ETHIOPIA CULTURAL FIELD GUIDE

Published: December 2010

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DSN: 278-6167.

DOD-2634-ETH-011-11

Foreword

The Ethiopia Cultural Field Guide is designed to provide deploying military personnel an overview of Ethiopia's cultural terrain. In this field guide, Ethiopia's cultural history has been synopsized to capture the more significant aspects of the country's cultural environment, with emphasis on factors having the greatest potential to impact operations.

The field guide presents background information to show the Ethiopia mind-set through its history, language, and religion. It also contains practical sections on lifestyle, customs and habits. For those seeking more extensive information, MCIA produces a series of cultural intelligence studies on Ethiopia that explore the dynamics of Ethiopia culture at a deeper level.

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CULTURAL FIELD GUIDE: THE FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia, approximately twice the size Texas, is the largest country in the Horn of Africa (HOA). It is landlocked and shares borders with Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, and Sudan. The capital city is Addis Ababa. Most of the population lives in rural areas and only a small portion (16 percent) live in urban areas, despite rapid urbanization (4.2 percent annually). Ethiopia is one of the poorest countries in the world, and most Ethiopians endure many hardships including famine and inadequate health care.

Ethiopia is home to at least 76.9 million people, surpassing Egypt as the second most populous country in Africa, behind Nigeria. It is also one of the most culturally diverse African countries, with

Addis Ababa Street Scene

more than 80 ethnic groups. Its government is based on a system of ethnic federalism that divides the country into administrative regions based on ethnicity. There are nine regional states and two city-states. As a result of these political divisions, ethnicity is an increasingly important part of Ethiopian identity in both the private and political spheres.

Sixty percent of the population speaks the national language, Amharic. Members of the Amhara ethnic group (15-20 percent of the population) speak it as a native language, while 40-45 percent of the population speaks Amharic as a second language. More than 70 other languages are spoken throughout the country, including the Oromo language, which 40-45 percent of the population speaks as a native language.

Historically, Ethiopia has been strongly associated with Christianity, particularly the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. In the late 1800s, Emperor Menelik II referred to Ethiopia as "a Christian island surrounded by a sea of pagans." However, Ethiopia likely has at least as many Muslims as Christians, if not more.

Many Ethiopians are proud that their country is one of the oldest in Africa and that Ethiopia was the only African country to remain independent from a European power during the Scramble for Africa in the 19th century. While many Ethiopians are proud of their history of independence from non-African rule, members of some ethnic groups believe they have been marginalized since the Ethiopian state was formed. These conflicting historical narratives influence the social, cultural, and political spheres of modern Ethiopia.

HISTORICAL ERAS

Ethiopia is arguably the oldest independent country in Africa and is often considered the "birthplace of mankind." The famous Lucy skeleton was excavated from a lakebed in Hadar, Ethiopia, and the Ardi skeleton, possibly a million years older than Lucy, was excavated from the Middle Awash region outside Addis Abba. A deep sense of historical importance is at the forefront of Ethiopian life and identity.

Biblical Legends

Among northern highland Ethiopians, history is strongly tied to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The Amhara and the Tigray ethnic groups in particular trace their origins to a religious legend about the Queen of Sheba and the Ark of the Covenant. This legend provides a direct link between the ancient rulers of Ethiopia and biblical Israel.

According to legend, the Queen of Sheba traveled to ancient Jerusalem to study governance at King Solomon's court. While

Ethiopian Literary Tradition: The Kebra-Nagast

The Kebra-Nagast, literally meaning "the Book of the Glory of the Kings," is an ancient text that details the origins and history of the Solomonic line of Ethiopian emperors. The Kebra-Nagast is the earliest literary evidence of the Queen of Sheba legend. It is part of a series of ancient texts, including the Tarike-Nagast (monarchic history) and the Fiteha-Nagast (laws of the kings) that explain and glorify the history of Ethiopia and its leaders. This collection of ancient literature, originally written in the ancient language of Ge'ez, provides the historical foundations for the national culture, history, religion, and identity of many Ethiopians.

there, she was tricked into having an affair with King Solomon and eventually gave birth to his son: the future King Menelik I. Future leaders claimed descent from this biblical lineage to legitimize their rule. The legend also claims that, when he came of age, Menelik I traveled to Jerusalem. Like his mother, Menelik was educated at King Solomon's court and, while there, was crowned king of Ethiopia. When he returned home, he brought the Ark of the Covenant back to Ethiopia. Believers claim that the Ark of the Covenant remains in Ethiopia and is guarded by monks.

Although there is no historical evidence to support this legend, it remains important to many Ethiopians, particularly those in the north who claim ancestry from the ancient empires. Many Ethiopians point to this legend as evidence that Ethiopia is one of God's favored nations and that the founding of Ethiopia was part of a divine plan. Many northern elite use this legend to legitimize their rule and the political and economic marginalization of others, particularly groups from southern Ethiopia. The legend is taught in schools and is thus widely known by educated Ethiopians throughout the country. However, many Ethiopians on the periphery of the ancient empires, particularly those incorporated as part of the conquest of Menelik II, do not believe in the legend.

Ancient Kingdoms

Beginning in the 1st century A.D., a succession of kingdoms came to power in what is now the northern highlands region. These kingdoms consolidated their authority over the diverse ethnic and social groups in the area. The kingdoms were dominated by the Amhara and Tigray ethnic groups, who used these historic dynasties to justify their imperial rule over Ethiopia in the 19th century and their continued elite status.

The Aksum Empire, founded in the 1st century A.D., was the first and most famous of these ancient kingdoms. It was the first

centralized kingdom in the region to be ruled by a Christian leader, now believed to be a Tigrayan. Throughout history, Ethiopian leaders drew on the prestige of the Aksum Empire and claimed direct descent from Aksum royalty to legitimize their rule and glorify their kingdoms. Many Ethiopians continue to view Aksum and Ethiopia's subsequent great dynasties as a political and historical ideal.

Stela Built in the Aksum Empire

Many Ethiopians, particularly Amhara and Tigray, are proud of this dynastic history. However, some believe that modern Ethiopia does not live up to the glory of the Aksum Empire. Some Ethiopians are discouraged that their country, which they believe once rivaled Europe in its advancements, is now suffering from poverty and lack of development. In contrast, many members of the Tigray ethnic group, who dominate the political sphere, are proud of the development efforts of Ethiopia's government.

The Oromo Expansion

As the Amhara and Tigray solidified their Christian empires in the north, the Oromo ethnic group (today the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia) was expanding its influence on the southern outskirts of Ethiopia's empires. Originally from southern/central Ethiopia, the Oromo significantly expanded their territory and influence during the 16th, 19th, and 20th centuries, encroaching on the Amharan and Tigrayan kingdoms. As the Oromo spread, they diversified and adopted many of the cultural practices of the societies they encoun-

The Oromo (aka the Galla)

Prior to the 1974 revolution, the Oromo were widely known as the Galla. This term was created and used by non-Oromos, particularly the northern Amhara. The Oromo never used the term among themselves. Many Oromos resented the term Galla and considered it the product of Amhara dominance and a reminder of their subordinate place in Amhara society. The term was banned following the 1974 revolution, and today many Oromos consider it offensive. Some Ethiopians still use this term to insult the Oromo, while other groups (the Somali tribes, for example) use the term Galla without meaning offense.

tered. Today, Oromo lifestyles and religious practices vary widely, making the Oromo the most diverse ethnic group in Ethiopia.

The Modern Era: The Ethiopian Empire

The modern era and the Ethiopian Empire (also known as Abyssinia or the Abyssinian Empire) began when an Amhara warrior defeated the Oromo *Yejju* dynasty in 1855 and declared himself Emperor Tewodros II. Tewodros II reunified the territories that were formally part of the ancient Christian kingdoms, which had been lost during the expansion of Oromo populations or divided into smaller, local kingdoms. The emperors that followed Tewodros justified their military conquests of neighboring areas as the rightful expansion and glorification of the ancient Christian empires.

The most significant expansion occurred under Menelik II, who ruled from 1889 to 1913. Under Menelik's leadership, with considerable encouragement from European powers, the Ethiopian Empire conquered extensive lands to the south. This southward military expansion forcibly incorporated regions that had been on

Addis Ababa Roadside Vendors

the outskirts of the ancient kingdoms and led to the formation of Ethiopia's current boundaries. The Amhara view this era as the formalization of the Ethiopian state and are proud to have established a unified Christian empire that has lasted to modern times.

On the other hand, groups in the southern and eastern regions, most notably the Oromo and the Somalis, view the same era as one of hardship and subjugation. They disagree with the narrative that emphasizes Ethiopian historical unity and view themselves as independent groups that were conquered and ruled by invaders. In fact, even though Menelik was not a European, many Ethiopians viewed his expansion as a form of colonialism and part of the European Scramble for Africa, when much of the African continent was divided among European powers. In the past, any protest against Ethiopian rule was brutally suppressed. Only since 1991

have Ethiopians been able to formally assert their own ethnic and religious identities.

European Encounters

Ethiopia has a long history of interaction with Europe. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to have a presence in Ethiopia, establishing an alliance with the Christian Ethiopian rulers and founding a Roman Catholic mission in 1626. As the Europeans expanded their trade routes in the 1800s, British, French, German, and Scandinavian traders visited Ethiopia. Today, many Ethiopians take great pride in the fact that Ethiopia remained independent from European rule during the height of European colonialism in the 19th century. They are particularly proud of their military victory over Italian forces in the battle of Adwa in 1896. The treaty that ended the Italian-Ethiopian conflict gave Emperor Menelik II sovereignty of Ethiopia in exchange for Italian rule over the Eritrea region, with its coveted access to the sea. Although the loss of Eritrea made Ethiopia a landlocked empire, this victory remains a source of great pride for Ethiopians.

The Reign of Haile Selassie (1930-1974)

Emperor Haile Selassie is a significant figure in modern Ethiopian history. Although in many ways a brutal despot, he was also at the forefront of many modernization campaigns and helped put Ethiopia on the international stage. Haile Selassie developed strong ties with Western powers and was accepted as an equal by many Western leaders. He was the first African leader to go on a world tour, and he addressed the League of Nations (a forerunner of the United Nations) when Italy invaded his country in 1935. Many Ethiopians still revere Haile Selassie, while others consider him a controversial figure.

Italian forces occupied Ethiopia from 1936 to 1941. Emperor Haile Selassie fled first to Jerusalem, then to Europe, where he remained for the duration of the occupation. By fleeing to Jerusa-

Emperor Haile Selassie

Emperor Haile Selassie had a lasting impact on Ethiopia and is a significant historical figure. Born Tafari Makonnen, Selassie ruled Ethiopia for more than 50 years: 14 years (1916–1930) as the regent and 44 years (1930-1974) as the emperor. During this time, he furthered the centralized rule of the state and modernized the military and educational institutions.

Selassie legitimized his rule by claiming descent from ancient rulers and dynasties. He was believed to be descended from King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. In fact, his imperial name, Haile Selassie, means "Power of the Trinity" in Amharic.

Selassie cultivated a significant following. He was viewed as the personal manifestation of the Ethiopian Empire. His birthday and coronation day were considered national holidays. He encouraged the youth and students of Ethiopia to sing songs to praise him.

Emperor Selassie focused much of his effort on international affairs. Some believe this was detrimental to domestic policy. However, he maintained Ethiopia's international prestige during a period when most countries in Africa were administered by colonial powers.

Selassie is significant to the Rastafari community. (Ras means "prince," and Tafari was Selassie's given name). The Rastafari community, founded in Jamaica, believes Ethiopia is the birthplace of humanity and that Selassie is the second reincarnation of Jesus. They reject Western policies and embrace an Africa-central world view.

lem, Haile Selassie was making reference to the ancient legend of the Queen of Sheba and King Menelik, according to which Jerusalem is the ancestral home of the Ethiopian rulers.

Despite the occupation, many Ethiopians are proud of their country's accomplishments during the war. The Ethiopians fought as members of the Allied Forces to liberate Africa from Axis rule. At the time, the Western powers looked down on most Africans. However, Ethiopia gained a reputation as an equal to the Western nations and as superior to other African nations. Today, many Ethiopians lament the loss of this status among Western nations.

Following the end of World War II and the defeat of Italy by the Allied forces, Emperor Haile Selassie returned to Ethiopia. In 1952, Eritrea, which had been ruled by Italy since its surrender by Menelik II, was returned to Ethiopia. The return of Eritrea was viewed as the final victory over Italian interference, and, perhaps more significantly, once again gave Ethiopia access to the sea.

The post-World War II period, particularly the 1960s and early 1970s, was one of modernization and political activism. Emperor Haile Selassie pursued a policy of modernization and created new occupational and educational opportunities, particularly in urban areas. However, his refusal to modernize the political system led to political mobilization by students and educated Ethiopians who were increasingly aware of the lack of economic and political opportunities in Ethiopia.

Many students educated during the post-war period were politically active throughout the 1950s and 1960s. They participated in a widespread movement promoting political reform, self-determination, and the removal of imperial rule. Advocates of the movement emphasized the issue of land redistribution and the social divides created by a system where the land-owning elite prospered at the expense of landless peasants. Today, students are still as-

sociated with political activism, and many Ethiopians assume all college students are politically active. Youth are sometimes targeted by government authorities for suspected activism.

The Derg Regime (1974-1991)

In March 1974, Ethiopian military leaders established the Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, the police, and the Territorial Army (known as the "Derg" or "The Committee" in Amharic). On 12 September 1974, in the midst of widespread social upheaval, military leaders overthrew Emperor Haile Selassie and the Derg seized power. Although the Derg labeled itself a socialist government and claimed to advocate for the common good, over time it became increasingly authoritarian and brutal, alienating some of the groups that initially supported it.

Aerial view of Addis Ababa

Under Mengistu Haile Mariam's leadership, Derg policy emphasized national unity and state control of the economy. To promote national unity, the Derg created the Institute for the Study of Ethiopian Nationalities to develop policies to integrate Ethiopia's ethnic groups. However, the Derg also used the pursuit of national unity to justify restrictive policies. The Derg outlawed many social practices that emphasized ethnic identity, such as the use of ethnic languages and initiation ceremonies. Ethnic and regional identities were thought to detract from the acceptance of a national Ethiopian identity. These policies led to the growth of political opposition parties and insurgent groups seeking to end the Derg's rule.

While in power, the Derg nationalized most of Ethiopia's assets, including land and domestic and foreign industries. It forced large segments of the population to relocate that led to droughts and environmental degradation of the land. The Derg's land reform policies, though devastating to many, were initially popular among the Oromo and other southern groups. Previously, land ownership had benefited northern groups, so the southerners had the most to gain from land redistribution. Nevertheless, the policies proved to be economically and environmentally devastating, and their impact is still felt.

Overthrow of the Derg

As Ethiopians became increasingly unhappy under the Derg's restrictive rule, insurgent groups formed to fight for ethnic autonomy and an increase in local self-governance. The most organized and effective insurgencies were the resistance movements in the Tigray region, led by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF); in the Eritrean region, led by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF); and in the Oromo region, led by the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF).

Drought and Famine in Ethiopia

A significant, though tragic, element of Ethiopian history is the series of famines that follow severe droughts. Ethiopia is an agrarian society, and most Ethiopians depend on the ability to grow crops to feed themselves and their families. Therefore, a drought can have devastating consequents on the lives and well-being of nearly all Ethiopians.

Two major periods of famine occurred in recent decades: one during the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie (1973-74) and one during the Derg regime (1984-85).

Drought and famine contributed to changes in Ethiopia's leadership. For example, Emperor Haile Selassie's failure to respond to widespread famine in 1973 helped popularize land reform proposals put forth by the leaders of the Derg regime.

The 1984 drought brought Ethiopia to the world stage as the subject of a sensationalist media frenzy. News outlets were awash with images of starving Ethiopians living in squalor and stories of Western aid organizations bringing relief food. Michael Jackson and Lionel Ritchie wrote the song, "We are the World," for this campaign. Much of the world still associates Ethiopia with famine, suffering, and general helplessness.

The 1984 drought and famine displaced millions of people in Ethiopia and neighboring countries. Many Western nations blamed Derg socialist policies for the historic famine.

Ethiopia remains highly dependent on food assistance and is one of the leading recipients of U.S. humanitarian assistance.

Numerous other groups were active at the time, but the EPLF, TPLF and, to a much lesser extent, the OLF, were the strongest and most effective. The Tigray had a long history of regional autonomy and were particularly disgruntled by the Derg's harsh and

autocratic rule. The OLF emerged from a broader movement that had supported Oromo nationalism in the 1960s in response to centuries of oppression and mistreatment at the hands of northern ethnic groups, such as the Amhara and Tigray.

In 1989, the TPLF established an umbrella organization known as the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) to unify multiple liberation movements and insurgent groups. The EPLF and the TPLF/EPRDF began a series of coordinated attacks in the late 1980s that weakened Derg forces. At the time, the EPLF had the strongest military and was able to occupy Derg forces with battles in Eritrea. As a result, the TPLF was able to expand and liberate territory from weakened Derg forces. This coordination led the TPLF/EPRDF to seize the capital, Addis Ababa, in 1991 and overthrow the Derg.

The overthrow of the Derg altered the political landscape of Ethiopia and put the Tigray ethnic group in a position of power and political dominance. It also represented a shift from a regime based on policies of ethnic integration to the recognition of a multi-ethnic nationalism. After the TPLF/EPRDF seized power, they established the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE). A new constitution, ratified by the TGE in 1994, officially created the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in August 1995. The EPRDF has held political power in Ethiopia since 1991 and is still dominated by the TPLF.

The TPLF and EPLF made a deal to establish an independent Eritrean state. The EPLF agreed to cooperate with the TPLF to overthrow the Derg on the condition that, once liberated, Ethiopia would hold a referendum on the status of Eritrea. The TPLF feared having the influential EPLF as a political rival within Ethiopia, and therefore supported Eritrea's independence. Following

Harare Street Scene

a national referendum in 1993, Eritrea declared its independence. Today, many Ethiopians, particularly those in the northern highlands, would like to re-incorporate Eritrea into Ethiopia. In contrast, many Ethiopians in the south and west do not hold strong opinions about Eritrea. Some Ethiopians would like to regain Eritrea simply to have access to the sea.

The Oromo population also sought an independent state but lacked sufficient military power and was discouraged by the United States and other Western powers. The region of Oromiya, where most Oromos live, constitutes more than half of Ethiopia. Western powers believed the secession of such a large region from Ethiopia would destroy the country. The OLF participated in the transitional government as a peaceful political party for roughly

a year. However, OLF members quickly came to view the new Tigray-dominated government of the EPRDF as yet another example of northern ethnic domination that threatened Oromo self-determination. The OLF left the national political coalition and returned to its armed resistance struggle. Many Oromos continue to struggle for self-determination, shared sovereignty, and a truly multi-national democracy.

Post-Derg Politics

After the overthrow of the Derg, the TGE reorganized the national government into a federal republic based on historical ethnic residency, a system known as ethnic federalism. Ethnic federalism was intended to reverse the Derg's centralization policies and enable ethnic groups to express their own culture and exercise semi-autonomous rule in their regions. The states are: Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromiya, Somali, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella, Harrari, and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples. Ethiopia's two city administrations are Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa.

In reality, the TPLF-dominated EPRDF monopolizes political representation at the national, regional, and local levels. Under ethnic federalism, each region has ethnically defined parties that wield a significant power locally. However, EPRDF affiliates essentially control the central government and all regional governments through violent coercion and/or state patronage. The regional ethnic parties have little resources and rely on ties to the national party for financial support and other resources. As a result, through a network of patron-client relationships, the EPRDF has maintained centralized authority. The EPRDF dominates the legislative and executive branches of the government and controls government employees, including bureaucrats and teachers in government schools.

Election results often create tension among the populace. The EPRDF victory in the 2005 elections led to public protests that resulted in thousands of arrests and the death of more than 100 civilian protestors. Opposition parties and the general public also contested the government's claim of a landslide victory (545 of 547 parliamentary seats) in the 2010 elections. While there is opposition to the EPRDF in both urban and rural areas, the education and resources available in cities and towns more readily allow citizens to organize against the ruling party. Many Ethiopians believe the EPRDF fabricates election results to maintain power. However, it is more likely that the EPRDF simply uses its extensive patronage networks to pressure the public into voting for its candidates.

Despite its dominance, unpopular policies and a reputation for corruption have damaged the EPRDF's integrity. Although the EPRDF has won every election since taking power, its suppression of other political parties has undermined its claims of promoting democracy. Likewise, the rise of opposition groups has undermined its legitimacy and forced it to centralize power further.

Large parts of society resent the EPRDF and the Tigray. Many Ethiopians are frustrated by inflation, lack of resources (including basic goods), and government corruption. They see the Tigray as having unfair advantages under the EPRDF. The Tigray have the most power and hold the most influential government positions. In some cases, the government has favored Tigrayans and others with ties to the ruling party by providing them access to resources often denied to the population at large. Much of the population believes that to be successful, one must be corrupt and have connections with influential people in the government. However, many others believe the EPRDF and the Tigray have brought stability and development to a country long plagued by violence and poverty.

Regional and Internal Conflicts

Eritrea

Eritrea is one of the most contested regions in the HOA. Once a territory within Ethiopia, Eritrea fought a long and bitter insurgent campaign under the Derg and ultimately won independence by a national referendum in 1993.

Italian colonialism is a significant factor in Ethiopia-Eritrea tensions. In the 1880s, Italy sought to expand its colonial holdings by invading Ethiopia and Eritrea, at the time a territory of the Ethiopian Empire. A treaty signed between Ethiopian Emperor Menelik II and Italy guaranteed Menelik's sovereignty of Ethiopia in exchange for Italian rule of Eritrea. Nevertheless, the imperial Ethiopian government continued to view Eritrea as part of historical Ethiopia.

When the Italians left in 1942 following their defeat in World War II, Ethiopians viewed the re-incorporation of Eritrea as a significant symbol of victory over colonial influence. However, Eritreans claimed that under Italian occupation they had developed a unique national identity that was not shared by their Ethiopian neighbors. Eritreans believed they were no longer Ethiopians and were entitled to become an independent country. Both Haile Selassie and the Derg emphasized national unity and brutally suppressed any attempts by Eritreans to achieve independence. It was not until the fall of the Derg regime and the EPRDF's rise to power that Eritrea's independence was possible.

Following the referendum and Eritrea's independence, the TPLF and EPLF had relatively good relations for a short period, having cooperated to overthrow the Derg. However, tensions soon arose over border disputes. Relations between Eritrea and Ethiopia grew tense, and as a result, Ethiopia and Eritrea are the two most mili-

tarized countries in the HOA. The tensions led to outright conflict in 1998 when more than 70,000 soldiers and numerous civilians were killed in a war that lasted only a matter of months. Prior to this conflict, Ethiopia had been granted access to Eritrean ports. However, since the conflict, continuing tensions with Eritrea have resulted in Ethiopia being cut off from access to the sea.

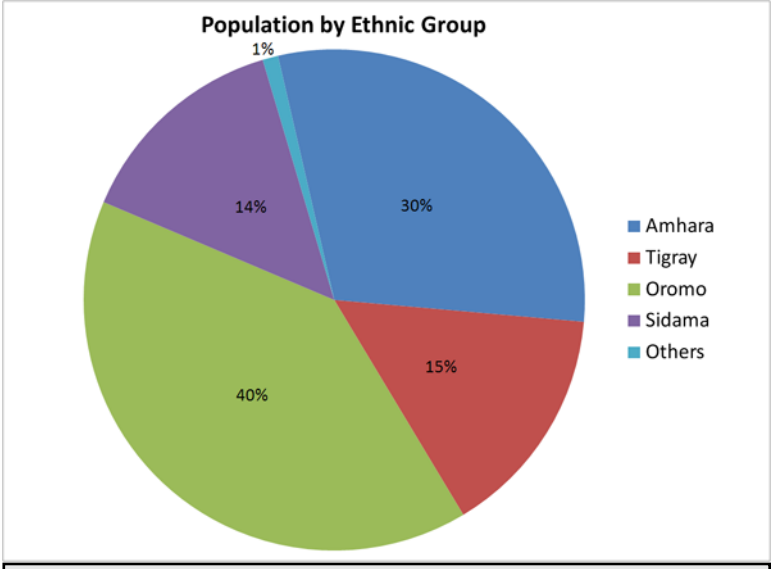
Somalia and Ogaden

Ethiopia has a tense and often volatile relationship with neighboring Somalia, resulting from conflicts over the Ogaden region. Historically, Ethiopia and Somalia have both laid claim to the Ogaden region of Ethiopia, along the border with Somalia. Today, the region is part of Ethiopia but remains primarily inhabited by ethnic Somalis.

Somali forces, motivated by a desire to unite the Somali populations within the HOA, invaded and attempted to annex Ogaden and other neighboring regions in 1977. Ethiopia, with considerable aid from the Soviet Union and Cuba, was able to drive Somalia out of the Ogaden region a year later.

More recently, Ethiopia and Somalia have come into conflict over the growth of Islamic radicalism within Somalia. Many Ethiopians are acutely aware that Ethiopia is perceived as a predominantly Christian country surrounded by predominantly Muslim countries. The growing instability and radicalization of elements in Somalia has added to this conflict.

In addition, Ethiopia is a valued partner of the United States in the efforts to combat Islamic terrorism in the HOA. Ethiopia's military, with political support from the United States, intervened in Somalia in 2006 in response to the Islamic Courts Union seizing power in Mogadishu. Ethiopian forces entered Somalia to sup-



Population by Ethnic Group: *The Amhara and the Tigray ethnic groups make up 30 percent and 15 percent of the population, respectively. The largest ethnic group in Ethiopia is the Oromo, which makes up roughly 40 percent of the population. The Sidama, a conglomeration of smaller inter-related ethnic groups, makes up 12-15 percent of the population. The remainder is composed of smaller ethnic groups including the Nara, Kunama, Bumez, Berta, Anuak, Nuer, Gurage, Agew, Felasha, and Somalis.*

port the fragile Transitional Federal Government, maintain the religious balance in the region, and halt the spread of terrorism in the HOA. Ethiopian troops withdrew from Somalia in 2009. However, the security situation is still fragile and Ethiopia remains concerned about the security of its borders with Somalia.

Attitudes Toward the United States

Ethiopia has had a close and enduring political and strategic relationship with the United States for many years. The United States often supports Ethiopia's government and the EPRDF party. However, since many Ethiopians fear and resent the EPRDF and view its policies as undemocratic, they are displeased by continued U.S. support. Some Ethiopians believe that the United States is the only country able to pressure Ethiopia's government into changing its policies and see the U.S. refusal to do this as hypocritical. Suspected human rights abuses within Ethiopia in recent years have increased tensions between the two countries. Nevertheless, Ethiopia remains a key ally with regard to U.S. counterterrorism policies in the HOA.

In general, Ethiopians have a positive view of U.S. citizens and culture. Older Ethiopians fondly recall the presence of Peace Corps volunteers during the reign of Haile Selassie, while younger Ethiopians are proud to own the latest electronics and clothing from the United States.

Identity and Affiliations

Ethiopia is a diverse and multi-ethnic society. It is home to at least 76.9 million people who are members of more than 80 ethnic groups and speak more than 70 languages. Groups living in Ethiopia developed separate cultural and language groups as early as 2000 B.C. However, even as they separated and grew more diverse, these ethnic groups continued to interact with each other through extensive trade networks, local and regional markets, inter-ethnic marriages, cattle raids, and warfare. The result is a population of distinct and historically autonomous ethnic groups that inhabit a common region and share similar cultural practices.

Ethnic Group Identity

The Amhara and the Tigray have long been the two most influential ethnic groups in Ethiopia. They have held political leadership roles since the time of the ancient empires and continue to hold power in the modern political system. Since 1991, ethnic identity has become increasingly politicized as interest groups mobilize based on their ethnic affiliations and politicians' increasing reliance on ethnic ties for support. This interaction between ethnic and national identity is influenced by a history of imperial expansion, independence from colonial rule, and the politics of ethnic federalism.

The Amhara

The Amhara have dominated Ethiopia since the 13th century. In the 19th and 20th centuries, under Amhara leadership, Ethiopia conquered land and forcibly incorporated additional ethnic groups

Billboard written in Amharic

into its empire. As a result, Ethiopian identity has been strongly influenced by Amhara culture and language.

For much of their history, Amhara leaders aimed to create and enforce an Ethiopian society and national identity based on Amhara cultural traits, particularly Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity and the Amharic language. The Amhara encouraged other groups to adopt their culture by speaking Amharic and converting to Orthodox Christianity. It was fairly easy to "become" Amhara by adopting Amhara beliefs and behaviors. Many prominent Amharas, including Emperor Haile Selassie, were descendents from other ethnic groups. However, they were accepted as Amhara based on their attitude and behaviors. Thus, the Amhara identity was more about behavior and beliefs than ethnicity or blood relations.

While many Amharas dominated politics, another group lived as peasants in traditionally Amhara regions of northern Ethiopia. Although they spoke Amharic and were devout Orthodox Christians, these Amhara peasants lacked political power and were marginalized from the state center.

Today, the Amhara are more likely than members of other ethnic groups to self-identity as Ethiopian, and the Amharic language remains the most widely spoken language in Ethiopia. Amhara communities are predominantly Christian and agricultural. Within their own communities, the Amhara primarily identify with smaller, regional sub-groups (including the Gojam, Gonder, Welo, and Shewa) but self-identify as Amhara when interacting with other Ethiopians. Many will also insist that they are Ethiopian and do not wish to be labeled any other way.

The Tigray

The Tigray, like the Amhara, are a historically significant ethnic group and dominate politics in Ethiopia. The Tigray believe their

ancestors founded the Kingdom of Aksum. Thus, like the Amhara, the Tigray link themselves to the rulers of ancient Ethiopia. The Tigray share many cultural traits with the Amhara, including similar religious practices. Intermarriage between Amharans and Tigrayans is common. Most Tigrayans follow Orthodox Christianity and may view themselves as the defenders of the Ethiopian Orthodox religion. However, they generally tolerate other religions.

Tigrayan Girl

The Tigray are best known for their overthrow of the Derg regime in 1974. The TPLF, which is a member of the EPRDF, is now the dominant party in the political coalition that governs Ethiopia, mostly because of its role in orchestrating the overthrow of the Derg. In the years immediately following the fall of the Derg, non-Tigrayans were able to participate fully in the political coalition. However, in recent years Tigrayan dominance has increased and other ethnic groups increasingly resent what they view as the corrupt practices of powerful Tigrayans. Many Tigrayans, on the other hand, resent the long-standing political dominance of the Amhara and believe it is their turn to rule.

The Oromo

The Oromo are the largest and most diverse ethnic group in Ethiopia (40 percent of the population) and one of the largest ethnic

groups in the entire HOA. They cover a vast expanse of central Ethiopia and pursue both agricultural and pastoral livelihoods. Many Oromos, particularly in urban areas, have assimilated into mainstream society, using Amhara names and adopting Amharic as their main language.

Social Organization of the Oromo: The Gadaa

Despite their diversity, the Oromo are proud of their ethnic identity and are unified by a belief in common origins and experiences under Amhara rule. Most Oromos continue to value their traditional ethnic practices and ancestral laws. One of the most uniquely Oromo cultural practices is the highly complex form of socio-political organization known as the gadaa.

The gadaa is both a cultural and political system. It places each Oromo man into an age set and a grade set. While other Ethiopian ethnic groups, for example the Nuer, organize men into age sets, the combination of age and grade sets makes the gadaa system unique.

Grade sets determine the social and political role of an age set. They help men gain power and influence as they mature. Grade-sets also move older men out of positions of active community leadership in a peaceful cycle that makes way for the next generation of leaders.

The gadaa has become a symbol of Oromo culture. The Oromo are proud of their complex social and political organization and believe it makes them unique from all other groups.

Today, Oromo nationalists use the gadaa system as a political rallying point. Oromo nationalists claim that the Oromo should govern themselves by their traditional system rather than by what they see as an imperialist system imposed on them by the Tigray and Amhara.

Many Oromos reject any cultural affinity or unity with the Amhara or Tigray and view their history as one of subjection to Amharan rule. As a result, they distrust the motives of Ethiopia's Tigray-dominated national government. Despite their large numbers, the Oromo have been one of the most disenfranchised groups in Ethiopia. The Oromo region was first incorporated into greater Ethiopia during the 19th century expansion of the Ethiopian Empire under Menelik II. At the time, the Amhara ruling elite characterized the Oromos as "uncivilized brutes," "primitive," and "prone to violence." The Oromo continue to be subjected to racist slurs and mistreatment by many Ethiopians, who view them as inferior. Some northern Ethiopians still view them as less educated.

Some Oromo groups have been unified by the adoption of Islam. The Oromo ethnic identity is not linked to a particular religion. Oromos practice Islam, Christianity, and traditional African religions. However, many Oromos converted to Islam as a means of rejecting the Christian, Amharan-dominated narrative of Ethiopian identity. Muslim Oromos increasingly attend Muslim universities and go on the *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca). At the same time, many Oromo elite argue that their ethnic identity as Oromo is far more important than the diverse religious practices they have adopted. In fact, one of the most influential Oromo organizations, the OLF, is secular and views religion as a potential source of division within the Oromo community.

Ethnic Minorities

In addition to the Amhara, Tigray, and Oromo, Ethiopia is home to numerous, less influential groups. In the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples region, the Sidama, who number an estimated 1.8 million, are the largest ethnic group. Although most Sidama are farmers, they may also own livestock, including

Karo (left) and Mursi (right) Tribesmen

cattle, sheep, and horses. Religious practices among the Sidama vary greatly; some groups have adopted Christianity, some Islam, while others follow traditional belief systems. Other large groups in the region are the Gurage, Hadiya, Wolayta, and Silte. Each has its own language and cultural practices. The Gurage in particular are known throughout Ethiopia as an entrepreneurial group, serving as merchants in many towns across the country.

Anuak and Nuer pastoral groups, whose lives are focused on their cattle herds, reside in the southwest and southern regions of Ethiopia. The southeast is home to the Borana Oromo and ethnic Somali clans, who are also pastoralists. Although the Somalis equal or exceed the Tigray in number, Somali clans have never held a strong position in Ethiopian society. In fact, most Ethiopians look

down on the ethnic Somalis, whom they consider a rebellious group who stubbornly refuse to assimilate into Ethiopian culture.

Ethnicity and National Identity

The overthrow of the Derg regime in 1991 put an end to the idea of an Ethiopian national identity based on Amhara cultural traditions. Prior to the fall of the Derg, the Amhara identity was imposed on Ethiopians by a strong central government and was equated with the Ethiopian national identity. Previously, individuals often had to abandon their own ethnic identity and adopt the Amhara language and religion to succeed politically or financially in the Ethiopian Empire. When the Amhara lost power, this cultural identity began to decline in popularity.

A sense of Ethiopian nationalism and identity still exists but is no longer confined to Amhara traditions. Modern Ethiopian identity is more diverse and regional identities are now more accepted as part of the national identity. In fact, individuals can gain influence, both formally and informally, by asserting their local and ethnic identities.

Language

Roughly 60 percent of the population speaks Amharic, Ethiopia's national language. However, nearly 40 percent of Amharic speakers are not native speakers the language. Instead, they speak a local language as their native language and learn Amharic as a second language in school. Generally, only members of the Amhara ethnic group (15-20 percent of the population) are native Amharic speakers.

Ethnic federalism allows regions to have different official languages. In addition to Amharic, more than 70 languages are spoken

in Ethiopia, the most significant of which are Oromo, Tigrinya, Welayta, and Somali. Oromo, the language of the largest ethnic group, is the second most prevalent language in Ethiopia, spoken by 40-45 percent of the population.

Religion and Belief Systems

Ethiopia is historically associated with Christianity and is still thought of as a Christian empire. Official sources estimate that the population is 62 percent Christian (43.5 percent Ethiopian Orthodox and 18.6 percent Protestant) and 34 percent Muslim, with the remaining population following traditional African practices. However, these numbers are highly controversial and likely influenced by the ruling elite who wish to maintain the image of a predominantly Christian country. In reality, the religious composition of Ethiopia is likely far more complex than the government

Church of Bet Abba Libanos in Lalibela

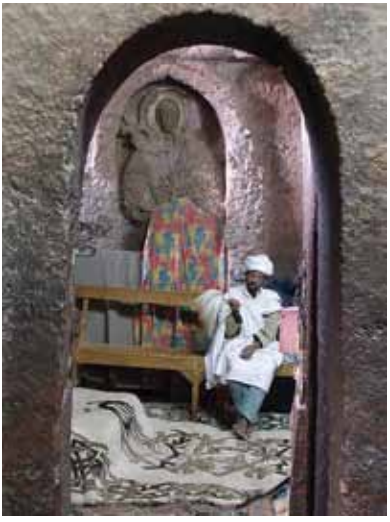
is willing to acknowledge. In particular, the Muslim population likely equals or exceeds the Christian population in number.

Ethiopians of all denominations tend to be religious and often wear crosses (Christian) or head coverings (Muslim) that indicate their religious affiliation. Followers of both Christianity and Islam have incorporated local beliefs into their religious practices and there is a great deal of interaction between the two religions.

Ethiopia has long had a reputation for religious tolerance and is known as a place where members of different religions are welcomed to live free of persecution. According to legend, the ruler of the Askum Empire welcomed Muslims to his court and offered them protection. This story is cited as evidence of Ethiopia's history of religious tolerance. Muslims and Christians attend annual

Pilgrims at Church

celebrations, including those of pagan origin. Cross-religious marriages, though rare, do occur and are increasingly common in urban areas.



Inside Bet Golgotha Church

Ethiopia's constitution grants equal status to all religions, which has contributed to tensions within the major religions. For example, the growing popularity of Pentecostal churches is a source of tension for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, which was historically linked to the state and given special status. Likewise, the adoption of conservative Islamic ideologies has caused tensions in some Muslim communities, particularly because indigenous practices of Sunni Islam in Ethiopia have varied significantly from the more orthodox forms practiced in the Middle East.

Traditional Belief Systems

Traditional African religious beliefs have been incorporated into Christianity and Islam in Ethiopia. Most Ethiopians, whether Christian or Muslim, share rituals, pilgrimages, animal sacrifices, food taboos, and a belief in spirit beings that are rooted in traditional Ethiopian beliefs. Ethiopians typically believe in a single deity (thought of as male) associated with the sky.

Many Ethiopians also believe in the evil eye, usually inflicted by a jealous person of low status. Snakes have a special place in tra-

ditional Ethiopian beliefs and are often central figures in myths about Ethiopia's origin.

Many Ethiopians believe in the existence of a spirit realm. Some Ethiopians believe that specially trained individuals called *qalitscha, balewuqabi, gotatch*, or *asmategna* can use secret words to contact spirits. They believe that spirits are able to impact the lives and well-being of physical beings. Spirits are often blamed for personal and community hardships such as crop failures.

Christianity

Ethiopia owes much of its national traditions and historical narrative to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Christianity came to Ethiopia as early as the 4th century and continues to hold a power-

St Mary of Zion Church

ful place in Ethiopian culture and society. However, many people now openly challenge the notion that a person must be Christian to be Ethiopian.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is the main church in Ethiopia. Though similar in many ways to the Eastern Orthodox Church, it is a unique form of Christianity indigenous to Ethiopia that evolved over centuries of relative isolation from the broader Christian world. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church reached the peak of its power and influence under the Ethiopian Empire, when it served as the state religion and enjoyed a strong and influential relationship with the emperors. The Ethiopian Empire excluded all other religions from official discourse and non-Christians were looked down on as uncivilized and inferior.

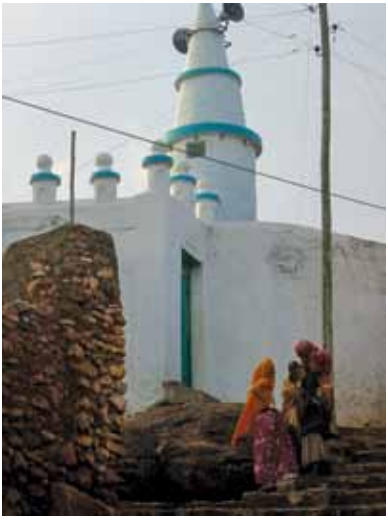
The Derg regime set up a secular, socialist government and sought to limit the power of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Though many Ethiopians supported the Derg's goal of limiting the Church's power and land holdings, Ethiopians still valued their religion and relationship with the Church. Most Ethiopians did not want to be considered socialist or Marxist because of the association between those ideologies and atheism.

Pentecostalism is the second most popular denomination of Christianity in Ethiopia. Pentecostal Christianity, which developed in the United States at the beginning of the 20th century, became popular across Africa in the 1960s, though it was introduced in Ethiopia in 1934. The Awasa Conference (1965) and the Addis Ababa Conference (1966) brought together Pentecostals from across Ethiopia and was the beginning of a unified Pentecostal movement there.

Eager to establish themselves as an Ethiopian movement, Ethiopian Pentecostals distanced themselves from sects in the United States and other Western nations. Pentecostal churches tend to attract members of the emerging elite. They are popular in the south and west as well as in historically Orthodox regions. Many Orthodox Christians feel threatened by the growth of the Pentecostal Church.

Islam

Islam was introduced in Ethiopia in 615 A.D. during the Aksum Empire. At the time, the king of Aksum welcomed Arab migrants and the empire gained a reputation for allowing religious freedom. The early spread of Islam was generally a peaceful process brought about by trading contact. Many Muslims point out the contrast between this and the spread of Christianity by Amharic conquest and conversion. Today, Islam is strongly associated with the Oromo ethnic group. As the Ethiopian Empire expanded into Oromo areas during the 19th century, many were drawn to Islam as a means to resist the cultural dominance of the encroaching Amhara. The Amhara encouraged Christian Oromo to look down on Muslim Oromo.



Harar Mosque

Today, most Muslims in Ethiopia, as in other African countries, deviate a great deal from orthodox Islamic practices. This is largely due to the incorporation or acceptance of local traditions and customs.

For many years, most Ethiopian Muslims practiced a popular version of Islam rather than an accepted orthodox version. However, as a result of new policies of religious freedom under ethnic federalism, an increasing number of Muslims have access to Islamic teachings and traditions outside of Ethiopia.

Many Ethiopian Muslims have been influenced by more conservative Islamic practices that are gaining popularity among the global Muslim population. Additionally, the Ethiopian Muslim population is expanding and moving into regions traditionally inhabited by the Christian Amhara. Several high-profile Muslims have begun building mosques in regions and cities that are holy to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Orthodox Christians do not welcome these trends, which and are a source of tension between the two religious communities.

ROLES AND CENTERS OF AUTHORITY

Local Organization and Leadership Authority

Traditionally, families and religious networks cared for the needy and passed cultural values to the next generation. These local networks are still important and are often more influential than the national government in the daily lives of Ethiopians.

Household Organization

Family, including extended family, is important to Ethiopians. Having children is an important part of Ethiopian social life and increases a woman's prestige. On average, a woman has six children. Children are often called upon to support their elderly parents. Because of the importance placed on extended family and

the higher status for women who have large numbers of children, Ethiopians tend to marry early and have large families.

Family ties remain significant even across vast distances. Ethiopians living abroad are expected to send money home to their family. Unfortunately, rapid population growth combined with high poverty rates has taken a toll on Ethiopian family ties. Divorce is increasing as husbands find they can no longer support their families. Many single women move to urban areas in search of work to support themselves.

Male and Female Roles

Although Ethiopia's constitution protects the legal rights of women, in general women are still treated as second-class citizens and their position in society is far more vulnerable than that of men. In most cases, the husband is considered the head of the family and has the ultimate authority in the household. A husband can prohibit his wife from working outside the home, and a woman who has outside employment often has to give her earnings to her husband.

Rural men and women generally do not have close relationships prior to marriage. Young girls spend most of their time indoors with female family members. Young boys are encouraged to socialize and gain contacts outside of their families. Even as adults, women generally socialize primarily with other women. In urban areas men and women are able to socialize with each other more regularly. For example, in Addis Ababa there are numerous clubs and university social events where men and woman socialize like typical U.S. students. Polygamy, though rare, does occur, and women in polygamous marriages have a lower social status than other women. It is relatively easy for Ethiopians to secure a divorce; however, since men generally hold all the economic power, divorce makes women vulnerable to abandonment and poverty.

Gender Roles and Land Ownership

Abeba, an Ethiopian woman, was recently divorced from her husband of 5 years. Abeba knows that divorce can leave Ethiopian women with no property or means to support themselves. However, she considers herself lucky because she was able to get ownership of half her husband's land. While she is still struggling to get by in a country that often treats women as second-class citizens, she is proud to be a citizen with legally equal rights and to own her own land. She knows that Ethiopia has a history of fighting over land and feels sympathy for the peasants during the imperial era who had to work for absentee landlords. She wants to maintain the quality of her land so that it will provide food for herself and her children if they inherit it. However, she, like many farmers, is concerned that she might lose the land to government redistribution. She hopes that the government and the EPRDF stay stable and follow through on their promises to make land more secure. In the meantime, she is proud and will work hard to build a life for herself.

Development programs that help women gain professional skills are increasingly available. However, while these programs provide valuable skills, they do little to change the underlying attitudes toward women and the subordinate role of women in the community. Women from wealthy families who do not require financial support from a husband are able to make the most of the opportunities these programs provide. Women from less well-off families often struggle to financially support themselves while attending school or professional training programs.

Local Government and Kebelle Organizations

Ethiopia has five tiers of government: federal, regional, zonal, *wereda* (district), and *kebelle* (neighborhood/community). W*ere-*

das and *kebelles* are the lowest levels of administration and the most influential local institutions. Their representatives are the most influential government officials in the daily lives of Ethiopians. Most Ethiopians have no interaction with government officials above the *wereda* level. *Kebelle* councils are composed of around 12 elected individuals. Each *kebelle* council presides over a community of roughly 500 households. *Kebelle* officials are responsible for various aspects of local administration and social services, including rent collection, food rationing, and access to water, fertilizer, food, and land. The *kebelles* may also control the local police forces. Ethiopians rely on the influence and good will of the *kebelles*.

The *kebelle* system, unlike traditional forms of leadership, is based on residency. The members of *kebelle* councils are elected, though EPRDF members dominate nearly all councils. Many members obtain influential positions through EPRDF patronage rather than local or traditional legitimacy. As a result, traditional leaders may be in conflict with leaders who base their authority on the *kebelle* system, which is linked to the ruling party. In addition, because of education requirements, most *kebelle* members are younger than traditional leaders and have little formal education.

Kebelles, originally a means for self-administration of local communities developed during the Derg regime, are now used by the ruling EPRDF party to monitor and control the population. Most Ethiopians believe that the *kebelle* system doubles as an intelligence collection network for the EPRDF party. Most *kebelle* officials are aligned with the EPRDF, having been given their positions in exchange for loyalty to the party. In general, local Ethiopian leaders cannot accomplish anything without the support of the state. *Kebelle* officials often pressure locals into voting for EPRDF candidates during elections.

National Political Organization

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, officially established in 1995, is a parliamentary democracy with executive, legislative, and judicial branches. Usually the leader of the political party that wins the most seats in an election is made the president. The legislative branch comprises two chambers: the House of Peoples' Representatives (547 members), the lower chamber, and the House of Federation (108 representatives), the upper chamber.

The prime minister is appointed by the House of Peoples' Representatives and is the head of the federal government, tasked with defense, foreign relations, and national policy. The president, who is elected by the legislature, is the head of the federal state, composed of nine administrative regions. The president serves a largely symbolic role with no real political power. Most Ethiopians expect little of their national government beyond the maintenance of law and order.

Ethnic Federalism

The most controversial element of the government is the political structure based on ethnic federalism. Designed by the Tigray-dominated EPRDF and implemented in the 1994/95 constitution, ethnic federalism was intended to empower ethnic groups by giving them a voice in the political process and reverse a long history of centralized rule that left local regions with little power and influence.

Regional administrations are politically weak compared with national politicians, lack economic resources, and, in practice, have little power. While local administrations control matters

such as education and language policies, they have little to no input on other key issues such as budgets and taxation policies. In addition, the national government has actively co-opted local leaders, offering them official power in exchange for loyalty to the state. Thus, Ethiopia is ruled by a centralized state with a dominant ruling party, which is itself largely controlled by the Tigrayan ethnic minority.

Under ethnic federalism, it is more advantageous to accentuate ethnic identity than to embrace national identity. This is often problematic for Ethiopians with weak or non-existent ethnic ties and for members of minority ethnic groups who are increasingly marginalized in a system that categorizes individuals by ethnic affiliation. While an ethnic group may have a large overall population, if its members are scattered across a wide swath of land they may be an ethnic minority in multiple regions. As a regional minority, they may be disenfranchised. In addition, children from cross-ethnic marriages or members of the growing urban population may lack strong ethnic identities, limiting their opportunities for political power and influence.

Many Amhara, formerly the politically and culturally dominant ethnic group in Ethiopia, resent ethnic federalism and believe it is causing the country to lose its Ethiopian identity. As ethnic affiliations have increased in importance, qualities long associated with Ethiopian nationalism, such as the Amharan culture and language, are increasingly rejected by many non-Amharans. Muslim communities in particular are moving away from the cultural norms established by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

Political Organizations and Parties in Ethiopia

Ethiopia has many political parties, the most influential of which are affiliated with the umbrella organizations described below.

Incumbent party: The EPRDF has been in power since 1991, "won" the 2010 elections (securing 545 out of 547 parliamentary seats), and is dominated by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF).

Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)	**Ideology**: Founded in 1989, the EPRDF supports a system based on autonomous ethnically defined regions and state-owned and -controlled land, has effectively co-opted regional governments, and retains support from the Tigray and from minority groups who fear losing their land and having limits placed on their autonomy **Affiliated parties**: TPLF, Oromo People's Democratic Organization, Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Front, Amhara National Democratic Movement

Opposition parties: The opposition movement is led by the Unity for Democracy and Justice (UDJ) and the United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF), both members of the Forum for Democratic Dialogue coalition.

Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD)	**Ideology**: Founded in 2004, the CUD promoted a nationalist agenda, sought to limit the power of ethnically based regional governments and strengthen the power of the central government, was supported by Amharas, Amhara-influenced Oromos, and other southern ethnicities, and dissolved after the 2005 elections when members were jailed for protesting election results. **Affiliated parties**: All Ethiopian Unity Party, United Ethiopia Democratic Party-Medhin, Ethiopian Democratic League, Rainbow Ethiopia
Forum for Democratic Dialogue (FDD)	**Ideology**: Founded in 2008, the FDD comprises the largest collection of opposition parties; is chaired by the former leader of the UEDF, Merera Gudina; represents various ideologies, ethnicities, and groups; was formed by a collection of opposition parties in 2008 in preparation for the 2010 elections; and seeks goals to establish democratic and legitimate government institutions.

Forum for Democratic Dialogue (FDD) (cont.)	**Affiliated parties**: UDJ, UEDF, Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement, Somali Democratic Alliance Forces, Arena Tigray for Democracy and Sovereignty (Arena) and Unity for Democracy and Justice, Oromo People's Congress
Alliance for Freedom and Democracy (AFD)	**Ideology**: Founded and defunct in 2006, the AFD represented both recognized opposition groups and outlawed rebel groups and sought to allow oppressed groups like the Oromo and the Ogaden to exercise their right of self-determination and freedom from the authoritarian regime. **Affiliated parties**: Kinijit All Ethiopia Unity Party (previously members of the CUD), Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party, Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party Democratic, Oromo Liberation Front, Ogaden National Liberation Front, United Ethiopian Democratic Forces

Education

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church provided the earliest formal education in pre-modern Ethiopia. Church education was based on rote memorization and incorporated strict disciplinary practices. Students progressed through three levels of scholarship to earn the title of *Liq* or *Dabtara* and an elevated status in society. At a time when there was no access to a modern education, these church-educated individuals made up the bulk of the government bureaucracy during the reign of Menelik and much of the reign of Haile Selassie.

A Church education focused on the beliefs and values of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and was designed to create scholars to serve the Church and glorify the history of Ethiopia. This education was designed to support the male-oriented, Amharic-dominated culture of the Ethiopian Empire.

Ethiopia's modern educational system is the result of a backlash against the religious education that glorified the Church and supported the imperial monarchy. Emperor Selassie believed educa-

tion was the key to advancing and modernizing Ethiopia. He provided incentives such as books, clothing, and financial rewards to those interested in school. His reign is often thought of as the golden years of Ethiopia's educational system.

Ethiopia's leaders believe educating the next generation of Ethiopians is the key to socio-economic development. Education is free for all citizens. Unfortunately, the quality of education is poor. Schools lack resources, and most schools are in urban areas despite Ethiopia's majority-rural population. Recent government initiatives to encourage graduation from secondary school have dramatically increased enrollment. As of the late 1990s, there is near universal enrollment in urban areas while enrollment rates in rural areas have reached roughly 45 percent. Private schools with better resources are growing. The university system has increased as well; universities are now in regional cities rather than exclusively in Addis Ababa. However, available jobs have not increased and many graduates are unemployed.

CULTURAL ECONOMY AND LIFESTYLE

Ethiopia is one of the poorest countries in the world. An estimated 14-16 percent of the population lives in urban areas while the remaining 84-86 percent resides in rural areas. As the overall population grows, demand for employment will increase.

Financial Statistics	
Gross national product (FY 2007-2008)	US$26.6 billion
By Industry:	
Agriculture	45 percent
Industry	13 percent
Services	42 percent
Per capita gross national income	US$280

Population and Urbanization Statistics	
Urban population	16 percent
Rural population	84 percent
Rate of urbanization	4.2 percent (2000-2008)
City	**Population**
Addis Ababa	3-5 Million
Dire Dawa	> 500,000
Mekele	> 500,000
Gondar	> 500,000
Bahir Dar	> 500,000
Average Household Size	
Rural	4.9
Urban	3.9

National Economy

Ethiopia's national economy is largely dependent on agriculture. Agriculture provides for 85 percent of all employment, 56 percent of the gross domestic product, and 90 percent of exports. Ethiopia's most profitable and famous agricultural export is coffee. Profits from coffee trade have provided steady revenue for Ethiopia's citizens and government.

In the 1990s, the government established a limited free-market system and encouraged private industry, though it insisted on retaining the system of state-owned land. In addition, the government limits competition in key areas such as banking, financial services, and telecommunications. Party-affiliated businesses have monopolies or near monopolies on export-import, major construction, and other profitable sectors of the economy. Nevertheless, these changes, along with international aid, have improved the economy, which had stagnated under the Derg. However, the per-capita

income is still below average for Sub-Saharan Africa and recent droughts have decreased agricultural production and exports. Agriculture in Ethiopia relies on rain, which means that production is highly vulnerable to increasingly erratic patterns of rainfall.

Urban Areas and Cultural Economy

In recent decades, Ethiopia has undergone rapid urbanization. Beginning in the 1960s, Emperor Haile Selassie's push for modernization created new occupational and educational opportunities in urban areas. Urbanization continued under the Derg regime as its nationalization of land left many Ethiopians with no farmland. Since the 1990s, poor environmental conditions and shortages of farmland have encouraged urban migration. Urban migrants originally settled in the city of Addis Ababa. However, beginning in the 1980s, smaller towns also became popular destinations. Many migrants prefer to live with their own ethnic group, which has led to the growth of urban areas in ethnic regions.

Urban Cultural Economy

The urban cultural economy is challenging, and most cities experience a high rate of unemployment. Most urban households rely on more than one source of income. For instance, Ethiopians may earn income from a combination of wage labor, home-run businesses, and child labor. In most households, the husband works. However, the wife may also have her own home business. The poorest households in Ethiopia are generally those supported by home-run businesses in the informal sector. Many Ethiopians also rely on money sent from family members working abroad.

The most prestigious urban occupations are those in the government, military, and Christian clergy. Positions in commerce and trade are less prestigious and are generally associated with minor-

ity ethnic groups, such as the Gurage, and with Muslims. Low-status jobs include metal working, weaving, tanning, and pottery. Individuals who hold these occupations are associated with superstition and witchcraft. Many urban Ethiopians hope to get a job with a local non-government organization (NGO), which are often affiliated with international or foreign organizations.

NGOs are common in Ethiopia and often have more resources, independence, and public respect than the government. Many young Ethiopians want to open Internet cafes as this is seen as a new and potentially profitable type of business. As in many developing countries, women in Ethiopia have fewer economic opportunities than men.

Urban Housing and Lifestyles

Urban Ethiopia is dynamic and charismatic. Large cement high-rise buildings dominate urban skylines. As a result of rapid migration, buildings are often constructed quickly and with no regard for building codes. In addition, developers often build only cheap housing and neglect to build infrastructure such as water and sewer systems. Urban Ethiopia has a flourishing underground music and video scene, often inspired by the challenges and frustrations of urban life. Most urban Ethiopians strive to be modern and Western. They use English words and wear Western-style clothing. Urban Ethiopians like to dress in modern fashion and show off their consumer goods, such as the latest cell phones. Western electronics, such as iPods, are popular in urban areas and are a sign of wealth and "coolness."

Rural Areas and Cultural Economy

Despite increasing rates of urbanization, Ethiopia remains a predominantly rural country. Most Ethiopians live in rural areas and

practice subsistence agriculture. Major crops include coffee, *tef*, and *enset*. *Tef*, the most common grain in Ethiopia, is used to make flat bread known as *injera*. Ethiopia is the only country in which *tef* is a significant crop. *Enset*, also known as the "false banana," is popular in the western and southwestern regions of the country. Cattle herding is also a significant source of livelihood for rural Ethiopians and the prestige and wealth of a household in lowland, pastoral areas is often determined by the size of its cattle herd.

Media, Telecommunications, and Art

Internet access and television are becoming more common in Ethiopia. Some people in urban areas have access to a television or the Internet. Rural Ethiopians are slowly being exposed to Western culture through television and radio. Radio, which is widely listened to throughout Ethiopia, is generally dominated by government programming. Many rural areas have roadside kiosks with Internet terminals. However, the government owns most Internet servers and restricts the content. The middle-class and the diaspora are pushing to establish independent Internet servers.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church was, until recently, the most significant patron of Ethiopia's arts. As a result, much of the art produced in Ethiopia has a religious tone. For example, ancient Ethiopian scribes were well known for producing illuminated manuscripts. Music was produced for the Church and influenced by religious themes. Ethiopia's music, which was developed independently from that of other countries, has a unique mix of Christian and African influences. Although proud of their artistic heritage, Ethiopian artists are increasingly using Western themes, and Ethiopian art is becoming more secular.

Traditional Land Ownership and Reform

In rural Ethiopia, arable land is a significant economic asset. Thus, land ownership has always been a contentious issue. In imperial Ethiopia, land ownership was associated with status and privilege. Those without land, the peasants, worked on rented farmland to feed their families. Peasant families were thus indebted to and dependent on landowners and held a lower social status.

In regions outside the influence of the Ethiopian Empire, kinship and communal land ownership schemes thrived. Elders who traced their ancestry back to the community founders could allocate land within their region. Anyone with kinship ties to these elders had the right to live on and use the land.

When the Derg seized control of Ethiopia in 1974, it sought to eliminate the social and economic divisions between peasants and landowners by nationalizing the land. Private land ownership was abolished and all Ethiopians had equal rights to all land. The gov-

Entoto Mountains

ernment outlawed the leasing of land and the hiring of laborers to work the land, thus ending the practice of absentee landlords employing peasants to farm their land. Land was redistributed to families based on household size with the expectation that members of a household would work their own land. Because of fluctuations in family and household size, land was redistributed every few years, usually resulting in each family having less land.

While landlords lost significant sources of income, some groups, like the Oromo, welcomed the nationalization of land since they had lost land when conquered by the expanding Amhara-governed Ethiopian Empire in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Land is still officially owned by the government and distributed by local officials. Since local officials are all aligned with the ruling party (the EPRDF), the best land is given to people loyal to the party. Land may be redistributed every few years to reflect local power dynamics. In areas with little government presence, many Ethiopians feel an attachment to the land that reflects traditional ties between lineages and land. In areas with a stronger government presence, Ethiopians have less of a sense of ownership or personal connection to the land.

In some regions, the government has leased portions of land to large-scale farms run by foreign companies. For example, Saudi, Chinese, and Indian firms all lease land in Ethiopia. Local peasant farmers were either forced off the land to make way for these businesses or given jobs working for them.

Rural Lifestyles and Dwellings

Most rural villages are composed of extended families living in a collection of homes. The average village is composed of approxi-

Tigray Cottage

mately 30 households that claim descent from a common ancestor. Most permanent rural dwellings are constructed from wattle (dried mud formed around interwoven sticks) with thatched roofs. These huts may be decorated with clay ornaments.

Rural life in Ethiopia is challenging. The rural population is growing, despite high rates of urban migration.

As a result of population growth and land degradation, most rural Ethiopians experience food insecurity and often must live through periods of severe famine. Many Ethiopian children are malnourished. Ethiopians, even those in rural areas, are increasingly aware of the world outside Ethiopia. Many educated Ethiopians wish to live in Europe or the United States where they believe they will have better opportunities and more material goods.

Health Concerns and Access to Health Care

Ethiopia is a poor country with chronic health care gaps. Many Ethiopians are malnourished and lack clean water. Healthcare facilities are limited and usually overcrowded. Ethiopians often must stand in line for hours early in the morning to sign up for an appointment with a doctor. Mothers often give birth at home, rather than at a hospital, attended to by local women experienced with childbirth.

Health Statistics			
	Men	**Women**	**Both**
2007 population in millions	37.3	36.7	74
Life expectancy in years	55.6	57.9	55
2004 under-5 mortality rate, per 1,000 live births	175	158	166
Adult mortality, per 1,000	451	389	
Maternal mortality, per 100,000 live births		850	
Causes of death	HIV/AIDS (12 percent); prenatal disease (8 percent); diarrheal disease (6 percent); TB (4 percent); measles (4 percent); malaria (3 percent)		

CUSTOMS AND PRACTICES

Style of Dress

Although Ethiopia is strongly associated with Christianity, almost half of the population practices Islam. Christians may wear religiously significant jewelry, such as crosses. Muslims, if they are conservative, may wear typical Muslim clothing such as head coverings. In urban areas it is particularly difficult to determine a person's religion based on their clothing or other aspects of their appearance.

Language

Amharic is the official language and most people in large towns understand it. Ethiopians usually appreciate when foreigners try to speak in Amharic or another Ethiopian language. However, one must be careful when choosing which language to use. For example, though Amharic is the official language of Ethiopia, many members of the Oromo ethnic group may be offended if spoken to in Amharic. However, in general, Ethiopians appreciate attempts by visitors to speak the local or national language.

Greetings and Conversations

Ethiopians tend to be formal and polite. They usually shake hands when meeting, even with friends and co-workers whom they see daily. They will usually ask how one is doing and ask about family multiple times. They appreciate being asked about the well-being of their family as well. Small talk about one's friends and family is key to building relationships in Ethiopia.

Food Market in Addis Ababa

Hospitality, Dining, and Entertainment

Ethiopia is famous for its cuisine. Staples include cereals, legumes, and vegetables. Primary grains include *tef*, millet, barley, and sorghum. *Tef*, a cereal native to Ethiopia, is the most common grain in Ethiopian cuisine. Honored guests will usually be served meat.

***Injera*:** This thin, pancake-like bread made from *tef* has a slightly fermented flavor. *Injera* is the centerpiece of all Ethiopian meals. A typical meal is served on a large circular sheet of *injera*. Small pieces of the *injera* are ripped off and used to scoop up food. One large *injera* platter will feed an entire dining party.

***Wot*:** A stew made with a blend of spices (*berbere*), herbs (*kebbeh*), and butter. *Doro wot* (chicken stew) and *sik wot* (beef stew) are the most popular versions of the stew.

Wot and Injera

***Vegetable fritters*:** Legumes, such as chickpeas, are often ground into flour, seasoned with chilies and ginger, and made into fritters.

***Side Dishes*:** Vegetable blends like kale and pumpkin are usually served alongside *wot* on *injera.*

***Fitfit*:** A mix of *injera* and thin *wot* usually fed to children.

***Drinks*:** Dinners and lunches are often served with *Tella,* the local beer, or one of the national brands of beer. Glasses are filled to overflowing and quickly refilled once emptied. Honey wine is another common drink, often served at feasts and celebrations.

In an Ethiopian home, guests and men are served first and are generally given the best parts of the meal. Women and children usually eat separately and may be given the leftover portions of the meal. Western women will likely be treated the same as men.

Gursha (hand feeding): Ethiopians hand feed their guests and guests of honor (even foreigners). This first handful of food, which is offered in a show of respect and friendship, is called gursha. A guest who is uncomfortable accepting the handful of food can decline and people will not take offense.

Ethiopians generally do not eat pork. This is common among Muslim communities in most countries. Some Christian communities in Ethiopia accept a ban on pork as part of their culture. Many Ethiopians have an aversion to fish or may not be familiar with fish dishes, particularly those groups living away from water.

HOLIDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS

The main holidays in Ethiopia are:

- ***Gena*** - Ethiopian Christmas (7 January)
- ***Timkat*** - Ethiopian Epiphany (19 January)
- Victory of Adwa Commemoration Day (2 March)
- Ethiopian Good Friday (The Friday before Easter)
- ***Fasika*** - Ethiopian Easter (April, the second Sunday)
- International Labour Day (1 May)
- Ethiopian Patriots Victory Day (5 May)
- Overthrow of the *Derg* Regime (28 May)
- *Enkutatash* - Ethiopian New Year (11 September; 12 September during leap years)
- *Meskel* - Finding of the True Cross (27 September)

Muslim holidays are based on a lunar calendar. As a result they vary every year. The following Muslim holidays are also public holidays in Ethiopia:

- *Eid al Fitr* - End of Ramadan
- *Eid al Adha* – Feast of Sacrifice
- *Mawlid* - Birthday of the Prophet Mohammed

Officially, Ethiopian Christians are supposed to fast every Wednesday and Friday as well as during Advent and Lent. Fasting is considered important and is adhered to by many religious adults. However, only the most devout Christians adhere strictly to the rules. Typically, for Christians, fasting simply means avoiding meat and dairy products. However, during the most significant fasting periods no food can be consumed during the day, and only fish and vegetables can be consumed in the evening.

Tef is commonly consumed to break the fast, and *doro wot* is usually served. At the end of a fast, families typically throw a large feast to celebrate. Muslims also fast by not eating or drinking during daylight hours during the month of Ramadan. They may also slaughter an animal and donate the meat to the less fortunate during various *eids.*

CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

The Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) is a significant military presence in the HOA. The ENDF is composed of the air force and army. Since Ethiopia is a land-locked and mountainous country, its air force is considered a vital branch of the ENDF and is the strongest and most competent of the branches. The army, however, is by far the largest branch of the military.

Most ENDF senior officers are members of the politically dominant Tigray ethnic group. However, the ENDF downplays this in an effort to maintain the multi-ethnic reputation of the force. In the lower ranks, the ENDF is one of the most ethnically diverse institutions in Ethiopia. Junior officers hail from all over the country. They are drawn to the military because of its reputation as a stable and relatively well-paying occupation. They see the military as an organization where members of any ethnic group can secure employment. However, non-Tigrayans have fewer opportunities for promotion.

Military History, Development, and Relationships

Ethiopians are proud of their military history and the strength and competence of their national forces. They are particularly proud of the military's history of defeating invading colonial powers,

Senior Ethiopian and U.S. Enlisted Servicemen

particularly the Italians. In the Battle of Adwa (1896) the Ethiopia military achieved a significant victory over Italy's forces. This victory preserved Ethiopia's independence until 1936. Today, Ethiopians still remember the Battle of Adwa with pride and view it as a symbol of nationalism and independence.

For most of Ethiopia's history, its military forces have been a significant social and cultural institution. During the early days of the Ethiopian Empire there was no standing army. Local leaders raised armies to fight for the emperor in exchange for money and land. Haile Selassie introduced Ethiopia's first modern military institution after World War II. Under the Derg regime, the military was used as a powerful tool of oppression and often committed crimes such as murder. As a result, the public developed a strong dislike of the military. During the Derg regime the military received support from the Soviets. As a result, much of the equipment still in use by the military is from Soviet Russia.

Many Ethiopian civilians have a more positive view of the contemporary military than of other government institutions. The ENDF, under EPRDF party leadership, keeps a low profile. The government discourages public displays of force and weapons so as not to remind civilians of the military's oppressive role under the Derg. Likewise, Tigray military leaders also try to maintain a low profile. Some Ethiopians are proud of their national military for guarding the sovereignty and integrity of the state and are proud of the military's role in combating Somali and Eritrean insurgent groups. However, many Ethiopians view the military as an instrument of the Tigray-dominated EPRDF – a repressive institution that favors the needs of the Tigray.

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