

**When Pastoral Commons are privatised: Resource Deprivation and  
Changes in Land Tenure Systems among the Karrayu in the Upper  
Awash Valley Region of Ethiopia**

**By**

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## Abstract

Owing to the physical geography of the region they inhabit, the subsistence base of the Karrayu is heavily dependent on nomadic pastoralism and exploitation of natural resources, marked by spatial and seasonal variations. Nevertheless, the traditional migratory pastoral mode of existence has come under increasing pressure over the last half century particularly from the ever expanding and 'disempowering' development interventions in the region such as large-scale agricultural enterprises and conservation schemes<sup>1</sup>. In response to changing circumstances and resulting pressures, the Karrayu in certain neighbourhoods have tended to sedentarise and take up farming. The fundamental changes have to do with the growth of agriculture and the associated changes in land tenure mainly in better-watered areas and at certain locations along the banks of the Awash River which are suitable for irrigated agriculture. The implication of the shift is that changes have also taken place in the traditional mode of pastoralism and the pattern of land use. Hence, the inhabitants of neighbourhoods in Abadir and Gelcha<sup>2</sup> areas now exploit privately enclosed land for agriculture and controlled grazing, rather than the customary communally held ranges. With the process of land privatising underway, the well-watered sections of these neighbourhoods have almost entirely been enclosed and held by individual herdsmen. In the light of the forgoing, this paper attempts to examine the process of transformation of the traditional resource tenural arrangements and its various implications for Karrayu pastoral adaptations.

Much has been said about resource deprivation and socio-economic changes among pastoral groups in the Awash Valley region (Lane, 1996; Tibebe, 1997; Muderis, 1998; Getachew, 1999). Certainly, the state-sponsored land alienation and the threats for still further encroachments have entailed significant transformations in the traditional pastoral land tenure arrangements. However, the correlation between these two aspects of change has not been adequately treated in previous discussions on the subject. One possible explanation for this is that the studies may have been intended to focus on other dimensions of the transformation process. As a result, little scholarly attention has recently focused on how state actions on land affect the tenure structure and how people respond to this and the manifestation of such a transformation in the land tenure.

This study is essentially intended to redress this neglect of the subject. Therefore, as land-use patterns in pastoral areas have changed, particularly with the growth of agriculture and development of enclosures, not only have the traditional patterns of settlement changed, but also people's fundamental relationship to and attitude towards land. Wherever there is agriculture, mobility has declined and people have become permanent

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<sup>1</sup> In the context of the Karrayu, these development schemes are constituted by transnational companies such as the Dutch firm Handels-Vereeniging Amsterdam (H.V.A), the Nura Era Plantation (NEP), the Abadir Fruit and Sugar Plantation (AFSP) as the Awash National Park (ANP).

<sup>2</sup> These are two of the five settlement areas called **nano** by the Karrayu. Together with the other three, Fentale, Merti, and Elala, they form the Karrayu territory (Biya Karrayu).

settlers on the land. This has led to a new emphasis on land ownership and territoriality which has its own implications for a wide variety of land-use issues and the traditional pastoral land tenure arrangement. It has introduced a new sort of competition to enclose communal grazing land for private use.

### **The Karrayu**

The Karrayu who are the indigenous inhabitants of the Metehara Plain and Mount Fentale area are Oromo-speaking transhumant pastoralists. Apart from livestock herding, the Karrayu who inhabit certain home neighborhoods have also started practicing both rain-fed and irrigated agriculture. This is a recent but growing tendency that emerged in the early 1980s and continued to develop ever since. It begun mainly as a response to the expropriation of their pastoral land and the subsequent weakening of the pastoral means of livelihood.

The Karrayuland is located on the edge of what may be referred to as the Upper Valley of the Awash River Basin<sup>3</sup>. It lies at an altitude of not more than 1000 meters above sea level falling to 955 meters at Metehara Plain and rising as high as 2007 meters at Mount Fentale, which is the highest elevation in the region. An important topographic feature of the area, besides the Metehara Plain and Mount Fentale, is the existence of the Kesem and Awash River valleys to the North and South of the mountain respectively. Accordingly, the Fentale Mountain forms two basic drainages to the North and South, namely, the Kesem and the Awash drainages. The neighbors of the Karrayu are the Afar Debine<sup>4</sup> in the North, Arsi Oromo in the South, the Awash National Park in the East and beyond the Park the Ittu of West Harrerge, the Argoba in the West, and the Amhara in the district of Berehet in the southwest (see the attached Map).

Up until the late 1940's and early 1950's the dominant land users of what is called the Fentale district and the Metehara plain had been the Karrayu pastoralists. After this period,

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<sup>3</sup> The classification of the Awash River Basin as the Upper, the Middle, and the Lower valleys was made by the former Awash Valley Authority (AVA) in order to oversee the various agro-industrial projects that operated in the area.

<sup>4</sup> Debine - One of the biggest federations of Afar clans inhabiting the southwest rangelands in the Middle Awash.

however, several large-scale plantations, mostly managed by foreign agribusiness in joint venture with the State, were set up in the area. Primarily, the Dutch firm Handels Vereniging Amsterdam (H.V.A.) established the Wonji Shoa and Metehara Sugar estate in the Upper Valley. Likewise, the Awash National Park was legally established by the State in 1969 in the Upper Awash Valley on an area of 80,000 hectares. This national park located between Matehara and Awash Station enclosed a vast area of dry and wet season grazing which was in the past used by the Karrayu pastoralists. This new phenomenon entailed serious consequences for the indigenous Karrayu pastoralists by depriving them of access to grazing land, which they used in critical periods of time. The establishment of the irrigation schemes and the Awash National Park changed the traditional land use patterns of the Karrayu and has significantly altered the land rights of the pastoralists entailing significant changes in the land tenure system.

### **Transformation of the Tenure System: An Overview**

Land in the Karrayu area has been administered by customary law. Increasingly, however, with the expansion of the population size, largely precipitated by the continued influx and systematic incursions of more and more Ittu<sup>5</sup> into the area and the expansion of the agricultural frontier, the land-use and tenural arrangements are undergoing a major transformation. In this paper, I argue that land expropriation was not the only consequence of the introduction of state-sponsored agricultural and wildlife conservation schemes in Karrayu land. It also had a negative effect on the traditional communal spirit of Karrayu's resource use. For one thing, the phenomenon stimulated a tendency among some pastoral households to prefer individual tenure, particularly those in better-watered neighbourhoods where they have started practising some form of individual agriculture. Furthermore, frictions that were not previously common over the use and sharing of grazing resources developed in the Karrayu social structure as private restrictions increased due to the continued shrinkage of the land and as more and more pieces of it were enclosed. Hence, the traditional values of consensus on the question of land-use and

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<sup>5</sup> The Ittu are predominantly agro-pastoralists inhabiting the highlands of West Hargeisa, mainly Habro District. Most Ittu inhabitants inside the Karrayu territory migrated there over the last forty years, particularly since the mid 1970s. Their migration was mainly caused by the droughts of 1973/74 and 1984/85 and the recurrent inter-ethnic clashes with the Issa Somali.

tenure that had once governed Karrayu communal resource management began to be eroded in the face of encroachment from commercial agriculture and wildlife reserves. Thus, 'communal' land tenure arrangements are increasingly changing in the direction of privatised range areas. The major manifestations of this change are the growth in land enclosures associated with opportunistic farming and as grazing reserves. Competition to enclose good arable land is increasingly advancing. The previous communal grazing areas, which during the wet-seasons used to serve as relief for their home-based herds, are nowadays turned into cultivated/enclosed lands. The change is not always smooth. It is sometimes accompanied by conflicts.

Over the last twenty-five to thirty years, Ittu migrants from West Harrerger have introduced the practice of farming and permanent settlement in the Karrayu territory with major consequences to the traditional land tenure arrangements there. To this end, the Ittu embarked on the clearing and enclosing of the previously communal access rangeland areas. Land thus enclosed and privatised for agricultural use is called

Worried that their entire traditional pasture land will eventually be lost to *qonna* and that fenced off for grazing is referred to as *kello* the Ittu farmers and other expanding commercial farms, the Karrayu also took to fencing off large areas of land for farming and mostly as dry-season grazing reserves. This development has gradually led to a large number of once communally held lands being demarcated for two major purposes. First, by so doing, the Karrayu hope to prevent their territory from being transformed into farmland by the ever-increasing influx of Ittu migrants. The concern on the part of the Karrayu is that the more land is enclosed and thereby privatised for farming, the less land will be available for communal grazing. Secondly, the *kello* (land enclosure as grazing reserves) are principally intended to facilitate what might be termed as land speculation (see Little, 1992). This practice refers to the competition for reserving as much land as is available for future use before there will no longer be land for enclosure. The trend has resulted in the fencing off as much land as individuals can possibly have access to regardless of their grazing requirements.

Plots of land enclosed for farming and for grazing are located largely in and around the neighbourhoods found at Fentale, Gelcha, and Elala areas, such as Koboo, Sogiddo, Dega Iddu, Benti, Jarra Nunu, Balchi, Denbiba, Elala, Kereri, Gelcha Dire Rede, Gelcha Wolqitie, etc. Rain-fed agriculture is practised in the land enclosures meant for farming in these neighbourhoods. However, in and around the Abadir area (Nano Abadir), which has a larger population and greater number of neighbourhoods, land is largely fenced off and reserved for the practice of irrigated agriculture. Irrigation is possible here because this is a well-watered region as a result of its proximity to the Awash River and the surplus flow from the nearby commercial farms.

The phenomenon of spontaneous privatisation has had an impact on the relationship between individual Karrayu householders and those of the Ittu migrants. As a result, conflicts frequently occur among villagers due to incidents whereby the *kello* belonging to certain individuals are trespassed by domestic herds of other neighbours. The problem seems to have worsened by the concentration of such enclosures within the neighbourhoods. Cases of such incidents reported to the police and local administration as well as to the traditional Gada<sup>6</sup> judicial institutions continue to multiply. The situation sometimes gets so serious that beatings occur among fellow villagers and physical harm is caused to animals with the use of spears and daggers, some of them mutilated and others killed. Such incidents are much more frequent and serious between the Karrayu and the Ittu than they are among members of the Karrayu community. The Karrayu strongly feel that they have lost their traditional communal grazing land to the Ittu who recently came over in large numbers and gradually privatised their 'pastoral commons'.

The situation at present is that some villagers have enclosed sizeable portions of communal grazing land which they protect against animals belonging to other herders, and effectively use them to graze their own stock. In other cases, individuals have fenced off extensive areas as farmland, although they may not manage to exploit the enclosures

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<sup>6</sup> Gada – largely a generation-based traditional system of local governance among many Oromo groups in Ethiopia and northern Kenya where people recruited into the system assume different politico-jural, ritual and religious powers for a specified period of time they officiate. On top of this, Gada is also an embodiment of elaborate institution arrangements capable of resource management as well as land and water control (Asmerom, 1973; Baxter, 1978; Helland, 1980; Mohamed Salih, 1999).

effectively due to their large sizes. The fences of such big enclosures soon collapse leaving behind little trace of identification so that the individuals assign relatives to look after the fields when they have to journey away to cattle camps in migration areas. Although domestic herds may in general have access to these places as there are no fences around them and farming has not yet begun, 'ownership' of the area still belongs to the individuals who put up the fences first. Hence, relatives or fellow villagers forbid attempts by others to privatise the area by saying that it belongs to other occupants.

Under circumstances whereby a man is not able to put up a fence around an area of land that he intends to privatise, he cuts down the trees in the vicinity leaving the trunks at half-length. Then he uses the parts to mark off the land by spacing stakes, twenty-five to fifty metres apart. Anyone who happens to come around looking for land to enclose turns away or passes by at the sight of the markings. Of course, grazing is permitted for all animals as long as the ownership rights of the first man to privatise the area are recognised. The first man to enclose and privatise the area is entitled to use it for the grazing of his own stock and for cultivation. He may also pass a limited portion of the enclosure on to friends and relatives if he so wishes. Still, the proliferation of fencing symbolises the widespread competition for land and tenure insecurity in the area which came about largely as a result of pressure and encroachment by outsiders.

The above two practices, especially the staking out of a large part of communal grazing land for private use, are engaged in out of fear that all available land will gradually be lost to others if the partitioning continues at the present alarming rate. It is, therefore, a strategy adopted to get hold of as much of the communal land as can be privatised by way of enclosing and fencing it off before others can do likewise. As the Karrayu explain, they resorted to setting up grazing enclosures due to increasing pressures on their resource-base. Their once vast traditional grazing land was progressively reduced due to the encroachments by ever-expanding commercial farms. The remaining limited territory came under further pressure due to overpopulation by a growing influx of largely Ittu

migrants and others such as the Somali<sup>7</sup>, Minjar Amhara<sup>8</sup> and plantation workers of different ethnic origins. Not only did the migrants take up settlements there, but they also graze their livestock on the Karrayu land left of what was expropriated by the development enterprises. People began to enclose areas of land in a bid to protect their individual plots from trampling, and thereby grow suitable pasture for their domestic herds.

Due to the increased activity of spontaneous privatisation and the resulting conflict among the villagers, it has nowadays become necessary to put domestic herds from the neighbourhoods *onnetéss*<sup>9</sup> under the care of herding boys. Formerly, domestic herds used to graze about unattended around neighbourhoods, but the practice had to be halted so that the animals would not cross over into other people's grazing enclosure (*kello*).

Moreover, Karrayu elders and ritual leaders think that such acts of privatising the 'pastoral commons' for the purpose of grazing and cultivation, unknown in the traditions of the community, has incurred the divine wrath. This has been expressed in the delay and absence of rain for long periods, which has often led to serious drought conditions. They therefore keep warning against the continuation of the practice for fear that evil consequences will persist or even worsen unless it is restrained. As an example, the ritual leader (*Qallu*) of Abadir cited the failure of rain for the last two consecutive rainy seasons in Karrayu territory, when it rained abundantly in the neighbouring districts of the Fentale Mountain. He attributed the mishaps to the hostilities and conflicts resulting from the competition for land privatisation. This trend, the elders say, sharply contrasts with the peaceful atmosphere in which villagers co-existed in harmony and mutual

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<sup>7</sup> The Somali settlers (Issa and Gadabursi) in Karrayu territory migrated to the area starting towards the end of the era of Emperor Menelik II as railway workers when the Addis Ababa-Djibouti railway was under construction. Later, their number continued to grow as their relatives and kinsmen travelled over to visit them and took permanent settlement there. As with the Ittu, the Somali also inter-marry with the Karrayu and the affinal ties thus created have been another factor for the increase of the Somali inhabitants whose number has now reached close to 2,000 living in about 100 homesteads.

<sup>8</sup> These are migrants from the highlands of Minjar, Bulga District in North Shoa. The immigrants now inhabit the northern part of the Town of Metehara which has come to be called Minjar Sefer (quarter).

<sup>9</sup> Onnetéss – These are more or less permanent settlements where Karrayu households generally stay together during the rainy season.

understanding in earlier days. The elders are deeply concerned that the spirit of individualism, which motivates and characterises the competition over the once communally held grazing lands, will in time erode the fabric that has held together the Karrayu community for so many generations.

Particularly in the Abadir Area (Nano Abadir) there seems to be hardly any land that has not been privatised. The expansion of irrigated cultivation in this area by the Karrayu as well as others has made land scarce for grazing to the point that animals can find barely enough space to move around let alone feed themselves. To onlookers, the area gives the appearance that it has been apportioned and distributed to occupants just as is the case with urban land in the towns. Land enclosure for individual cultivation hastened the rate at which pastoral commons were converted into private tenure regimes. As a consequence of the intensive agricultural ventures of the commercial farms and increasing crop cultivation practised by Karrayu inhabitants, the area has reached a stage where it can no longer be used for pastoral purposes. The Karrayu cattle herders in this area retain their pastoral mode of subsistence by putting their livestock under the care of their kinsmen or affines living in distant settlements. Karrayu households with large families, on the other hand, manage to carry out cultivation in their Abadir villages, and cattle herding in migration areas (*beke deda*<sup>10</sup>) far away by appropriately dividing the household labour between the two economic activities.

It appears that wealthy herd owners in particular are affected by this development. The large size of their livestock prohibits their return to the neighbourhoods even in the wet-season. Not only is there the problem of space to keep the herds back in the neighbourhoods, but also the possibility of conflicts occurring when livestock trespasses into grazing enclosures belonging to individual villagers. Thus, rich pastoralists are forced to stay away in migration areas or along the frontiers of neighbouring groups throughout the wet and dry seasons. Loss of access to these wet-season pasture areas has disrupted the whole rotational grazing system, effectively reducing the pastoral

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<sup>10</sup> *Beke deda* or distant migration areas are temporary settlements where cattle camps are located and Karrayu pastoralists spend the dry season.

productive capacity of the whole district, in addition to the direct impact of the commercial farms. This loss has resulted in a drastic reduction of livestock numbers and a steep decline in production which the Karrayu say has caused them great suffering. Consequently, these herdsmen are hostile towards Ittu migrants whose arrival and settlement were accompanied by the recent phenomenon of spontaneous privatisation and land speculation. The Karrayu even complain that the situation has become so serious that they are finding it hard to get an appropriate site for the celebration of their age-old Gada rituals, let alone grazing sites for their animals

Hence, the present size of land unenclosed by individuals amounts to only one-half of the home-based territory left of the area after the take-over by the commercial farms and the Awash National Park. It is evident that the long Karrayu tradition of grazing livestock in communally held pasture land is being continually eroded at its roots against the background of such recent trends.

Another factor, more important in the eyes of the Karrayu, which has contributed to the transformation of the tenure system, has been the loss of sizeable parts of rangeland to private and state development schemes and to wildlife Park. The uncertainty that more land will still be expropriated as the schemes continue to expand seems to be increasing the pressure on the already disintegrating traditional tenure arrangements and resource management institutions. As studies show (Anderson and Grove, 1987; Little, 1992), since the state directly controls a great number of these development schemes, it can be said that it plays an important role in the transformation process by undermining the power and autonomy of local organisations traditionally entrusted with resource management responsibilities. The weakening and gradual disintegration of such local functions leaves an expanding void of which non-herders from urban centres, especially Metehara Town, take great advantage. Pastoral resources outside the control of the development schemes are gradually coming in the possession of urban-based traders and herd owners who exploit the uncertainty surrounding pastoral land rights. The Minjar and Argoba<sup>11</sup> who are urban residents in Metehara Town and some employees in the nearby

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<sup>11</sup> The Argoba are the western neighbors of the Karrayu.

commercial farms are putting up claims to the ownership and use of grazing resources and water points. Important also is the progressive enclosure of land for the purpose of farming by these urban-based herd owners who continue to compete with the Karrayu pastoralists for the remaining limited pastoral resources.

With more and more of the area in use both as grazing enclosure and for rain-fed and irrigated cultivation by both the Karrayu and the Ittu, most of the land has at the moment been enclosed and in effect privatised. In the areas of Merti and Abadir where a degree at least of access to the waters of Awash River and the surplus waters from the state farms makes irrigated cultivation favourable nearly all land is taken. But even in the regions where only opportunistic rain-fed cultivation is possible much has already been spontaneously claimed and occupied. Currently, therefore, the situation is such that those wanting to take up some form of farming can hardly find a plot of land in the territory.

Due to this shortage of farm plots, the wealthier herd owners tend to exploit their affinal and consanguinal links so that they can obtain as much of the well-watered land as possible. They manage to obtain such plots from relatives who had earlier enclosed and possessed areas suitable for irrigated agriculture. Apart from this, an incipient land market is evolving and the practice of buying land in secret arrangements has also become increasingly common. Under such deals, one *qertie*<sup>12</sup> of land costs up to Birr 1,000. Of course, such transactions are made under strictly secret arrangements; buyer and seller must be intimate acquaintances. Such close relations between the two parties are essential for two reasons: first, if the buyer is an outsider to the area, there is the risk that the one selling the land may go back on the deal and continue to retain the plot after having received the payment. More often than not, the fellow villagers take sides with the seller rather than the buyer, which complicates matters for the wronged party. Secondly, selling and buying land is a violation of the law since land is considered state property which necessitates that the transaction be strictly confidential. Local authorities at the district (Woreda) and regional (Zone) levels advise and warn the community against such practices because if they continue and all land is sold out they will eventually be landless

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<sup>12</sup> *Qertie* is a local term, and signifies a piece of land of approximately one-quarter of a hectare.

and displaced. In spite of this, however, there are a number of rich pastoralists who have managed to possess large tracts of land in different localities in the manner described.

In an attempt to resist the systematic process of land alienation and the growing uncertainties surrounding tenure, as many as 500 Basso<sup>13</sup> Karrayu household heads organised themselves under what is known as the Akake<sup>14</sup> Development Association some time in the middle of January 1995. A brief account of the background and history of this association is presented below, as it will shed more light on our theme.

### **The Akake Development Association: A Case Material**

The major motivational factor behind the establishment of the Akake Development Association was the concern and sense of insecurity felt by the Karrayu that the Ittu and town-based Minjar Amhara and other pastoral and agro-pastoral migrants to the area would soon occupy their land. Equally profound or even more so was their fear that the Metehara Sugar Estate would take over their land and turn it into cane fields. The Karrayu reacted to these alarming developments by resorting to the practice of land enclosing which they pursued as extensively and frequently as they could.

Meanwhile, a group of local investors began to show interests in developing certain areas of land in the Karrayu territory for agricultural purposes. As they surveyed the territory, they found the Akake area to be most suitable for irrigated agriculture as it has easy access to the Awash River. The area in question borders the Awash National Park (ANP) in the east, the Gelcha settlement area (*nano*) in the west, the Addis Ababa-Djibouti railway in the north and the Awash River and a section of the cane fields of the Metehara Sugar Estate in the south. When the Karrayu realised that the investors were planning to convert this area to an irrigated farm, they were worried that one of their last remaining suitable grazing territories was also to be lost.

At this point, the pastoralists took their case to the Woreda Administrative Council, expressing their plight and asking for immediate remedial action. The council then informed the petitioners that the plan to give away the area to the investors was necessary as the land should not continue lying in an 'underdeveloped' state and that they did not have the capacity to utilise it productively. In reply, the Karrayu, especially the Basso who largely inhabit the surroundings of the Akake, explained to the Council that they would be able to exploit the area better provided that they were given the necessary support. Accordingly, 500 Karrayu Basso household heads gathered and formed the Akake Development Association.

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<sup>13</sup> The Karrayu have two major tribal divisions or *gossa* as they refer to them; Basso and Dulecha.

<sup>14</sup> Akake is the name of the last remaining watering point (*melka*) along the banks of the Awash River to which the pastoralists of the area still have access. The grazing area in the vicinity of this *melka* is also commonly referred to as Akake.

One of the articles in the Association's Constitution states that it could independently make a deal with other associations, individuals, or agencies. Accordingly, an Italian investor agreed to develop the area on lease from the Association according to the terms of contract that the Association proposed. Major items in the terms of the contract included: 1) limit the duration of the lease to ten to fifteen years, 2) of the 1,000 hectares of land to be let lease, the investor will prepare a total of 100 hectares during the terms of the lease (a limited number per year) for maize cultivation by the pastoralists, 3) the investor will pay a rent of Birr 150 per hectare each year for the 900 hectares to be developed, and 4) irrigation canals should be constructed such that they can permanently be used once the contract is terminated.

However, the agreement was not effective since the Oromiya Regional State would not approve it on grounds that the pastoralists were not entitled to lease out land to investors. The rejection is in line with the country's constitutional provision that all land belongs to the state. The pastoralists, disappointed by the failure of the deal, complained to the state authorities that they should not be denied the right to rent and use the land after their Association was formally recognised as a legal entity. Their side of the case is that, to start with, it was acknowledged that the Association could not afford to develop such a sizeable area of land on its own.

Following this, the Association negotiated another agreement with the Al-Mesh<sup>15</sup> enterprise in the summer of 1997. However, the proposal made by the enterprise was even less favourable to the pastoralists than the previous one. The deal proposed by the enterprise required that the duration of the lease be extended to thirty years and omitted the benefit to the pastoralists in the form of rent payment of Birr 150 per hectare each year. Hence, the Association, as expected, declined the offer out of hand. The pastoralists are generally sceptical that the regional state is in favour of their interests as far as the land in question is concerned. From their point of view, the deal with the Italian investor failed and the Al-Mesh enterprise proposed one that was unfair primarily because the regional state seeks to collect the lease payment for itself. They once again reasoned that their Association was given an entitlement certificate with full knowledge that it did not have the resources to utilise the land in the manner desired. Thus, they suspect that the regional state was behind the proposal put forward by the Al-Mesh firm. Their suspicion is that, if the deal was accepted by the pastoralists, the firm would then make an agreement with the regional state as to the lease payments to be made to the administration. Thus, the benefits to the Association members would be limited only to the preparation of the 100 hectares of maize cultivation, whereas their claim to collect the land rents would be lost to the regional state. In relation to this, the pastoralists recall the remarks by Ato Meshesha, a shareholder of the enterprise, who said that it did not seem to him that the pastoralists had the legal right to lease land to private investors. He is quoted as saying that if members of the Association could provide assurances from the regional state to that effect, his firm had no problem with making a deal with them.

Amid such circumstances, the Association remains non-functional with the area of land that it set out to exploit continuing to be idle and unused. In the meantime, the pastoralists

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<sup>15</sup> Al-Mesh is an investment venture jointly run by two private individuals, Al Amoudi and Meshesha.

have been pressing ahead with their plea to the regional state so that it facilitates conditions for other investors to make favourable offers to jointly develop the land with them. Instead, the state authorities propose that investors will not work to their advantage and that the state will make arrangements with the region's development arm, the Oromiya Development Association (ODA), to invest in the area with benefits to the inhabitants. Local people, though, entertain doubts as to whether the proposal will ever materialise seeing that ODA's capacity as a development agency is extremely limited at the moment. Little progress has, therefore, been made in implementing the latest proposal with the result that things are now in a kind of limbo.

The above case material reveals that the Karrayu have themselves begun enclosing tracts of land as private holdings. This practice is the result of the uncertainties over rights to resources, the sense of insecurity created by the expanding commercial farms and game reserves, encroachments by immigrant farming groups such as the Ittu and the growing interest of private investors in the area in recent years. The trend not only conflicts with the traditional land tenure system of the pastoralists, but also weakens their herding practices. The more land is enclosed and privately held, the less pasture is available for especially home-based herds.

However, this is viewed as the only option by the pastoralists in the face of external threats to expropriate their remaining grazing land. The course is meant not so much to violate the traditional rules, as it is to protect community interests while denying outsiders access to communal resources. Thus, the change from the long-standing norms only reveals the nature of their flexibility in response to outside pressure bent on alienating land from traditional uses. Hence, the Karrayu are too wary of further land encroachment, and have found it to their advantage to tolerate their members when they establish ownership rights vis-à-vis the different legal powers in the state who can adjudicate pastoral land to outsiders. Evidently, the Karrayu are intent on maintaining their pastoral way of life at all costs. In the light of this, the lease offer made by the Basso Karrayu of the Akake grazing area should not be viewed as a strange act. Actually, it does not contradict the long-existing local values and the current severe shortage of rangelands. In the first place, the move to enclose the Akake area on such a scale has not come originally as a local initiative but rather as a direct response to an outside threat of alienating it for a different purpose. When their fight to prevent the threat by legal means

failed, the Basso were left with just one choice. They had to risk their herding activity, at least momentarily, so as to save their grazing reserve under the pretext that they are to develop the rangeland themselves.

Another important point illustrated by the case is the dynamism of pastoral land tenure arrangements necessitated by constantly changing circumstances. In other words, land tenure changes are manifestations of the overall economic and social transmutations in the pattern of pastoral livelihood and land-use practices. In essence, such adaptations are related to the introduction and expansion of small-scale agriculture by the herdsmen including changes in their settlement patterns, social relationships, and attitudes towards the land itself. Accordingly, agricultural practices have resulted in reduced mobility and permanent occupation of land by the sedentary pastoralists. Among the immediate effects of these changes is the emergence of exclusivity and a new emphasis on land-ownership and territoriality.

#### **The Spread of Agro-Pastoralism and Changes in Pastoral Land Tenure: A Glimpse at the Practices in Three Selected Karrayu Communities**

The Karrayu have been practicing irrigated and rain-fed cultivation for the last fifteen to twenty years. The most important reasons behind their resort to crop cultivation is the increasing amount of pressure on land which put their pastoral mode of subsistence in crises. The alienation of a great part of their pastoral land for use by commercial farms and national park as well as the flooding of their grazing land by the ever-expanding Lake Beseka has contributed to their taking up cultivation as a coping mechanism. No less important, the settling inside the Karrayu territory particularly of the Ittu who migrated from West Harrerge has played a part in the overcrowding and overstocking of the already shrinking resource base. Thus, the resultant competition and confrontation over grazing resources which have themselves become considerably less than they were have caused the Karrayu to turn to cultivation of at least their staple crop, maize. Moreover, fear and concern that their remaining land would still be expropriated, if uncultivated, has been another factor, as they put it, in the change of their economic adaptation and diversification into farming.

The Karrayu practice their cultivation, what some refer to as opportunistic farming, in two ways. The first is irrigated cultivation carried out in the areas (*nano*<sup>16</sup>) of Gelcha, Merti, and Abadir. This is the expanding form of cultivation entirely dependent on the Awash River and surplus flow of irrigation water from the Metehara Sugar Estate and Nura Era Farm. The second is dry-land/rain-fed crop production, which is dependent on run off water that drains from the mountains or high grounds and is spread out to the nearby fields through crude water spreading techniques. Without the run off water thus obtained, the climate of the area characterized by low rainfall and high temperature would not have made possible any rain-fed crop production. Such type of “take-a-chance” (Dahl, 1981:204) farming which is dependent on rainfall and the resulting flood involves a great deal of risk. For one thing, seeds are sown in anticipation of rains (dry planting) or after witnessing their onset. Then, the floods are diverted so as to water the fields. However, it so often occurs that the rains fail to pour in amounts or for durations that had been anticipated causing the crops to dry up prematurely. In other cases, the rains may fall so heavily that floods result and inundate the fields sweeping away or destroying the crops.

The resort to farming activities has meant that their traditional land tenure arrangements have undergone significant changes and modifications. And one way to understand this process of transformation is to look local inhabitants of a particular village or group of villages where the practice of land enclosing for purpose of different forms of cultivation takes place. In order to address the issues with typical enriching material, two carefully selected and representative community case studies have been presented and analyzed. These cases deal with neighborhoods where irrigated cultivation is largely the practice. I have the conviction that the use of community case material will not only round out the investigation on transformation of the tenure system but will also elucidate the functions and workings of the phenomenon. It is also hoped that the cases will shed some light on the dynamic of pastoral land tenure and the agricultural modes of adaptations that the Karrayu

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<sup>16</sup> In the Karrayu pattern of settlement localities or home neighborhoods numbering five to ten on the average together form a settlement area (**nano**). There are five such areas (**nano**) in the Karrayu territory, namely, Nano Gelcha, Nano Fentale, Nano Abadir, Nano Elala, and Nano Merti.

cattle-herders resort to whenever circumstances require it and are opportune. With respect to possible derivations from the case material presented, I have also included remarks and reflections on fundamental concepts of some theoretical relevance.

### **The Case of Dire Sedan**

I begin the discussion by briefly examining the processes which led to the settlement and cultivation practice by the Karrayu herders in Dire Sedan. Dire Sedan is a home neighborhood in the Abadir area (Nano Abadir). The inhabitants are mainly Karrayu, Ittu, and small number of Shoa Oromo called Chore who arrived from the vicinities of Wulinchitie, Boset district.

The continued expansion of the Metehara Sugar Estate kept displacing the Karrayu pushing them further and further until they reached the Dire Sedan peripheral area covered with bushes and forests. Members of the Ittu and Chore groups introduced farming in this area by clearing forest lands and hoeing the ground until they later started ox-drawn cultivation since 1985. These groups are used to farming as they practiced it to some extent in their previous settlements. Observing the benefits these cultivators could derive from their plots, the native Karrayu also started to enclose areas of land for cultivation.

Those Karrayu who first started cultivation in the Dire Sedan area occupied as much as one or two hectares of land depending on their capacity to practice farming. As more and more of the pastoral commons were converted to individual plots of land, the demand for cultivable land increased. Thus, others who wanted to take up cultivation had to be confined to less than one hectare.

The Karrayu in the Dire Sedan area use small portion of their farm enclosure for the cultivation of maize, which is their staple crop. They sharecrop the remaining large portion of their enclosure to workers in the state farms and others from the nearby towns who want to hire land for cultivation on sharecropping arrangements with the Karrayu 'land occupants'. The following are the five common forms of sharecropping and/or land mortgaging agreements that have been gleaned from the in-depth interviews carried out with one of my key informants.<sup>17</sup>

1. In the first form of the contract, the Karrayu 'land occupant' rents his plot of land, sometimes with a pair of oxen, to someone wanting to cultivate produces for the market. The one hiring the plot (the sharecropper) agrees to cover all the expenses for the agricultural inputs (fertilizers, pest chemicals, and seed varieties) and farm

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<sup>17</sup> The data on the various forms of contracts adopted by the Karrayu in Dire Sedan home neighborhood and other people was collected during several interviews conducted with an elderly local. He chairs a self-initiated Water Management Committee set up by community members to ensure a fair distribution of irrigation water among the cultivating pastoralists. The interviewee was identified as a key informant by virtue of the fact that he is knowledgeable and experienced in providing historical and ethnographic information.

related activities such as weeding, tending, and watering. When the produces have been harvested and sold, he deducts all his expenses and equally shares the profit with the Karrayu 'land occupant'. The Karrayu are losing interest in this type of arrangement since some of those who hire the land claim to have made more expenses than they naturally have and thus minimize the share that goes to occupant.

2. The second type of contract is exactly a reverse of the first. In this case, the Karrayu occupant hires labor rather than rent out 'his plot'. He covers all the expenses needed for farm inputs, and a laborer who is used to cultivation performs all the farm activities. After harvest, the Karrayu occupant calculates all the expenses he made for the inputs and then equally splits the profit between him and the laborer.
3. The third type of contract is an arrangement under which both parties equally share all the expenses needed for the inputs, work together on the plot and divide the profits equally between them accordingly. This arrangement offers no special or additional benefit to Karrayu occupying the plot. Such an arrangement is entered into because the land is not desirable for cultivation due to its being marginal and less productive.
4. There are three parties to the fourth type of contract; the one renting the plot (the 'Karrayu occupant'), the man carrying out all the farm activities and the individual who 'invest' his cash on farm inputs. Thus, the Karrayu sometimes acts as a guard of the plot besides letting it is used for cultivation, while the second party takes care of the actual farm work such as ploughing and tending. In addition to making available all the agricultural inputs, the third party may cover the costs of hired labor for the farm if it is needed. Cash profits in this arrangement are equally shared out among the three parties after all the expenses incurred for the inputs and additional labor have first been calculated and returned to the 'investor'
5. The fifth form of arrangement is land mortgaging. This is an arrangement under which a Karrayu who holds a plot of land manages to borrow an amount of cash from a moneylender. An agreement is made to the effect that provided the borrower is unable to pay off his debts within a period of time, he will temporarily transfer his plot of land to the lender to use for a certain number of production seasons. Hence, land mortgaging is a practice whereby land is conditionally transferred from its holder to a moneylender who, in many cases, is an outsider engaged himself in different forms of sharecropping. Under the terms of this arrangement, the defaulter has his plot of land taken away by the lender who uses it in the manner of his choosing until his cash is paid back. Thus, the loan will be interest-free, while it affords the lender an access to a piece of cultivating land and allows the borrower a limited time to get the cash for debt settlement. If, though, the borrower remains unable to clear the debt during the period allowed, the lender will not wait indefinitely but rather will retain the mortgaged land permanently. Rich Karrayu livestock owners also enter into land mortgaging arrangements with their fellow cultivating pastoralists. Thus, by buying land mortgages in the form of cash loans, many wealthy Karrayu herdsmen are getting richer as they expanded their land holdings and fields under cultivation.

Although the Karrayu in the Dire Sedan area practice cultivation in the manner discussed earlier, pastoralism continues to be the dominant mainstay of their subsistence economy. Thus, they carry out the two activities side by side and this requires them to allocate the available household manpower as effectively as possible. The rich pastoralists are often found to be more polygynous and it is quite common and necessary for such herders to take multiple wives and to have many children for taking care of the various pastoral activities. Wealthy herd owners can usually afford to support polygenous households, which they utilize as a strategy to cope with their manpower needs. This is especially the case with rich pastoralists engaged in activities such as crop cultivation besides livestock herding and who consider it sound strategy to have access to both economic niches.

### **The Case of Algea**

Alegea is one of the localities found along the banks of the Awash River and is situated East of Abadir, and southeast of Addis Ketema. It used to be one of the suitable watering sites (*melka*<sup>18</sup>) on the Awash banks, which the Karrayu used before the establishment of concession farms in the area. Besides, the place was a home village for some Karrayu households.

By the end of the 1960s this area was handed over to a concessionaire who launched small-scale cotton farming there. The intervention later led to conflict between plantation guards and Karrayu cattle herders who brought their livestock to the farm. After the concessionaire had operated the farm for some years, the *Derg*<sup>19</sup> regime nationalized it following the downfall of the Imperial Government. Although the farmland came under state control, the area, nevertheless, remained uncultivated for sometime until 1981/1982. During this period, some Karrayu and Ittu men began land clearing in order to carry out crop cultivation. As a result of this, the government body then responsible for rural settlements organized these men, together with impoverished Karrayu women and other settlers from different places, under a 'farmers association'. Following this, the members of the association took up cultivation in their respective enclosed areas. To water their fields, the cultivators on the Algea area continue to rely on the surplus flow of irrigated water from the Metehara Sugar Estate which they divert through furrows from the irrigation canal.

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<sup>18</sup> *Melka* – A site on a river bank suitable for watering domestic herds.

<sup>19</sup> Also called 'the Provisional Military Administrative Council' (PMAC), the *Derg* was a military junta that came to power in Ethiopia in September 1974. It established a Marxist military government and ruled the country for 17 years (1974–1991). The *Derg* was deposed by rebel forces that seized power in May 1991.

Nevertheless, the salty nature of the water at Lake Beseka located around Algea and the small size of pasture land available because of the ever expanding cane plantations in the area, livestock keeping became increasingly difficult for the Karrayu pastoralists in the locality. Because of this, many of the Karrayu who possessed land in this area favored cattle herding over crop production. Hence, except for the few Karrayu who chose to stay and continue with cultivation, many of them left the area to take care of their cattle in distant pastures hiring their enclosures to others. Sharecropping arrangements of the Algea take three different forms and, as the terms of contract indicate the agreements entered into reflect the traditional land tenure practices common in the central highlands. The wordings and references used in connection with the arrangements strongly suggest that they were applied by highlanders who moved to the area as plantation workers or for other purposes. In fact, the information in this case material was obtained from one of such individuals who migrated here from a highland region in search of wage employment. The different forms of contractual arrangements in this locality take the following three forms as described by the said informant<sup>20</sup>.

1. ‘Yäkul’<sup>21</sup>: - The term shows that there is an equal share of profits under this arrangement. The Karrayu with a plot of land rents it to someone with money and oxen. The second party works on the plot by making available all the necessary inputs in addition to oxen and labor. When crops especially tomatoes, onions, and watermelons, are harvested the expenses that the ‘investor’ has made are first calculated before the two parties equally share the profits.
2. ‘Arat Ànd’ (Érbo<sup>22</sup>): - Under this arrangement, there are three parties and the profit from the sale of the produce is divided into four parts. Two parts of the profit go to the Karrayu who rents ‘his’ land. One part is taken by the individual with cash and oxen and who hires a laborer as a third party to the arrangement. The laborer, in turn, carries out the cultivation with other workers under him. This third party receives the fourth part of the profit, which represents only one quarter of the returns from the sale. Before the profit is thus apportioned, the ‘investor’ calculates and deducts the costs of inputs, labor, and oxen.

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<sup>20</sup> At one point during my stay in this home neighborhood, I was surprised to find a typical highlander engaged in farm activities in the heart of Karrayu territory (Algea). Fascinated by his non-pastoral appearance and particularly native accent in the dialect of Amharic he spoke I asked him if he had come from Wollo region. In the middle of the conversation which then ensued, I was astonished to learn that the man had not only come from exactly the same village as my relations lived, but actually knew one of my immediate parents too. The unexpected incident made it easier to put queries to the individual concerning his background and present circumstances. So I put to him that, being a native of the Wollo highlands, how he could occupy farm land a long way down here where it is so overcrowded and scarce. In reply, he explained to me that he had been a wage laborer at Metehara Sugar Estate for a period of time since his arrival here. However, after losing his employment in one of the Estate’s layoffs, he was forced to take up cultivation on the basis of a sharecropping arrangement with Karrayu cultivating pastoralists. He then narrated a whole range of sharecropping arrangements in which he and his fellow migrants are involved, as well as other related developments.

<sup>21</sup> Yäkul- As used in the context of the traditional land tenure system in northcentral highlands, the term refers to a sharecropping agreement in return for one-half of the produce.

<sup>22</sup> Erbo- As used in the same context, this is a sharecropping agreement in return for one-fourth of the produce.

3. 'Sost Ànd' (Siso<sup>23</sup>): - Karrayu 'land occupant' in this situation leases his plot of land for a year or two or even three depending upon a mutual agreement. The sharecropper who takes over the plot on lease pays for it from Birr 600 up to Birr 1000 which payment varies according to the size of the plot, its fertility, and the suitability of the location for the flow of water from the irrigation canals. The contractor buys the inputs, provides the oxen, and hires labor for the cultivation. A third partner to the agreement, who, besides ploughing the land, is helped by additional hired labor for tending and watering the field, carries out the actual work of cultivating the land. When the produce has been gathered and sold all the expenses that have gone into the farm work are first calculated and returned to the contractor. He then collects one half, i.e., two quarters of the earnings in his position as the temporary occupant of the plot on lease. The remaining one half or two quarters is again equally divided and one part is given to the 'investor' for contributing the cash. The last quarter of the profit goes to the third partner who contributed his labor and serves as a chief workman on the plot.

### **Discussion of the Cases**

With the systematic process of alienation of prime grazing land, displacement of the pastoralists into marginal areas, and the curtailment of their mobility came the gradual sedentarisation, land enclosure and privatization and engagement in opportunistic farming. Farming particularly is increasingly becoming an economic alternative for many Karrayu households, as is the case particularly in better-watered neighborhoods such as Abadir. Therefore, among the Karrayu it was the poor, who had lost their core livestock and thus almost sloughed-off from the pastoral sector, to be the earliest to resort to farming. However, many of these poor pastoral households who have taken up agriculture could not sustain their farms because of their inability to generate and bear the costs involved. In addition, the rich herd owners have also in some areas started practicing agriculture. This group of pastoralists, unlike the poor ones, devote much of the time and household manpower in their pastoral pursuits and carry out agriculture on a sort of part time basis. These processes therefore led to the evolvment of a whole lot of changes in their traditional pastoral subsistence, some of which are:

- Engagement in different forms of sharecropping and other land rental arrangements which at times may not be in their favor. The expansion of cultivation regime

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<sup>23</sup> Siso- A sharecropping agreement in return for one-third of the produce.

particularly irrigated farming in the neighborhoods very close to the Awash River has important implications for changes in the Karrayu pastoral land tenure systems. New land rental, and sharecropping arrangements including the use of hired labor, are evolving. The cases give evidence of a wide variant of contractual agreements that existed in the evolving tenure system in the surrounding areas. Different contractual arrangements over land in the areas demonstrate several things. First, there was a substantial degree of flexibility, which existed in the emerging tenure system in terms of what sort of arrangements regarding the use of land could be made. These contractual arrangements seem to expand over time to include share contracts and rentals as well as inheritance and, in some instances, sale. Secondly, pastoralists are making contractual arrangements that were not sanctioned by law. There is restriction in almost all Ethiopian governments' land laws on entering contracts over land without the approval of the concerned state agency.

- The emergence of an incipient land market where land is sold, mortgaged and temporarily or permanently transferred between households within the pastoral group or with those from outside who possess the necessary capital such as farm oxen and liquid cash to buy the required farm inputs and hire labor;
- Changes in the herd management (herding organization which alter with changed circumstances) of the cultivating pastoralists, who due to their engagement in agriculture, could not carry out their pastoral pursuits in traditional way. As a result, they see to it that their animals are herded through informal and semi-contractual arrangements such as cattle entrustment and share-rearing. In this case, the area of herding co-operation between families is extended to include more distant relatives and friends; the basic economic unit is enlarged while its dependence on other such units increased. All these changes are part of the drive for greater economic viability.
- The evolvement of hired labor mainly to carry out the most laborious parts of the farm works particularly in the cultivation of cash crops such as tomato, onion, water melon and pepper which necessitate considerable labor in-put. This labor comes

from the nearby towns and from among those who have been laid off by estate farms in the areas. Therefore, one distinguishing feature about agricultural production on such farms is that the pastoralists hire persons from agricultural background to do almost all the manual labor. The cultivating pastoralists particularly the rich herders, in addition to their strategy of maintaining their household manpower for exclusively pastoral engagements, still generally retain an aversion to doing farm work, and consequently such work is done by employees from non-pastoral groups.

### **Conclusion**

Since the introduction of commercial farms and conservation development programmes, the Karrayu have been losing rights to many essential resources. This new situation also enabled territorial expansion of several agricultural peoples into Karrayu land. As a result, many Karrayu pastoralists were forced to assume sedentary or semi-sedentary residence in order to make or strengthen their claims over either wet or dry-season grazing areas. In the process, agriculture is becoming a new way of life among the Karrayu. Pastoralists are trying to adapt to new opportunities, contrary to the prevailing official thinking that they resist change. The Karrayu, particularly in the most populous neighbourhoods such as Abadir, have been transformed from largely transhumant pastoralists exploiting a communally owned range and have become settled pastoralists exploiting privately owned enclosures both for agricultural and grazing purposes.

Over the last fifty years, considerable changes have been taking place in Karrayu traditional ownership of grazing land. As a result, vast portion of the land left from what has been appropriated by expanding development schemes is enclosed and privatised by individual households. While much of the process has taken place in the wet regions that offer irrigation opportunities, it is now spilling over into neighbourhoods far removed from the Awash River basin. At present, communal land is available only on the margins, which, in the final analysis, will mean that there are going to be no more pastoral commons left at the end of the appropriation process.

What we can learn from the preceding discussion is that the transformation of the Karrayu pastoral land tenure system has been due not only to the changes within the rural pastoral population. It has also been the outcome of the growth of plantations, game Park and other developments. This land ‘crunch’ and enclosure of pastoral grazing territory comes as a direct consequence of economic diversification, not only by the Karrayu but also by the immigrants such as the Ittu, outside investors, and the government. The earlier viability of much of pastoralism, especially in its nomadic form, had depended upon the security and protection of these resources. With the termination of the pastoralists’ control, outsiders began to move in.

The expansion of the cultivation regime, irrigated farming in particular, has important implication for Karrayu pastoralism, apart from possible changes in ideology. As discussed in the main text of the paper, the last two decades have seen continuing changes in what was traditionally communal Karrayu land tenure. In the wake of such changes and the introduction of small-scale agriculture have come new developments, i.e. land rent and different sharecropping arrangements. At the centre of such transformations is land and land-related factors. This refers mainly to a denial of access to what once was premium Karrayu grazing land and the subsequent evolution of different forms of land-use. The fact that, in association with these elements of change, varied forms of land-based contractual arrangements have established itself implies a number things.

Under compelling or changing circumstances, the land tenure system manifests a high degree of flexibility giving way to the introduction and adoption of what could be described as ‘alien’ contractual land-use institutions. And in the course of time, these institutions continue to develop by assuming varied features which might be local in their origin or borrowed from other agricultural areas. As a result, land leases, rentals, inheritances, and sales have become common arrangements under which the Karrayu carry out farm activities on a joint basis with other partners. In the process, an informal land market has emerged in which land is temporarily or permanently transferred between households within the pastoral group or outside it through sales or mortgages. Of course, the practice is still in its incipient stage, although there are indications that it will

be expanding, given the present high demand for cultivable land. This change signifies the fact that land is assuming a commodity value as a means of production and exchange, which attribute it did not possess prior to the advent of cultivation. Another implication of agriculture as practised by the Karrayu has to do with its being carried out on land under no legal recognition of private ownership. Hence, the different forms of land transfer including sales are not sanctioned by state law. Indeed, all pastoral land is declared 'state land' in the constitutions of successive Ethiopian governments. Thus, any contractual arrangement involving land-use will be valid only upon the approval of the concerned government agency, as stipulated in pertinent decrees issued by respective regional states.

A change in the customary pastoral labour relationships is yet another of the developments that have accompanied the expansion of small-scale cultivation. Specialised skills were needed to carry out important parts of the farming process which only those with an agricultural background could possibly provide. Thus, the need for hired labour manifested itself, paving the way to the emergence of contractual labour relationships on the basis of cash payments. The main activities that required hired labour involve ploughing, planting, watering and harvesting, which tasks demanded inputs not only in the form of know-how and experience but also in that of manual work. The demand for hired labour was met mainly by people from nearby towns and those dismissed by the Estate farms. Hence, the use of hired labour especially by the rich herders has become an important distinguishing feature of crop production carried out by the cultivating pastoralists. Because of their orientation to the exclusive use of household manpower for pastoral engagements and their relative financial strength, wealthy herdsmen involved in cultivation chose to employ labour to manage their farms. As for the less advantaged livestock keepers, they mobilise work parties to assist them in their farm work. Such cooperative labour also contains elements of hired manpower since

organising the work party involves costs in the form of *khat*<sup>24</sup> and coffee which the host or organisers offers to the participants.

Due to the emergence of agro-pastoralism, traditional herd management and organisation has been affected in the case of those engaged in both activities. Cultivating pastoralists could no longer attend to pastoral pursuits in the old ways because they had to devote a good measure of their time and effort to their fields. Stockowners in this situation had to seek ways of carrying on with herding practices while engaging in crop husbandry. Semi-contractual arrangements and different forms of social cooperation, cattle entrustment, stock associateship, and share-rearing are the institutions by which they continue to practise pastoral production as they simultaneously pursue cultivation. These arrangements have become important in obtaining extra-domestic labour, forging personal alliances, and in planning a territorial spread of livestock to avert or reduce the risks of localised hazards. Similarly, the demand for draught oxen, which are an important form of capital, has brought about different forms of relationships between households with one or more oxen and those without any. The relationships often go beyond 'ethnic boundaries' to involve the members of other groups which might be pastoral or otherwise. The new developments in the network of social relationships have necessitated the involvement of distant friends, relatives, and associates in different forms of herding cooperation. As social links thus develop and expand, the basic economic unit, i.e. the household, also becomes enlarged since the interdependence among the members of different households within the pastoral group and outside continues to increase. In the final analysis, all the different forms of social and economic cooperation expressed in the above institutions are adopted to maintain the continuity of the pastoral practice while simultaneously searching for an alternative to cope with adversities.

An additional factor worth mentioning in connection with the introduction of agriculture is the role of migrant populations who arrived in the area at different periods. Two distinct groups of migrants have influenced the evolution of crop production in the region

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<sup>24</sup> *Khat* – *Cathula edulis*, is a narcotic plant chewed as a stimulant. It is widely grown in the highlands mainly of West Harrerge and sold to the consumers inhabiting the nearby towns in the region as well as big cities like Nazareth and Addis Ababa.

in a number of significant ways. One group, numerically dominant and the first to arrive are the Ittu. Having been displaced from their traditional habitat as a result of recurring droughts and raids from hostile communities, they arrived in Karrayu territory in successive waves of migration. After their arrival, they very quickly entrenched themselves in different Karrayu neighbourhoods as permanent settlers. The other group comprises highlanders referred to as Minjar Amhara who came later on following the growth of urban settlements in the region. Also involved in this group are migrant workers who came to the area seeking wage employment at the state farms. Common to all the migrant communities is that they came from agricultural areas with a background in farming practices. As such, they helped influence the rise and development of agricultural production in the Karrayu area. A notable contribution of theirs in this regard is that they infused novel farming techniques and hastened the spatial spread of the activity around the neighbourhoods conducive for cultivation. Among the major innovations introduced were the adoption of different types of farm inputs and the supply of hired labour. A related important development brought about by the migrants has been a set of different sharecropping institutions including land lease which served to promote market-oriented and market-inspired production. In view of the unfamiliarity of these farming methods and arrangements, it is no wonder that the arrival of small-scale cultivation was received by the Karrayu cultivators as an externally oriented and 'alien' enterprise.

In sum, two major conditions; confinement to an ever shrinking resource base under the pressures of an expanding human and livestock population impose on the Karrayu the need for constant self-readjustment. The self-adaptation manifests itself in the manner of land exploitation that they see fit in view of their crisis. Besides, the question of continued survival, which is the driving force behind the process of transformation, necessitates that they maximize the returns from their land. The Karrayu have developed a particular mode of pastoralism, which proves to be remarkably adaptive in the face of multiple external challenges that they have had to cope with. Over the last half a century of time their 'version of pastoralism' has transformed itself from a range management that had predominantly been open and communal to a wider one which encompasses

herding practices and different forms of crop cultivation carried out mainly in the home neighborhoods within the domain of private enclosures. Thus, the form of pastoralism now practiced in certain Karrayu neighborhoods continues to sustain itself as a way of life and, its pursuers as a group, proving to be persistent in difficult situation. This process of transformation bears out two important features of pastoralism, namely, change and continuity, a change which is an “assertion of societal continuity in changing or new circumstances” (Salzman, 1980:6).

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