*: the victim is immersed in holy water.
- (3) *Yewof-beshita* ("literally bird illness" hepatitis): Since this disease is believed to be caused by a bat, the victim should eat a bat's flesh which is cooked with *wot* (stew) to get well. The other treatment of this disease is drinking a sip prepared from a plant leaf known as *senssel*.
- (4) *Chiffe* (rash): This is a skin disease which can be cured by rubbing on a cream-like substance prepared from a plant seed known as *yedega-aballo*.
- (5) *Yekolla-kussl* (lowland wound): The medicine for this disease is prepared from a plant found in a *tef* farm known as *gorteb*. After drying and crushing it with its seed, it is mixed with butter so as to make a cream-like substance. Then the medicine is rubbed on the affected skin of the patient.
- (6) *Ibittet (iktiyal)*: The symptom of this disease is a swollen spot on some part of the patient's body. After drying and crushing a plant root known as *nech-merech* which looks like a potato and which is found at the gorge of the river Abay it is mixed with butter to make a cream-like substance. The swollen spot of the patient is rubbed with this substance.
- (7) *Yejoro-memgel beshita* (ear infection disease): For this disease, an ear-drop is prepared from the leaf of a grape vine.
- (8) *Ye-koso til* (tapeworm): This parasite is obliterated from the host by drinking a liquid medicine prepared from a plant seed known as *inkokko*. The patient should not eat any food for ½ a day or so.

The 1994 researchers thought that there were also many other traditional medicines which the practitioners were not willing to tell to anyone. The above ones were described only after strong persuasion.

In 2005 according to the owner and health practitioner of the private clinic in Yetmen the most prevalent diseases were gastritis, 'infection-abscess', arthritis and haemorrhoids which affect adults of both sexes. Children were mostly affected by ascaris, amoeba and diarrhoea. 'Infection abscess' is a disease caused by bacteria, that usually affects limbs causing a swelling. And if it is not treated soon it might enlarge and leave that limb weaker.

6. Consumption

Food

The people usually eat *injera* and *wot* which is often made from beans or vetch. Rich people can get varieties of food such as vegetables, meat and dairy products, while most middle-wealth and poor people eat the same item of food most of the time. There is no considerable change of food items except in fasting seasons, when the supply of grains dwindles in some households. Starting from the rainy season they are forced to decrease the number of meals they take in a day. And during this time they plant vegetables in their backyards which can be eaten soon. On special occasions such as holidays, rich and middle-wealth people slaughter sheep by themselves, while the rest may contribute money to buy and slaughter a sheep in groups. This is when the holidays are seen by the people as very important. But on other holidays, poor and middle-wealth people may not do anything new to celebrate the holiday.

There is no food taboo that restricts children, women or other categories of people from eating a given food item. Everyone in a given household eats whatever is prepared. But it is the household head and very little children who are served first. However, children can also eat with their parents. There are no emergency crops as such; but the least valued pulse, the chickling pea was eaten during the drought of 1985 by some individuals. There has been no drought in the *kebele* for 40 years, except for the 1985 drought which affected the community to a minor extent as compared with other parts of the country.

Saving, Investment and Credit

Peasants save money. They invest the largest portion in purchasing agricultural inputs and other commodities and they keep a little as a reserve. Compared to traders, who take part in wholesale activities, retail in the village and build bigger zinc-roofed houses, savings and investments among the peasants are modest. For farmers livestock is one of the means for saving. But with ever decreasing grazing land they cannot keep large number of livestock. Some farmers also purchase grain when it is cheap and sell it when prices get higher. Most people in Yetmen keep their extra cash in their own house for future use. But richer merchants in the urban site save their money in banks in Dejen or even in Addis Ababa.

During the 1994 *meher* the MoA gave fertiliser on credit to farmers in different *kebele*, except Yetmen and Zebch. These were forbidden credit because of an outstanding debt to the Agricultural and Industrial Development Bank given to the PC in 1989. Fertiliser credit is now available. In 2005 there were two saving and credit associations in Yetmen. The first one was set up by the government and is monitored by the Amhara Region Saving and Credit Association, while the second was set up by the people themselves. These days many people have come to understand the use of the associations and the membership in both associations is increasing.

People do not borrow from relatives and friends unless the amount is small. They usually borrow from rich people or from money-lenders. Usually borrowers return 100 kg of *tef* for 100 *birr*, or 50 kg of *tef* for 50 *birr*. The agreement is written as if the borrower took 100 kg of *tef* and not 100 *birr*, and the witnesses of the agreement also sign as if they saw the borrower receiving 100 kg of *tef* and the following harvest season the lender goes where the borrower threshes his *tef* and take the 100 kg of *tef* from the threshing field, so that he will not have any problem of getting it after the harvest is taken into the house. However, if the lender agrees to receive interest in cash rather than in kind, the interest rate is 10 *birr* per month for 100 *birr*. And the borrower has to pay the interest every month until he returns the amount he borrowed. But if he fails to pay the interest the borrower will take the initial amount from the

person.

The people in Yetmen recently are investing in their children's education because they do not want to rely only on agriculture which is failing to support more families with decreasing farm size. So they think that their children will help them after they attend their school.

Household Assets

In 1994 respondents said that the following household assets were seen in a wealthy household in Yetmen town: 2 big tables, 2 smaller tables, 6 big chairs, 2 dishes made of clay, 3 tin dishes, 11 glasses, 4 plastic plates, 3 tin plates, 3 big trays and various baskets made from reeds, etc. Wealthy households in the rural parts of the *kebele* would not have such household assets. In poor households we may find a dish made of clay, 2 or 3 *medeb* (traditional mud seats) and other household goods made from reeds.

In 2005 it was reported that in very rich and rich households in the rural site there are big barrels and up to four big pots, in which to make *tella*. They might have also beds, chairs and a table, but this includes also some middle households. Middle households may also possess big pots. This is important because availability of *tella* throughout the year is one indicator of status in the rural part. But poor households may not have pots and other household furniture. However, all the above-cited households usually have cutlery and crockery although their number may vary according to the household's status. In contrast to this a destitute household may lack even the basic assets and hence be forced to borrow from neighbours. In the urban site, there are some rich people who have a TV, video player, and fridge; these people are engaged in big business activities.

Regarding houses, the size of the house varies according to the status of the household. The richer the household the bigger the house, with a corrugated iron roof. But the house-building pattern is the same for rich and poor households, except that the houses of poor people are not maintained well. However, destitute people live in thatched huts where they sleep, cook and do everything. But the other households use a thatched hut as a kitchen by building it in front of the main house. In the urban site rich people have houses built with bricks and stones while some live in a very congested manner because they sell part of their compound and even part of their house to other people who run businesses.

Local Services

In 1994 there were 16 shops in the *kebele* which normally stocked the various commodities found in major towns. The MoA had assigned one extension agent to work for the *kebele*. The peasants went to his office to consult him. This extension agent often visited farms. There was no *kalicha* in the *kebele*. The nearest one was found about 10 km from the village. There were 3 traditional birth attendants in the community.

The following other amenities were found in Yetmen *kebele*:

1. Telecommunication station (it has been out of service since the EPRDF held power)
2. Community-owned diesel generator for electric light (owned by the urban *kebele* association not the rural *kebele*)
3. Elementary & Junior High Schools
4. Private fertiliser shops which are eight in number
5. Police sub-station

There are now many shops in the urban site of Yetmen. Some of them are very big and their owners have

their own cars to transport agricultural goods to major towns and consumption commodities from those towns. There is a private pharmacy in the local clinic which stocks medicines which are in high demand in the area, though the people say that the price is more than they can afford. Thus they usually go to the health post in Zebch, where they might not get what they want.

Yetmen serves as a major market centre for the surrounding rural areas because the main road passes through it. In 2005 the market was held three times a week: on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. There are development agents in the *kebele* agriculture Bureau, who pay frequent visits to Yetmen, and try to help the farmers with their agriculture and their cattle. But some people say they are not effecting the change they should. There is also a veterinary clinic in Yetmen, but it does not usually give any service because there are no qualified staff, and it was not operational in the last year. It started to give simpler services only recently.

The following services were also available in Yetmen in 2005.

1. Telecommunication station with only one line, which does not give service consistently and at times it might not be giving service for more than a month.
2. Primary school
3. Police sub-station
4. Postal service.

7. Local Institutions and Organisations

Households

The basic unit of Amhara social life is the household (*beteseb*). The term *beteseb* also stands for family. A family consists of parents, children, and others such as adopted children who reside in the house and ex-members who are no longer resident. To be a member of a household through adoption is very rare. The dwelling unit of the Amhara, the homestead (*bet*), consists of one or more circular wattle and daub, thatched huts called *gojjo* and perhaps one or two grain stores (*gotera*). Usually the homestead comprises only one house which serves as living quarters for the entire household, kitchen and shelters for the family livestock. For Gojjam Amhara before villagisation, single homesteads normally stood alone separated from one another by between 20m and 1km. Homesteads ranged from units of one or two wattle and daub or stone huts containing a single nuclear family to hamlets of a dozen or more structures containing a few related families with their servants and retainers.

The Amhara household has two distinguishing characteristics: members are expected to carry out specific tasks allocated according to sex and other criteria, and they are all under the authority of a single senior male. Men are assigned such tasks as ploughing, sowing, harvesting, threshing, cattle and grain trading, slaughtering, herding, driving pack animals, building houses, and cutting wood. Women are responsible for cooking, making butter, carding and spinning, cutting, and carrying water and wood.

Members of a household eat together according to their age, with the exception of the particularly demanding times during the agricultural calendar. For instance, when the father is in the field for *kocha* (ploughing from dawn to dusk) he eats alone in the field. Normally, parents and their elder sons or daughters dine together; while children eat together. Sometimes, all members of a household eat together, when their individual tasks are finished in time or when it is not important to finish them quickly. The husband or the father is responsible for the household budget which all the members have the right to share in.

In 2005 it was reported that there are also people living alone, especially in the urban site. Women who are living alone work in local drink houses of their own or of other people. But men who live like this get their subsistence from daily work. Most households in Yetmen are male-headed, and a woman who has lost her husband would want to marry soon otherwise she will be labelled *galemota* with a connotation that no one is willing to marry her. Children who grow up in female-headed households are also considered to be arrogant as they lack control of fathers. However, there are a few female-headed households who support their children by renting their land or by giving it to a share-cropper.

People who are hired for a given period of time in a household and are not relatives of the members of the household are regarded as members of the household until they finish their contract. No distinction is made regarding dwelling, food and the like. But clothing might not be bought for him, unless he agrees that it will be deducted from what he will get at the end of the contract.

Young and old households are considered to be lacking self-sufficiency. This is because the younger households are recently formed and older households are declining. So both households need support from middle-aged households. And thus middle-aged households are considered as fully-fledged households.

Marriage

For Amhara society in general, marriage is a contractual agreement between a man and a woman, involving the pooling of their labour and their property in order to establish a new household and raise children. In principle either partner can institute divorce, which involves the separation of property merged through marriage. Hoben distinguished four types of union, three of which (equal partners, communion, and pay marriage) are considered fully legitimate forms of marriage by the Amhara (Hoben, 1963: 112-113). The most common type is *balekkul* (equal partners). Though such a marriage is announced in the parish church and at the actual wedding ceremony a blessing is given by a priest, the marriage is secular. *Qurban* (communion marriage) is identical to *balekkul* except that it is sanctified by a church ceremony during which the couple take communion together. Since it is a sacrament of the church it is considered indissoluble. The third type of legal marriage is *demoz* (pay marriage). This is a contractual agreement between a man and a woman, never arranged by parents, whereby the man undertakes to pay the woman a fixed salary per month or per year in return for which the woman lives with him and performs all the tasks expected of a wife. The fourth type is not considered marriage but just living together.

For a first marriage, elders who are chosen by the parents of the prospective groom, are sent to the parents of the prospective bride to request their consent to the marriage. If the parents of the woman agree, the date for the marriage is set immediately. The bride is expected to be a virgin. The society accords great value to virginity.

Except for a few individuals who have reached a higher educational level and hence have the chance to choose their marriage partner, marriage is usually arranged by parents or relatives. There is no bridewealth in the community. Instead *tilosh*, special gifts, have to be presented by the bridegroom to the bride. The gifts vary depending on the wealth of the prospective husband. In 1994 they were usually expected to consist of jewellery (necklaces, earrings and a ring made of gold) and dresses and shoes. Parents were also expected to give certain presents to the couple. The presents may be grain, a pair of oxen, or livestock, money and the like. The aim of the parents in presenting these items is to give the couple a good start (*kibibil*) so they can lead an independent life. The number of cattle given to the couple by one set of parents should be at least equal to what the other parents are willing to give. If the aspiring groom's family are unable to match what is demanded by the female's parents, the proposal is automatically refused. Either of the parents or both can give more cattle than the number negotiated; and

two sheep will be given to the parents of the bride.

In 2005 it was reported that usually 100 *birr* is given as a *tilosh* or else the bridegroom must buy clothing for the bride. Parents also give presents to the couple if they can afford to do so. But giving livestock for the newly married has proved to be impossible for most households as the number of livestock is so small. But each set of parents may give 1 *gemed* land (1 *gemed* = 50 m by 50 m or $\frac{1}{4}$ of a hectare) to the newly married. Otherwise, the bridegroom will work on his father's land to share $\frac{1}{3}$ (*siso*) of the produce.

In 1994 it was reported that within the community those who were of 'noble birth' did not marry with families whose ancestors were slaves (servants) before the *Derg* regime, with herdsmen, tenants, or poor families. In 2005 respondents said that the only restriction regarding marriage is that two people who have a kinship relationship up to the seventh degree of consanguinity cannot be married. In previous times it was impossible to be married with *baria* which literally means slave, who were brought from the south by landlords. Marriage with other people who worked as blacksmiths and weavers was also restricted, because it carried strong stigma from other people. But nowadays a few people have married some others from these categories because these people want to use their land, and because their occupation generates good income. But these people are continually ridiculed and insulted by others for spoiling their lineage.

As to the age at marriage, in 1994 it was said that the male has to reach a minimum of 17, while the female is about 14, under normal circumstances. However, child marriage was also practised. This is arranged when the parents of the prospective couple want to make their relationship ever-lasting. Around the age of 4 or 5, a feast-like wedding is prepared. The children consider themselves as siblings to each other until they reach the age of maturity. The bad aspect of this type of marriage is that it may be cancelled if the parents of the couple quarrel or disagree, due to any personal clashes if and when the would-be partners still live with their respective parents.

In 2005 respondents said the most prominent type of marriage is called *yemadego gabicha* in which the parents of the children propose that their children will be married when the children are eight to twelve years old. After they are married they stay in their parents' house; the parents agree to put aside for them a given amount of grain each year to be given when they start to live independently. Then they can start their own family after receiving resources such as land and assets like oxen. But this type of marriage does not last long as the children do not want to live together. Then they can marry again by their own choice or by their parents'. And this second type of marriage may last a long time, as long as they want to live together. Recently, the suitable age of marriage is in late teenage and it is good if the groom is a little over twenty. This is because first marriages which used to be set up during childhood have been failing after consuming much of income on the wedding day. But when the couple marry late they can manage their own house with great care.

Food and various types of local drink are brewed for the wedding day. All the kin are involved in contributing money, grain, or cattle for the feast, according to their wishes. For the ritual, there are various types of songs to be sung. The couple lives with the family of the husband until they build their own house. When they are ready to live on their own, they are given support from parents of both sides. Over and above the things they were promised at the time of the wedding, they are given flour, salt, oil, butter, spices, pepper, tools and equipment for agricultural practices from the husband's parents and kitchen utensils (such as *insira*, *mitad*, *sifed*, *mesob*, calabash, etc.) from the wife's parents.

Polygamy is completely non-existent in the community. In earlier times men used to have illicit children, but now the economic situation and fear of HIV/ AIDS have significantly decreased its prominence. However, there are some men who still go to the urban site and continue to have illicit sexual relationships with women who work in local drink houses.

Divorce

Divorce, which is considered as a misfortune, was reported as rare in 1994. The traditional conventions and norms of the community were strong mechanisms that prevented divorce. Divorced women were despised and given the nickname *galemota*. If divorce did occur, the land and any property were in theory shared equally. If the partners have children, they live under the custody of one of their parents according to the decisions of elders. Mostly, the causes for divorce are infertility and infidelity. Even if the husband may be infertile, it is the woman who is blamed; she is labelled as *beklo* (mule).

In 2005 respondents said that divorce is becoming common. People are getting divorced without any apparent reason. Either of the spouses can appeal to divorce and the elders who were involved in the marriage try to reconcile them. But if one of the spouses is resolute in getting divorced, the property is divided equally and children also go equally for both. The father is supposed to pay a fixed amount of money each month, (it might be in kind) for little children who will stay with their mother till they reach the age of six. There is no difference of opinion between government, religious leaders and elders regarding divorce. All of these do not want spouses to get divorced, but if they do not want to live together, no one can prevent it. The people who got divorced will marry again soon. A divorced woman especially is sought out because she has resources which were divided from her previous husband. The man also gets married even if his resources decline. In some rare cases a divorced man marries another divorced woman to create jealousy, leading to the marriage of the husband's former wife and his new wife's former husband.

In 1994 it was said that if a girl is found to be deflowered prior to her marriage her husband immediately divorces her and she is humiliated and given a lower status. Some men even beat such a woman severely and break the contract. In this case, the woman has no right to share any property; she even has to leave her *tilosh* (gifts given to her) with her partner. This circumstance is also a humiliation to her parents since the people believe that the girl has not been properly brought up.

Inheritance

The rule of inheritance of the village is based on bilateral descent. That is, an individual inherits property from both his father and mother. If a deceased person has no daughter or son, his close relatives inherit his property. Illegitimate children have no right to inherit unless they are given the chance to belong to the family of one of their parents. Illegitimate children are locally referred as *dikala*. In 1994 respondents said that before the land reform, land was inherited by all children equally. After the reform no one had any right to inherit it. The house and livestock are inherited by sons and daughters equally. Sons are entitled to inherit their father's goods - e.g. gun, *akmada*, *silicha*, *mechagna*, plough, hoe, saddle, hammer, bed, *jendi*, *metegiua*, *gan*. Daughters inherit their mother's goods - e.g. jewellery, cooking materials, mill, *insira*. Clothes are usually given to the poor, especially to beggars. If there is no son to inherit, a daughter can and vice versa.

In 2005 it was reported that when a household head dies his wife will take care of the property to bring up her children, and she might get married again too, so that the new husband manages the farmland. But if both parents die, elder children or close relatives take charge of the property until the children grow up. Then the children can equally divide the property among themselves. But unless the land was given to children before the household head dies, the government will take the land. However, many people want to give their land to their children equally, no matter how small it gets.

Kinship

Kinship and descent are important aspects of Amhara life. Although kinsmen frequently live in different parishes, kin relations are salient in a few important circumstances, such as selection of marriage partners, blood feuds, and, in the past, land tenure. Members of the *kebele* trace kinship relationships up to the seventh degree of consanguinity. Kinship is traced through both father's and mother's lines. Customarily relatives help each other up to three degrees of blood relationship through both mother's and father's sides. Wealthier ones help those who are materially poor. For example, they may be provided with oxen, seeds, money and the like. The recipients may repay if they obtain sufficient amounts of products. Strong people help their weaker relatives physically, especially during the ploughing, sowing and harvesting seasons. In 2005 respondents claimed that unlike earlier times, even close kin do not support one another under normal circumstances. And when they give support it is to be returned somehow. But close relatives celebrate holidays and feast together, specially holidays that their ancestors used to celebrate.

In the *kebele*, there are also fictive relationships that are created through baptism. A man may be *yekiristina abbat* (godfather) for a baby boy, and a woman *yekiristina innat* (godmother) for a baby girl. These individuals are co-parents creating blood-like relationships with the real parents of the children, including their relatives. Marriage is also prohibited between individuals who are related up to the seventh degree of fictive relationship, just like the prohibition of marriage between kin of up to the seventh degree of consanguinity. Any sexual mating between persons in fictive relationship up to seventh degree is considered to be covered by the incest taboo.

Ethnicity, Clans and Lineages

There is no conception of clan or tribe in the *kebele*, except the notion that they belong to the Amhara ethnic group. Amhara refers both to their group and their religious identity: Orthodox Christianity. Amharas generally do not marry Oromos since they consider them as animists. The surrounding rural areas consist of a predominantly Amhara population. There is intermarriage with Tigrayans since they are considered Christians. There are only three Muslims in the area. Since all the people in Yetmen belong to the Amhara ethnic group, there are no other ethnic groups to which they can get married.

People of the *kebele* trace their lineage through patrilineage (father's line) and matrilineage (mother's line), associating their ancestors with the names of their places of origin. The places of origins of ancestors used to name lineages are Gubiya and Woudmit. Both areas are now in Dejen *wereda*. Gubiya is near Dejen, while Woudmit is situated across River Muga which passes near Yetmen. The majority of the villagers belong to the Gubiya lineage while the smaller portion of the people of the community belongs to the Woudmit lineage. As to the economic obligation of lineage, there is no special significance other than assistance given on the basis of kinship relationship noted under the sub-title Kinship.

Life Cycle Changes and Rites of Passage

The following age distributions are recognised in Yetmen:

1. *Aras* babies up to six months
2. *Hitsanat* children up to six years
3. *Leffo/Ligoch* boys and girls from seven to twelve
4. *Wettatoch* youth which includes what they call *Goremsa* (male adolescents) and *Koreda* (female teenagers) and *Konjo* (girls aged 12-20)
5. *Nefs awaki* persons aged 20-30 of both sexes.
6. *Afla* persons aged 30-40 of both sexes
7. *Ekul fire* at age 40 of both sexes
8. *Shimagilewoch* old people

Children are circumcised at the age of 7 days. There are no rites of passage and special indicators of age as there are among the Oromo and other ethnic groups.

Children who are less than six years old do nothing except playing and the care given for them is very good at this period. But children start to perform minor tasks at the age of seven. The girls start to help their mothers in household chores, while the boys start to look after the cattle of their parents. And it is at this age (seven), that children start to attend school if their parents enrol them. After the age of twelve boys start helping their fathers in farming while girls help their mother in performing major household chores. In the next stage they form their own families and start to live independently. Then their households become fully grown and start to marry off their children. Finally they become respected citizens as they become older.

Friends and Neighbours

People of the *kebele* are very friendly to each other and to strangers. There are friendly groups whose members establish a *mahiber* or *equb*, but there are no individual friendship contracts such as those found, for example, among the Gurage. There are a number of widely practised forms of voluntary personal relationships, such as godparent-child, adoptive father-child, guarantor-guaranteed, confessor-confessee relations.

Citizenship

There is a notion of citizenship in the *kebele* based on region. The villagers consider themselves as *Gojjame*, the adjective derived from Gojjam province. In addition they refer to themselves as *Yeyetmen Sew* (a person from Yetmen). But the most important citizenship identity for them is being an Ethiopian.

Those people who were born in Yetmen and grew up there have the right to live peacefully doing whatever they want as long as they do not violate and disrupt the rights of other people. Outsiders also have the same right as far as they conform to local norms. But they cannot obtain land by any means. The obligations of citizenship are adherence to cultural values, respecting elders and living peacefully. Otherwise they will be labelled as *feddala* which literally means arrogant.

Markets

In the market of the *kebele*, there are standardised and traditional measurements for grains as described earlier; e.g. *dirib*. There is also a traditional weight for selling cotton. Otherwise the other measurements are modern ones, which are small and big weights. As for controlling prices and measurements, there is a sort of inspection of the market every six months by government professional controllers from the Ministry of Internal Trade. However, there is no local controlling mechanism of the market.

For consumption most of the people depend mostly on what they produce. And many of the people sell their surplus on the market using dishes (two dishes equal 3 kilograms), and those who buy them sell it in turn in quintals to the rich merchants, who fix prices for different grains and other outputs by making contact with other merchants in major towns. But they do not get together to fix the same price; the information spreads informally. However, sellers (of agricultural outputs) do not have any control at all on the price of their produce, it changes according to the interests of the merchants. These merchants have their own cars which take the agricultural outputs to towns and most of them return with other consumption goods to supply their own big shops, or else to others who have shops. So in most cases they are beneficiaries being middlemen in both transactions.

Social Security

In Yetmen, as in the other parts of the country, the role of *equb* (ROSCAs), *iddir* (funeral societies) and *mahiber* (religious feasting societies) is tremendous. *Equb* are established on the basis of (1) friendship (2) *iddir* and (3) *mahiber*. In 1994 there were several *equb* in the village. One *equb* had 50 members in which each of them contributed 200 *birr*. Another one had 38 members and each of them contributed 30 *birr*. Each member contributed 20 *birr* in an *equb* with 35 members. In addition, there were many *equb* in which members' contributions were below 20 *birr*. There were 6 *iddir* in the village. The names of the *iddir* are associated with the names of saints. The number of members in each *iddir* and monthly contributions are indicated as follows. Even though members of the Michael *iddir* contribute more money than people in the other *iddir*, there is no discrimination in being a member of any *iddir*. That is, members may be poor or rich.

Table 6: *Iddir* in Yetmen in 1994

<i>Names of iddir</i>	<i>No of members</i>	<i>Contributions (birr per month)</i>
Michael	401	2
<i>Bale-egiziabher</i>	45	1
Mariam	33	1
Abo	25	1
Yohannes	20	1
Gebriel	23	1

In 2005 it was reported that *iddir* and *mahiber* were common with large memberships.. People can belong to two or more *iddir* at the same time while they usually belong to one *mahiber*. The contribution varies from one *iddir* to another, and it also may vary from month to month. It increases when a member

dies, because money is given to the other household members.

Some wealthy persons of the village lend money to those who are facing financial hardship. Generous villagers lend money without interest to persons whom they trust. However, individual lenders lend money with interest. In 1994 100 *birr* must be repaid with 100kg of *tef* (which cost 218 *birr* on the day of the interview). Anyone needing credit must provide a guarantor whose wealth position should enable him to settle the debt if necessary. It is preferred if the lender is cultivating the land of the debtor under a share-cropping agreement. Then, if the debtor fails to repay the debt, the lender can decrease the share of the harvest provided to the debtor. Typical reasons for a loan were to buy fertiliser, to buy an ox, or for seed, consumption, ceremonial expenditure or medical expenses. In 2005 money-lending took two forms. In the first type of agreement a borrower pays one quintal of *tef* for 100 *birr*. The price for one quintal of *tef* is currently 250 *birr*. In the second type, the borrower pays interest of 10 *birr* per 100 *birr*.

When a person suffers illness s/he borrows money if medical treatment is sought. But if the household head becomes ill at a critical time like during harvesting close relatives and members of the *mahiber* he belongs to help him in harvesting and other activities. And when someone dies, relatives support one another and *iddir* and *desh* members also take part in escorting the mourners and serving others who come to visit them until the mourning ends.

There is a different arrangement when an ox dies. When a farmer's ox dies the neighbours and relatives divide the meat (which is called *irtiban*) and promise to give the farmer a given amount of grain in the next harvest season so that the man at least covers part of the expense needed to buy an ox. If livestock are lost or stolen, friends, neighbours and relatives search for them. If they are not found they will help by providing oxen for ploughing until the household head gets his animals back. They will also contribute money so he can buy replacements. If someone is unable to get enough labour at the right time relatives, members of *mahiber*, neighbours and friends will work on his land as *debo*. During famines rich people will help those who are more vulnerable.

If someone's house catches fire, everyone in the area will go to the rescue of life and property, by helping to put the fire out and removing everything possible. If the house burns down neighbours, friends and relatives will help the household to reconstruct the house by providing materials and labour. They also give the household crops if the stock is destroyed, in the form of a gift, or a loan to be repaid during the next harvest. However, a household whose crops are affected by drought or by other harm has no choice except borrowing money or grains up to the next harvest season. Nothing can be done for a household that loses land since there is no spare land so that no one wants to provide them with land.

Redistributive Mechanisms

There are feasts involving sacrifices during major Orthodox Christian holidays. These major holidays are: *Kidus Yohannes* (new year commemoration), *Meskel* (the day for the commemoration of the finding of the True Cross), *Timket* (Epiphany), *Genna*, (Christmas), and *Fasika* (Easter). People slaughter animals for feasts in the belief that it will create happiness and joy. Everybody is invited to all holiday feasts. A few people slaughter animals in the months of January and June which are referred to as *Yetir-dem* and *Yesene-dem*. This is linked with animistic beliefs which the overwhelming majority look down upon. They call it *Amliko-baad*. People who practice *Amliko-baad* rub the blood around their faces. The flesh of the slaughtered animal is only eaten by kin. Non-kin are not invited. In 1994 it was reported that during the major Christian holidays, the rich invite the poor to celebrate with them. In addition, food was redistributed to beggars at the Abo Church found in the *kebele*. However in 2005 during the major Christian holidays, and in other similar occasions, it was reported that it is only relatives who celebrate

together. The previous culture of celebration with poor and redistributing food to beggars is now only history. In *Sene* there is a holiday when people take *injera* to the church to give to beggars.

Local Organisation

The community is tightly knit and orderly. There are a lot of social interactions among the members of the *kebele* and neighbouring people. The people are densely associated with each other within the various activities like *desh*, *iddir*, *equb*, *mahiber*, etc. During the harvest season, they undertake various tasks together in groups known as *debo* or *jige*. There is also cooperation through *wenfel*. This involves the lending of an ox or anything important for farming.

In 1994 a group in the community ranked local organisations in order of usefulness as follows:

- (1) *senbete*
- (2) *mahiber*
- (3) *tsigie**
- (4) *iddir*
- (5) *equb*

Tsigie is a community-based religious festival held once in a year.

In 2005 many people in the rural site ranked local organisation in order of importance as follows

- (1) *desh**
- (2) *iddir*
- (3) *mahiber*
- (4) *senbete*
- (5) *equb*

Desh is an *iddir* to which all members of the community belong.

However, some people in the urban site emphasise the importance of *equb* because they are usually beneficiaries of the arrangement as they run different businesses.

Disputes and Resolutions

In 1994 it was said that disputes within households are usually resolved by neighbours. Most disputes are settled at this level. However, if neighbours cannot solve the problem, relatives get involved in arbitration. If the dispute is between husband and wife, the arbitrators are the relatives of both parties. If this level also fails the elders of the community get involved; a dispute between husband and wife will next be dealt with by the marriage committee (persons, usually father figures, who initially attended the marriage settlement). In 2005 if the two parties are not satisfied they can go to the *kebele* social court, which passes its decision based on what the elders say. Then the two spouses may get divorced and the property division takes place based on the decision of elders.

Respondents said in 1994 that disputes between households are first considered by neighbours and relatives of the two opponents and then by elders of the community. The villagers have local dispute settlement mechanisms. They are called *shimgilina* and *Fird-Shengo*. The institution of *shimgilina* is a traditional council that comprises respected elders who analyse complaints and reach decisions. Elders are respected and their decisions are considered to be just and moral. The *Fird-Shengo* is elected by the community to settle disputes in accordance with societal norms and traditional principles. It operates in compliance with government regulations. In 2005 the case might be taken to the *kebele* social court and the elders who were involved in trying to resolve the problem are called as witnesses. If one party is found to be guilty they are made to compensate for the loss incurred by the other. The other common

type of dispute is over land. In such kinds of disputes neighbours and friends are involved at the beginning. And then community elders might try to reconcile the parties, but if this fails again the case will be taken to the social court which finally resolves the conflict.

Arbitrators at all levels are usually respected, honourable and elderly people. The police are involved in cases that the community is unable, or does not want, to deal with, especially when violence and serious offences such as murder are involved.

In 1994 it was said that bewitching also has an important role to play in resolving conflicts in the community. First one of the disputants, usually the victim, will report the dispute to the sorcerer/ess. The other party will be sent a summons to appear before the sorcerer/ess for mediation. When both appear they will be put under oath to tell the truth and will come to terms on conditions the sorcerer/ess decides, having sworn not to break up the mediation and to keep their allegiance to him/her. If the offender then does not follow instructions, the witch, using magic powers, inflicts a death penalty on him or her and the families. Usually the family is inflicted with diseases which are said to be insoluble and incurable by any means and die one by one after unbearable suffering. In 2005 bewitching is said to be still present still for resolving conflict, but the number of people who resort to it is decreasing. There is no sorcerer (locally known as *tenqway*) in Yetmen. People have to go to a neighbouring *kebele* called Dibissa or to a place called Tik, a village found at the junction of this gravel road with that of the asphalted road when heading to Dejen.

Anyone who breaks local rules is fined and warned. If he or she continues to err he/she will be denounced and segregated from the community. Eventual repentance and requests to the community for mercy will be decided upon by the community.

Local Government Organisation

Taxes are paid to the government by the villagers. In 1994 peasants were required to pay 20 *birr* per holding as were all other peasants. Traders paid taxes imposed by the government according to their income. Grain and money are contributed to those who serve the Church, as salaries.

Wealth was measured by the following items of property:

- the number of livestock
- the number of beehives
- the amount of grain produced which is measured in *chan* at the threshing field

Up to 1996 Yetmen was self-sufficient in administrative issues and it was a *kebele* on its own. But afterwards in the new administrative setting it was merged with Zebch and Yemrit to constitute Felegeselam *kebele* in Enemay *Wereda*. However, the urban part is a self-sufficient *kebele* now, directly connected to the *wereda*.

At the top of *kebele* administration is the chairperson with his six cabinet members. These people are chosen from 100 people, who were chosen by the people in the three respective *gott* Zebch, Yemrit and Yetmen. Fifty people are chosen from Zebch, while Yemrit and Yetmen choose 25 people each (according to their size) as *kebele* representatives. And they again select one *gott* chairperson for each of the three *gott*. Then under the chairperson there is one secretary and the local militia. And in Yetmen there are nine *Mengistawi Budin*, each consisting of about fifty households. Each *Mengistawi Budin* has three representatives, chosen by the people. All these people might not be changed, (and there are people who are serving in their post starting from the new administrative set up) as long as they serve the people

honestly. But they can be changed at any time if the people feel they are not satisfied with them.

In the last year government activities were minimal because much emphasis was given to the election that took place in May. Most of the administrative people were preoccupied with repetitive meetings related to the election. However, vaccination was conducted every month as usual, and the polio eradication campaign was carried out twice. The construction of a new health post was initiated and started last year, and ended in September 2005. The compounds and houses were measured by people who came from the *wereda*. As far as campaign work was concerned, the road to Zebch was maintained, terraces were built near the church where flood eroded the soil very much, and the compound of the police station was maintained. These things were done by coordinating each *Mengistawi Budin* whose representatives have the obligation to check who was present and who was not.

8. Social Inequality, Conflict and Politics

Poverty and Wealth

The wealth of the community is better than the surrounding rural areas, due to its access to the main road, an urban site and a market which draws many people from the surrounding area. However, people in Sebshengo are better in wealth, because they have relatively large farmlands, large grazing land and large numbers of livestock.

In 1994 respondents said that the wealthiest people in the community were the owners, traders, moneylenders and those with special skills such as weavers, potters, blacksmiths, tailors, carpenters, and masons (especially those who also own farmland). They became wealthy through hard work, inheritance, craftsmanship, and good fortune. The wealthy were those people who had large amounts of livestock and who also had more than one *gota* of grain in store.

In 2005 respondents said that the wealthiest people in the community are those businessmen who buy agricultural products from the farmers for a lower price and sell it for a higher price in major towns. They also have big shops which provide consumer goods. So they benefit twice, and their wealth keeps increasing.. The urban wealthy include those who came from other areas in Gojjam and some from rural Yetmen. Rich people in the rural part may have two or more oxen and the same number of cows and sheep, and may rent additional plots of land to increase their income. Those people who have additional skills like weavers and blacksmiths are also better off. But as compared to the people who are merchants, their income is not that significant.

In 1994 poor people were identified as those hired to work for others for a daily wage. People with small amounts of livestock were regarded as relatively poor. Poor people might be landless, descended from a poor family, labourers (especially farm workers), handicraft men who own no land, widows, prostitutes, those who collect and sell firewood and dung-cakes, those who make and sell *tella*, *areke*, *kolo*, bread, and those who are disabled and unable to work, especially old people with no one to look after them. People are poor because they did not inherit anything, because of laziness, or through bad luck. It is possible for children of poor people to become rich if they get employment from a young age and save. Poor people compare themselves with rich people, particularly with regard to the ability to make ceremonial expenses. e.g. for weddings and holidays. In 2005 respondents said that the poor are those who have no land or no ox to work on their land and who are forced to give their land for a sharecropper or to rent it out. And there are also some people who earn their subsistence through daily work. Older people might get poor especially when their children do not live in the neighbourhood and support them by handling farm activities and household management. However, the poorest of the poor are those

people who are disabled and who have no supporter, but who make their livelihood by begging.

Rich people in the urban site are getting wealthier because they are engaged in a very lucrative business. But the rest including richer people in the rural part are getting poorer because the price of fertiliser is increasing, the farmland is getting more and more fragmented and the weather is not as it was before.

During the *Derg* regime 13 people from the *kebele* were imprisoned and their properties were confiscated. This was because they were rich and considered to be against socialism. As a result, some other individuals who were not rich got the opportunity to replace the former ones. People nowadays want to live the same lifestyles as their richer neighbours without considering their own economic capacity to do so. And this is one of the reasons for the decreasing in household standard of living in Yetmen.

Economic Mobility

In 1994 it was said that wealthy farmers tend to be children of wealthy farmers and poor farmers tend to be the children of the poor. There is no considerable change between generations in terms of wealth or social mobility. A poor peasant may be upwardly mobile if he undertakes off-farm activities like trading. Parents try to help their sons and daughters who are becoming poor by providing them with the necessary materials for their livelihood; i.e. farming.

In a wealth-ranking exercise in 1994 three respondents sorted community members into three groups. Movement down from category 1 (wealthy) to 2 is not very frequent, while movement from 2 to 3 is frequent because households in category 2 are more vulnerable. One respondent ranked typical reasons for movement as follows:

from Category 1 to 2	recurrent death of livestock shortage of cultivable land an increase in the price of fertiliser
from Category 2 to 3	unable to use fertiliser or failure to obtain money to buy it death of livestock large family shortage of land

Other reasons given by other respondents included loss of land, recurrent ceremonies (especially weddings of children), old age, divorce, laziness, death of husband, illness, extravagance (e.g. drunkenness), sharecropping land out due to death of husband, lack of oxen, shortage of grazing land, little availability of other income sources, lack of labour in the household.

Two respondents claimed movement up from category 2 to 1 was rare while the third reckoned movement up from 2 to 1 was greater than movement down from 1 to 2. While the first two respondents claimed movement from 3 to 2 was frequent, the third did not agree. One said that households moving from 3 to 2 tended to be recently married young households and the reasons included good provision at marriage by parents and kin, very hard working, saving money, managing well, and the absence of requirements for ceremonial expenses. He said that households in category 2 are mostly middle-aged households and at this level because of the problems of large families, ceremonial expenses, the problem of being physically older, and the loss of important labour and ploughing oxen through marriage, it is harder to be upwardly mobile. The ones that do tend to be upwardly mobile are those that are relatively young and strong, who do not incur much for ceremonial expenses, those who sharecrop much land and

are able to use enough fertiliser, those who save, and those who lend. Additional reasons given by the other respondents were economising and innovativeness.

Generally, people become wealthier through restricting family size and ceremonial expenditures, saving and lending money, sharecropping in as much land as possible, working very hard, inheritance or help or gifts from rich parents, marrying into a rich family, good home management, a good wife, good cooperative children, good management of time, off-farm employment and business activities, and wise consumption including refraining from drinking.

People become poor through laziness, extravagance, poor home management, bad and/or extravagant wife and children, bad luck (e.g. sickness, regular death of livestock, land loss, death of husband) old age and helplessness, and the related inability to cultivate one's own land requiring it to be sharecropped out.

In 2005 respondents said that nowadays it is not common for the children of wealthy people to be wealthy. This is due to the shortage of the basic resource - land. If children are to maintain their parents' wealth status they have to engage in trading besides working on their own land or on their parents' land. Thus downward inter-generational mobility is now common. The wealth status of people may decline for many reasons. The major cause is the shortage of cultivable land especially when children must be self-sufficient. Bad weather, crop and animal diseases may also play their role to decrease the wealth status of people significantly.

A particular cause for the decline identified in 2005 is expensive ceremonial expenses for weddings and for commemoration. While the wealth status of some people might be improved, it is rare, compared with the decline. People who were poor and who were engaged in trading may rent land for farming, at the same time while trading. And each harvest season they may rent additional plots of land, which finally leads to improved income, hence a better wealth status.

Status

The bases of status reported in 1994 were occupation, wealth, age, war service and charisma. Elders, priests, rich people, development agents, health workers and teachers were respected. A hard-working peasant was respected. Wealthy individuals like traders and moneylenders had greater status as opposed to other commoners. Charismatic people who spoke at public gatherings and who could convince others were given respect. Those people who gave war services in the earlier days who are generally called *neftengna* have titles. These are: *Hamsa-aleka* (Sergeant), *Meto-aleka* (Lieutenant), *Shambel* (Captain) and *Shaleka* (Major). Individuals with these ranks may not have modern military training; elders simply give them such positions.

The bases of status in 2005 were identified as occupation, wealth and age. War service is not a basis of status now as no one honours these people nowadays, unlike the earlier times. Elders, priests, rich people, development agents, health workers and teachers are respected.

In the *kebele*, there are also "caste" groups; blacksmiths, potters, tanners, weavers and *baria* (the descendants of ex-slaves) who have become servants. The term *baria* has been replaced by a descent name called *agelgay* which simply means obedient and trustworthy servant. The poorest people have resorted to handicrafts such as weaving, pottery and blacksmithing and due to demand they have received a favourable income. The people despise these people and are envious of them because with their income they have been able to buy livestock and cultivate their own land.

In 1994 respondents said that as the village was increasing in size and new occupations were mushrooming, there were urban status symbols. But there were no luxury goods. In 2005 in the urban

site there were people with TVs, video players, fridges and even satellite dishes (around 10), although they were few in number.

Social Stratification

In 1994 respondents said that the local elite are those who have wealth, education and are able to organise the people. Kinship plays a role in wealth. They include elders, committee members, the wealthy and priests. Wealth, status and power are highly correlated. There was some evidence of incipient class formation in the *kebele*. Those people who have greater amounts of money are given higher status. Wealthier individuals are those who trade grain by supplying to major towns; especially to the capital. Hard-working peasants who usually obtain good harvests also have greater status next to the fully-fledged grain traders. Then come commodity traders who have greater status than other commoners (poor peasants and poor traders). Tanners, blacksmiths and weavers are considered as outcasts who have least or no status at all.

In 2005 the local elites were identified as those people who have political power, wealth and education. Priests are also considered to be elites. And their eliteness is based on their wealth and their capacity to influence other people. Those people who are wealthy and who have political position may get status in the community. But a wealthy person cannot get political power just because of his wealth, and equally, those with political power cannot obtain wealth just because of their political position. In addition people who have education are accorded good status: teachers, development agents, health workers and priests. And since most of the people in the community are not educated the formal education of these people gives them authority in their respective areas.

One respondent in 1994 argued that the elites will keep their position since they are being reasonable, decent, fair to everyone without discrimination, and respectful of customs, rules and principles accepted by the community. Another respondent said the elites are getting wealthier by being hardworking and because they can get either labour or material help from others whenever they want. A third respondent suggested the local elites are under the government and some are politically connected to the central government. They are not able to derive power, but they are able to help and be helped by their kin, as a result of the voting system.

Social Conflict and Politics

There are no social conflicts between groups in the community; the people live cohesively and peacefully. This is because there are no clearly differentiated social groups with opposing interests. There is no unusual gender-based conflict in the community. If there is a dispute between husband and wife they usually get divorced. People from Yemrit who come to sharecrop cheated them so they decided not to sharecrop with them in future.

There was a clash between the *Derg* and EPRDF forces in April 1991. During the time of the research in 1994 the people commented on the operation of the EPRDF forces with contempt. Members of the *kebele* complained that they were interrogated, harassed and imprisoned. The people complained that EPRDF gunmen with unknown forces frightened them during evenings. There were no signs of political dissent beyond this. It was reported that the community members seem to have one political stand; i.e. they seek democracy. It was reported that, due to the regionalisation policy of the EPRDF, former members of the community who used to live in other parts of the country have been evicted. Hence, they have come back to their original place. The villagers resented this government policy.

In 1994 people felt that the taxation was not fair. This is because the tax for a holding was increased from 7 *birr* to 20 *birr*. The relationship between leaders of government institutions and traditional leaders was not positive. According to the informants, the elected *kebele* officials and some other people were imprisoned during the time of the research in 1994.

In 2005 it was reported that in 1997 when land was redistributed many people were involved in disagreement and fighting, especially those whose land was taken, (who were officials during the previous government) and those who were given this land. And some of the people whose land was taken, together with people from other areas with a similar problem, tried to go to Bahir Dar and appeal to different regional offices, but they were unable to effect any change.

In 2005 most of the people were of the idea that the current government is not doing much for their benefit, and this was seen by the result of the election. But a few people prefer the status quo since they fear that the transition may result in chaos and insecurity. Besides, even if the government might be changed the promised changes might not happen as most people expect. On the way to Bichena there are *shifita*; the researchers were told not to go that way during the night.

In 2005 the rural people paid taxes for their land while the urban people who had businesses paid according to their capital. But both groups of people complained that the tax was not fair. The farmers paid the following amount of tax according to their land holding.

Amount of land (in 'gemed' ⁹)	Tax (in <i>Birr</i>)
1-2	20
3-4	25
5-6	30
7-8	35
8-10	40
11-12	45

In 2005 there were no manifest political conflicts, but there was tension between administrative officials who are supporters of the ruling government and other people who support other political parties. According to people in administrative positions the election was very democratic and fair starting from the agitation period. They cite the CUD victory in Yetmen by a significant margin as proof of this. However, many people and those who were active supporters of CUD do not accept this. According to this group of people the election was not fair starting from its agitation and the CUD victory was in spite of its unfairness. The people were told to vote for candidates of the ruling party on many occasions, and were asked who they were going to vote for. The people had no choice but to conform to their expectations in meetings. However, it turned out to be the opposite on the Election Day. In addition, candidates of other parties were interrogated and harassed. And according to them what was amazing was that after the election people from the *wereda* came and asked the people at a meeting why they did not vote for their candidates and if there were any reforms they wanted to be made. But these things must be done regularly and not after they have lost the trust of the people.

Government activities trying to abolish commemorative ceremonies are very unpopular among most members of the community. And community elders argued with government officials at different meetings held to convince the people. But when some *Kebele* officials tried to impose this idea and to enforce it, the people defended their right through open protest. And now this endeavour by the government is no longer strongly pursued.

⁹ 1 *gemed* = 50m by 50m

9. Beliefs and Values

Land

People of the community are buried in the compound of the Church. The villagers prefer burial sites to be near their ancestors. This is because they feel that kinship bonds can be maintained this way until the life after. The people regard land as sacred. This is chiefly because they produce grain from land and they are buried in the land. Also, people believe that human beings are created out of mud. In 1994 it was said that people of the community want to possess land privately. In 2005 it was also said that most of the people want the land to be owned privately so that they can do whatever they want with their land including selling part or all of it, or renting it out without being anxious that it will be taken by the government, or the fear of engaging in conflict and dispute with those who rent the land. However, there is also what seems to be a contradictory perspective on redistribution with most people agreeing that it should not be a one-time happening but a continuous process which takes place within a given interval so that a fair distribution of land exists. However, some people argue that this is virtually impossible, while others say it is very difficult to implement as it creates continual disagreement and conflict.

Religion

There are no people from religions other than Orthodox Christianity who are permanent residents in rural Yetmen, though there are five or six Muslim households who work and lived in the urban site. However, they are not permanent residents and they do not have a burial site. These people have close relatives in the nearby urban centres like Bichena and Dejen and they may also have a permanent residence there.

Each Amhara household has obligations to the local church. The focal point of parish life is the Ark of the Covenant (*tabot*). Each household in a parish is obliged to contribute a certain amount of grain each year and supply labour and materials as needed for the construction and repair of church buildings. Parishioners baptise their children and bury their dead at the local church. The villagers are devoted Christians even though there are a few individuals who practice remnant beliefs of animism as well. They believe that God is the creator of the world and every living and non-living thing. God is named as *Egziabher*, denoting that He is everything and He is Omnipresent and Omnipotent. People of Yetmen consider that God is close to the clergy. Each of them has a religious father called *yenefs abbat* (soul father). They obey whatever this priest orders. When a person feels that s/he has committed a sin, s/he reports to his or her religious father to be redeemed from the sin.

People attribute all natural calamities (e.g. plant and livestock diseases, drought, heavy frost, storms, etc) to God's wrath against sinners. For instance, it is believed that a peasant who cultivates crops on holy days will have his crops destroyed. In times of such crisis the priests summon the community to hold a communion with God in prayer for his forgiveness. In addition the people of Yetmen believe that various saints protect them from troubles. Hence, each villager has a Christening name that is associated with the name of one of these sacred figures.

In 1994 it was reported that people of the community go on pilgrimages to the following churches: Lalibela, Gishen, Ziqwala Abo, Jirru Gabriel, Bahir Dar, Kristos Samra, and Dima Giorgis. These pilgrimage places are between 50 and 350 km from the *kebele*. Some go on pilgrimages to these churches on foot and others by car; the latter is obviously expensive. In 2005 pilgrimages were not as common as they used to be. But people may go to different churches to attend *tsebel* (holy water) when they are ill. And they go to a church famous for its *tsebel* for healing specific diseases.

In times of crisis the Orthodox Church organises and leads the community in solving the problems. The clergy also teach the commands of God and entreat people to obey the law. They make and enforce rules for the proper regulation of the community. Excommunication from the community and church is the final punishment of the community. The priests in the church tell the people when to fast and about non-working holidays. And sometimes they can also prohibit working on other days called *gizit*. If a person is found working on these days, he will be contacted by his religious father and will be forced to pay some amount of money for the transgression. Religious leaders in the church are people who attended church schools and who have a good reputation for being good examples for others. These people are not supposed to come from specific sections of the community, as there are some priests who serve the church who come from other areas.

Explanations of Misfortune and Illness

The people link sorcery with the work of the Devil and frown upon it. They think that the sorcerer communicates with the devil, who is locally called *Saytan* or *Aganint*, to cause someone to become ill or to experience misfortune. They also regard witchcraft or the evil eye as caused by a curse. An evil-eyed person is known as *buda*. They say that an individual *buda* turns into a hyena in the night to eat whatever a real hyena eats. They also believe that a *buda* person rides a hyena in the night to get whatever a hyena eats. Their belief in spirits is associated with the Devil, who is a spirit that interferes in one's life and causes wicked deeds e.g. homicide. They also relate misfortunes with sin. For example if a person works on holidays, God may punish the person, his family or the community for the transgression. And that is why the people are very keen on observing holidays and they do exactly what their religious leaders tell them.

Sorcerers/esses can cure diseases, tell fortunes, make fortunes, and punish the disloyal. There are also *debtera*. They can control rain, make heavy falls of hail, and are capable of causing trouble for anybody who opposes them. For example, they can get pieces of furniture to rise and kick each other, they can fill people's houses with horrible smells, insects and worms, and they can make people sicken and die.

There is no ancestor worship. But in their prayers, they speak of *Yeabate amlak chigir indaygetmegn irdagn* (may the lord of my father protect me from facing hardship).

Community Values

In 1994 it was reported that ritual ceremonies and giving offerings to *Kolle* and *Adbar* were on the verge of extinction. When a member of a community died, the mourning did not last more than a week. The mourning tent was not taken down until the 8th day. Members of the *iddir* spent their time in the tent and escorted the relatives of the deceased person who went to church to mourn for a week. The mourners wore sack clothes for between six months and a year to demonstrate their affection for the deceased person.

However in 2005 respondents said that ritual ceremonies and the giving of offerings to *Kolle* or *Zar* and *Adbar* are still practised by families whose past generations used to do the same thing. Otherwise, they think that they can get ill or even they may die if they fail to give the usual offerings. Now when a member of a community dies, the mourning is for three days and the mourning tent is also taken down on the third day. Members of *desh* and *iddir* spend time escorting and serving those people who come to escort the mourners. Women mourners wear black clothes while men wear a black cap from six months to a year according to their closeness to the deceased person.

During the *Derg* period the people were forced to work on holidays and to give less emphasis to

religious activities. But this failed to achieve the expected results as it was unpopular among the people. The endeavours to convince the people has also failed recently to reduce the number of holidays and to abolish commemorative ceremonies. But external religions have no impact yet in the community. And the media influence is not that widespread in the community to impose 'western' values.

The people do not reconcile traditional and modern beliefs. They do not accept the harmfulness of such practices as female circumcision. But, because their importance has been proved they are using modern agricultural inputs such as fertilisers, herbicides, pesticides, etc.

The villagers are willing to answer questions such as those in the economic survey. On the whole, they give accurate responses if one persuades them respectfully. Questions asked in this manner would not be answered wrongly. They think that the economic survey may result in some changes like increasing the size of land holding, decreasing the prices of inputs and taxes, giving new or better employment opportunities for the unemployed and the underemployed and cancelling the debt borrowed from a government bank.

Political Beliefs and Attitudes

As one would expect political beliefs vary. So in 1994 one respondent claimed that no one could tell what people think of current policies since the community was not interested in discussing political issues. Most people did not want to share their views with regard to regionalisation. However, some, especially the rich and religious elite and the younger generation, thought that regionalisation would bring about disunity among the Ethiopian people.

Another respondent suggested the people had negative attitudes towards the elections and constitutional exercises. They regarded the EPRDF as favouring the people of one ethnic group. During the research time (1994) some of the villagers reported that they were harassed, interrogated and imprisoned. They said that if the government is to be accountable, it must be popular, and institutions like the police sub-station and the local administration of the *kebele* should not be mechanisms for reinforcing and promoting a one party government's ideology. The villagers were anxious to get pumped water and hydro-electric supplies, a clinic, job opportunities for school drop-outs, etc. They thought that these would be fulfilled by democratic government policies. Members of the community were accountable to the local leaders who were imprisoned. They would be happy if the size of land holdings was increased.

In 2005 most people agree that the government should be strong in maintaining peace and order in the area and providing necessary amenities for the people. But the other things must be left for the people so that they can do whatever they want if it is said there is democracy. Otherwise, if the government tries to interfere in every sphere of life, the people will have no autonomy, hence, putting democracy in question. The majority of the people do not agree that there is democracy and think the election was not conducted in a free and fair manner as the people in the ruling party claim and thought CUD won the election in the community with a significant margin. Many of the residents want a change of government at any price. But some people are afraid the transition might be very costly. And violence and insecurity might prevail instead of what most people expected it would result.

The people did not organise for the election, as the influence of the people in the ruling party was very strong. And people supporting other opposing parties were harassed in a very subtle way in the community, while it was more open in other rural areas. Besides, the people were told to vote for the candidates of the ruling party on many occasions and at meetings. The people seemed to be on the side of the ruling party because of the continued pressure. But on the election day the majority of the people voted for CUD, and this party won the election in Yetmen, getting the majority of the votes. However, a few

people who are in administrative positions and some people who were intimidated to vote for the ruling party cast their ballots in favour of candidates of the ruling party.

10. Relationship with Other Communities and the Wider Society

Ethnic Groups and Clans

Clans or tribal feelings are non-existent in the *kebele*. Hence, they have no impact on the life of the villagers. And they do not have any special linkage with other clans and/or ethnic groups outside their community.

Relations with Other Communities

People of the surrounding *kebele* come to Yetmen for trade. They sell grain to the merchants of Yetmen and buy commodities in the shops and market of the village. The detail of relationships with surrounding *kebele* and towns is described in Map 2. They are also interconnected through marriage, and hence they share common farmland. They also share common grazing land. So the people have a very strong linkage with the surrounding rural communities.

Relationships with wider Ethiopia

People of the *kebele* have no traditional enemies. They have a positive relationship with the neighbouring *kebele*. The people consider themselves Ethiopian. Their commitment to Ethiopia is very high.

Effects of Government Policies

It was reported in 1995 that current economic and social changes were affecting the poorest members of the community to a great extent. People were worse off, because unemployment had risen and some of the people in the farmers' association did not have land. The end of marketing boards has been advantageous for some peasants, because they became able to sell grain to anyone at unregulated prices. This was good for those with *tef* to sell but problematic for the poorest people. Due to the effects of the devaluation the villagers, especially the poor ones, were not able to buy day-to-day consumer goods because of their reduced purchasing power. Those individuals who make their daily bread by selling local drinks or daily wage labour suffered from this problem. Generally, the economy of the community was highly affected. That is, the prices of food, inputs, crops, and the like increased. The price of fertiliser from private merchants was much higher.

The dismissal of the party aristocracy was welcomed. Peace was better and in particular the return of sons from the army was appreciated. The community was reported as better off because there was no Agricultural Marketing Corporation (AMC) quota, price regulation or PC and the price of *tef* more than doubled since 1991. There was no contribution for different community and government organisations, and there was no forced requirement for military service. Many people in the *kebele* did not think that productivity, crop yield, and innovation were either high or satisfactory during the time of the PC. They believe that the PC would have been good had it not been a means to attain political objectives. The unspeakable corruption which made life very difficult for the peasants is the other thing that obsesses people's minds and is associated with fear of anything associated with the idea of PC. A number of

respondents argued that people are better off because they work harder for themselves than they did for the PC. The worst problem is the shortage of land. One consequence of this is that a lot of people (especially young ones) want to migrate to work but they fear other ethnic groups. Some people expected that land would be reallocated in the future.

Some respondents said that most people did not know much about regionalisation but returned soldiers and those who are educated thought it was a bad policy since it was resulting in ethnic conflicts. They also thought there would not be any improvement since there was no longer mutual aid between regions and exchanges of knowledge between peoples of each region. Another respondent said that the people do know about regionalisation, as they have heard about the problem from those who have been to other regions and described the restrictions imposed on them. Some people expected there will be conflict or war among the once-Ethiopian people.

Nobody knew much about the Constitution. They thought it was just a kind of bureaucratic procedure regularly performed by this and the previous government. So they did not think that it would affect them much. With regard to democracy, one respondent suggested that while most people know the word "democracy" they did not know its real meaning. The people have been hearing the word since the fall of Haile Selassie and some think it means to act in a dishonest way and to take advantage of the people. One respondent said that people do not know what is meant by democracy except people who are educated. Those people know that one has the right to choose, to be chosen and to nominate another to be chosen, and one has the right to do anything that does not affect other people's rights. Some said that nowadays (1994) a man is more afraid to speak his mind at meetings than he was before Mengistu left. In 1994 one respondent said that there was no security problem.. The worst security problem was cattle theft. Another said there was a security problem in the locality without exact information; people have been arrested.

In 1994 economic conditions were reported as better but political conditions as much worse than before, particularly with regard to the law courts. Government policies gave most attention to the remnants of the *Derg*. This policy has allowed the development of banditry, particularly robbers who stole farmers' cattle from their houses during the night, leading to conflict among the people.

The land redistribution reform carried out in 1997 had a great impact on many people. Land from people who were serving in the previous government, was taken and they were forced to support their family on small plots of land. These people are the ones who have utmost resentment of the current government. Besides, due to land fragmentation and the decrease in size of holding per farmer the economic situation of many farmers is getting worse. However, the situation of rich merchants in the urban site is improving although they repeatedly complain about the unfair tax imposed upon them. In 2005 relating to what the government claims about democracy and the election, many people have reservations. They say that democracy works only on paper and not in reality.

The people were afraid of insecurity problems starting from the election because violence may arise at any time and long term conflict may be the result. They were also afraid of thieves and robbers who might want to take advantage of such times. During the election many people purchased commodities for household consumption and they also ground grain for more than a month, for fear of not getting such services if violence and insecurity arose. It was observed that economic conditions are not better now, but political conditions seems a little better, although the concept of democracy is not yet as the people appreciate. And for some people democracy is not existent at all.

Government Development Activities in the Community

In 1994 a group of men ranked government activity in order of usefulness as follows:

- (1) agricultural extension advice
- (2) veterinary services
- (3) health services
- (4) teaching

In 2005 as number (5) the telecommunication service was added, although it is out of service repeatedly.

NGO Activities in the Community

There are no NGO activities in the community.

The Future

In 1994 the major problem reported was the shortage of land, which was a source of other problems too. Problems relating to access were being partially resolved by redistribution of already cultivable land and, though insignificant, turning part of communal land (grazing land) into farmland. There was an increasing number of landless people and others with excess labour who were entering share-tenant arrangements or renting land for cash.

In 2005 the major problem in the area is still shortage of land. Since 1997 there has been no large-scale land redistribution, although land owned by dead parents whose children already have their own land was being given to those who have no land. However, this was insignificant compared to the demand for land. The number of people who have no land is ever-increasing as children grow and form their own households. The people are forced to engage entirely in small-scale trading in grain or renting land for cash or as a sharecropper.

Landless households, and those capable of farming on their own but living with their parents as they are landless, do want land reallocation in the future. Landholders do not want any redistribution in the future because any reallocation is likely to be at their expense. There is no uncultivated land at present and the only alternative is the communal land which is already of minimal size. Landless people resort to wage labour, and trading. If you have no oxen you must give land to the richest in a sharecropping agreement. The problem is bad for old people, especially when they have no one working for them. They have to give their land to a share-cropper or rent it out for cash. But since they cannot control or supervise their land the sharecropper usually cheats them.

There has also been a decrease in land fertility which means that people need more land to grow the same amount as earlier. The fertility of the land is decreasing very much, as the same land is tilled every harvest season, without or with less crop rotation. Thus, the farmers need more land or more fertiliser to grow the same amount as earlier.

To the delight of many people there is a plan to upgrade Yetmen into a municipal town. Many people think that this will improve the lives of the people including the farmers. There will be opportunities for non-farming activities, thus enabling the people to entertain a better standard of living. However, some people are pessimistic in that they might be evicted from their land and the final outcome might not

benefit the majority.

Yetmen has a great potential for growth and development and even more for poverty reduction if careful development programmes are introduced. While there are a wide range of possibilities one respondent in 1994 suggested that the three most important are: a credit scheme; an irrigation scheme; and a reforestation programme. Another suggested that it was necessary to increase crop productivity; there should be special treatment for agriculture before everything. Fertiliser was too expensive and the supply was untimely. More off-farm income opportunities were needed. The poor needed oxen.

In 2005 if things are allowed to go as they are now, most people believe that the situation will be even worse. Thus, they continually reveal their ideas to government people from the *Wereda*, so that the government might do something about land and fertiliser. They also want NGOs and other donors to engage in various development activities in the community, as they do in some other communities, so that the lives of the people might be changed for the better.

Bibliography

- Report on the 1984 Population and Housing Census, 1990
Dessalegn Rahmato, *Agrarian Reform in Ethiopia*, Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala, 1984
Hoben, A, *The Role of Ambilineal Descent Groups in Gojjam Amhara Social Organization*, University of California, Ph D, 1963
Hoben, A, *Land Tenure Among the Amhara of Ethiopia: the Dynamics of Cognatic Descent*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1973
McCann, J, *From Poverty to Famine in Northeast Ethiopia: a Rural History 1900 - 1935*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1987
-

Glossary

- Akmada:* Leather bag for grain transport.
Areke: A distilled spirit.
Belg: The short rainy season usually occurring during February/March/April. The harvest from this season takes place in July and August.
Birr: The currency of Ethiopia (15 birr = approximately £1).
Birz: Non-alcoholic mead.
Debtera: A person with some religious training who may participate in church ceremonies or religious education.
Dega: The cool highlands.
Derg: The name of the military government which ruled Ethiopia from 1974-1991.
Fasika: Easter.
Gann: Large clay pot for brewing beer.
Genna: Christmas.
Guaya: Chickling peas.
Gult: System of land taxation under Haile Selassie.
Injera: Ethiopian flat bread.
Kalicha: Traditional religious leader associated with spirit possession.
Kebele: A political boundary marking a village, an association of villages or an urban dweller's association.
Kiremt: The rainy season between June and mid-September.
Kolo: Roasted grain.
Kubet: Animal manure used as a source of fuel.
Mechagna: Leather rope.
Meher: The main rainy season - from June to mid-September. Crops sown during this period are harvested from October to December.
Meskel: the day for the commemoration of the founding of the True Cross
Mesob: A large basket on which food is served.
Neftegna: Literally "gunman". Historically the name for those who settled the South of Ethiopia as landlords during the 19th and 20th centuries.
Rist: A form of land holding based on descent groups.
Safed: Basket.
Senbete: A Sunday association which meets on the grounds of a church. Members take turns providing refreshments.
Silicha: A leather bag made from the skin of a cow or ox.
Tef: A millet-like cereal.

<i>Tej:</i>	Alcoholic mead.
<i>Timket:</i>	Epiphany.
<i>Wenfel:</i>	Reciprocal labour exchange
<i>Wenfit:</i>	Sieve.
<i>Wereda:</i>	An administrative division above the <i>kebele</i> .
<i>Weyna dega:</i>	The warm midlands.
<i>Wot:</i>	Stew eaten with Ethiopian flat bread.
<i>Wurch:</i>	The coldest highlands.

Acronyms

AMC:	Agricultural Marketing Corporation
CUD:	Coalition for Unity and Democracy
EPRDF:	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
MoA:	Ministry of Agriculture
PC:	Producers' Cooperative
ROSCA:	Rotating Savings and Credit Association
TB:	Tuberculosis

Appendix A: Ethiopian calendar

Ethiopian Month	Gregorian calendar starting date in 2005
Meskerem	11 September
Tikimt	11 October
Hidar	10 November
Tahsas	10 December
Tir	9 January
Yekatit	8 February
Megabit	10 March
Miyazia	9 April
Ginbot	9 May
Sane	8 June
Hamle	8 July
Nehase	7 August
Pagume	6 September

There are 13 months in the Ethiopian calendar, 12 of 30 days and the last one, Pagume, of 5 or 6 days depending on whether it is a leap year. The above table provides the starting date for the Ethiopian month in the Gregorian calendar for 2005.

Appendix B: Seasonal Calendars

Women's activities													
		Meskerem	Tikimt	Hidar	Tahsas	Tir	Yekatit	Megabit	Miyazia	Ginbot	Sane	Hamle	Nahase
Women's agriculture													
Men's fields													
	Teff												
	Wheat												
	Chick pea												
Women's crops													
	<i>Abish</i>		Harvest								Sowing		Weeding
Spices	<i>Dimbilal</i>		Harvest								Sowing		Weeding
	<i>Besobila</i>		Harvest								Sowing		Weeding
	Garlic		Harvest								Planting		Hoeing

Off-farm activities													
		Meskerem	Tikimt	Hidar	Tahsas	Tir	Yekatit	Megabit	Miyazia	Ginbot	Sane	Hamle	Nahase
Men	building houses												
	making furniture												
	migration												
Women	trading												
Livestock sales	ox												
	cows												
	sheep												
	goats												
	donkey												
Livestock diseases													
Mogne bagegne													
black leg (ox)													
? (donkeys)	Worchidacalues												
nameless (sheep)	Beret												
nameless (goats)													
CBPP (ox and cows)													
Maget (cow and ox)													
Fuel Availability													
	wood												
<i>ker</i> a (maize)	Korokonda												
<i>ker</i> a (sorghum)													
<i>guto</i> (maize)													
<i>guto</i> (sorghum)													
Dungcakes													
<i>gind</i> (maize)													
<i>gind</i> (sorghum)													
Niger seed													
Water availability													
Well		with varying volume depending with rain season											
river		with varying volume depending with rain season											
Tap													

Children's Labour													
		Meskerem	Tikimt	Hidar	Tahsas	Tir	Yekatit	Megabit	Miyazia	Ginbot	Sane	Hamle	Nahase
Boys	Weeding												
	Harvesting												
	Threshing												
	Ploughing												
	Sowing												
	Looking after cattle												
	Going to school												
Girls	Household chores												
	child care												
	fetching water												
	fetch dung												
	making <i>sefet</i>												
	weeding												
	going to school												
School terms													
	modern												
Quran													

Consumption, harvesting and credit													
		Meskerem	Tikimt	Hidar	Tahsas	Tir	Yekatit	Megabit	Miyazia	Ginbot	Sane	Hamle	Nahase
Consumption													
	pumpkin												
	beans (<i>eshet</i>)												
	<i>injera</i>												
	cabbage												
	roasted maize												
	meat												
	chickpea (<i>eshet</i>)												
	wheat (<i>eshet</i>)												
	potato												
	vetch <i>cegenet</i>												
	milk												
Hungry season													
Credit needs (women)													
Credit needs (men)													
Festivals		2 days		1 day	1 day	1 day			2 days	1 day	1 day	1 day	2 days

Health Calendar												
	Meskerem	Tikimt	Hidar	Tahsas	Tir	Yekatit	Megabit	Miyazia	Ginbot	Sane	Hamle	Nahase
Women												
lung cancer												
Diarrhoea												
Malaria												
Haemorrhoids			related to child delivery									
inability of giving birth												
Gastritis												
Cough												
Infections												
Men												
Malaria												
lung cancer												
Gastritis												
Amoeba												
Coughing												
Cold												
Diarrhoea												
Infection												
Trachoma												
Haemorrhoids												
Children												
Meningitis												
<i>Tiktik</i>												
Measles												
Diarrhoea												
TB												
Polio												
Anaemia												
Amoeba												
Cough												

Rain Calendar												
	Meskerem	Tikimt	Hidar	Tahsas	Tir	Yekatit	Megabit	Miyazia	Ginbot	Sane	Hamle	Nahase
High												
Average rainfall												
	Low											
Pest Calendar												
army worm												
tef												
wheat												
stockborer												
maize and sorghum												
weevil												
maize and sorghum												
chirinko												
maize and sorghum												
hudo												
potatoes and chat												

Yetmen

Crops	Meskerem	Tikimt	Hidar	Tahsas	Tir	Yekatit	Megabit	Miyazia	Ginbot	Sane	Hamle	Nahase
Maize								sowing	hoeing weeding			
Tef (dabo)	weeding		harvest				soil preparation					
Sorghum												
Tef (white)	weeding			harvest			soil preparation				Sowing	Sowing
Wheat	sowing		weeding			harvest	soil preparation					
chick pea	sowing					harvest						
Vetch	sowing		weeding			harvest						
field peas												
Nigerseed					harvest							
Fenugreek												
Lentils												
Potatoes												
Sweet potatoes												
garlic		harvest							planting		Weeding hoeing	
Gesho, beans			harvest						Planting			
									Sowing	hoeing weeding		
Grass												
Trees												
cow peas												

Labour													
		Meskerem	Tikimt	Hidar	Tahsas	Tir	Yekatit	Megabit	Miyazia	Ginbot	Sane	Hamle	Nahase
Men	Ploughing												
	Weeding												
	Sowing	wheat, vetch and chickpea							maize if it rains			tef, wheat, vetch and chickpea	
	Harvesting				Tef		wheat, vetch and chickpea						
	Threshing				Tef			wheat, vetch and chickpea					
Women	weeding												
	household chores												
	fetching water												
	child care												
	feeding dung												
	carrying husks												
	<i>gulgualo</i>												
	weeding												