POLITICS AND CHANGE IN DIMAM, SOUTH-WEST ETHIOPIA

by

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A Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in The University of Kent.

September 1975

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Thesis is based on fieldwork carried out in Ethiopia between November 1972 and February 1974, under the auspices of the Social Science Research Council. The visit was financed by the following bodies and funds, to which I am grateful:- Alasdair Charles Macpherson Fund, Cambridge University; Anthony Wilkin Fund, Cambridge University; Bethune Baker Fund, Cambridge University; Social Science Research Council; Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research.

The preparation of my material was financed by the S.S.R.C., and grants from the H.M. Chadwick Fund of Cambridge University, and the Radcliffe-Brown Memorial Fund.

The Ethiopian Antiquities Administration (Minister, His Excellency Tekle Tsadik Mekouria) facilitated my entry into the country, and provided invaluable assistance during my stay there, in which respect I wish to thank particularly Monsieur Fr. Anfray and Ato Bekele Negussie. I was also associated with the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Director Dr. R. Pankhurst.

My wife and I reached Dimam by mule and foot from the Bulki Mission station of the S.I.M. Throughout our stay, the staff of the Mission were extremely hospitable to us, and provided our only link with the 'outside world'. Without their advice and assistance our research would have been extremely difficult.

Our greatest debt is, of course, to the Dime themselves, who tolerated our strange customs with considerable humour. In particular, I wish to thank my closest friends, the Chikashum, Ato

Mamo Dolinde, and Ato Argenu Zeleke, both of whom were my frequent companions and helpers.

The current form of this work owes much to the suggestions of Professor Paul Stirling, who patiently read draft versions of several chapters. Dr. John Kesby also provided encouragement and assistance during the course of the research.

Straitened circumstances required that I type the manuscript myself, and I apologize for any suffering which this may cause the reader.

ABSTRACT

POLITICS AND CHANGE IN DIMAM, SOUTH-WEST ETHIOPIA

The Dime number about 8,000 people, and inhabit a series of mountain ranges and surrounding lowland territory, overlooking the lower reaches of the Omo River, in Gemu Gofa Province of South West Ethiopia. They practise slash and burn agriculture on large-scale terraces.

Until the beginning of this century, they were a self-governing people, under a number of chiefs, who had political, jural, economic and ritual functions. They were then invaded by an army of Amharas, who entered the country from the east, and colonised it. A large number of Dime were sold to visiting traders, who removed them from the area, and sold them as personal slaves to Amhara land-owners. The land was divided into a number of estates, belonging to both resident and absentee landlords, worked by the Dime in return for the right to use smaller areas of land for their own purposes.

The period of enslavement effectively destroyed the political power of the chiefs, and left them as guardians of rituals concerning the welfare of their chiefdoms. Previously, serious legal cases were brought before the chief, who had the authority to pass judgements, even in a case of murder, and the power to carry out his sentences, by the use of his own 'bodyguard' of members of a servant caste. If defensive or offensive action was required, it was a chief or chiefs, who decided to call men together, and led them to battle.

In pre-Amhara days, the chief was the focal point of a re-distributive economy. His subjects brought him personal gifts, and were invited at a later date to a feast of his providing. Other gifts which they brought to his compound were offered by him to the gods and spirits, to ensure the well-being of the country and populace. Economics, politics, law and ritual were all part of the same coherent view of the world. Beneath the chief, small-scale disputes were solved informally by village gatherings, tenants payed tithes to Dime land-owners, and local rituals were carried out by lineage heads. Local affairs were pursued in a manner which reflected those of the chiefdom, and there was no discontinuity between the powers of small-scale leaders and those of the chiefs.

The Amhara invasion altered the content of chiefship, by making the chiefs minor political agents of the landlords, with power derived from their masters, no economic function, and greatly reduced religious authority.

In the late 1930's, an Italian force drove the Amharas from the area, and re-instated the Dime as free men. But the Italians were soon removed, the Amharas returned, and began to reconstruct their old system. They were thwarted by the arrival in the Sub-Province of Ethiopian Government officials and policemen, who began to put into effect the abolition of slavery. At this time, economic power went to the landlords once more, while overall jural and political power went to the police force, and Government Courts. For a short time, the Dime had no legitimate leaders, who could organize internal social control.

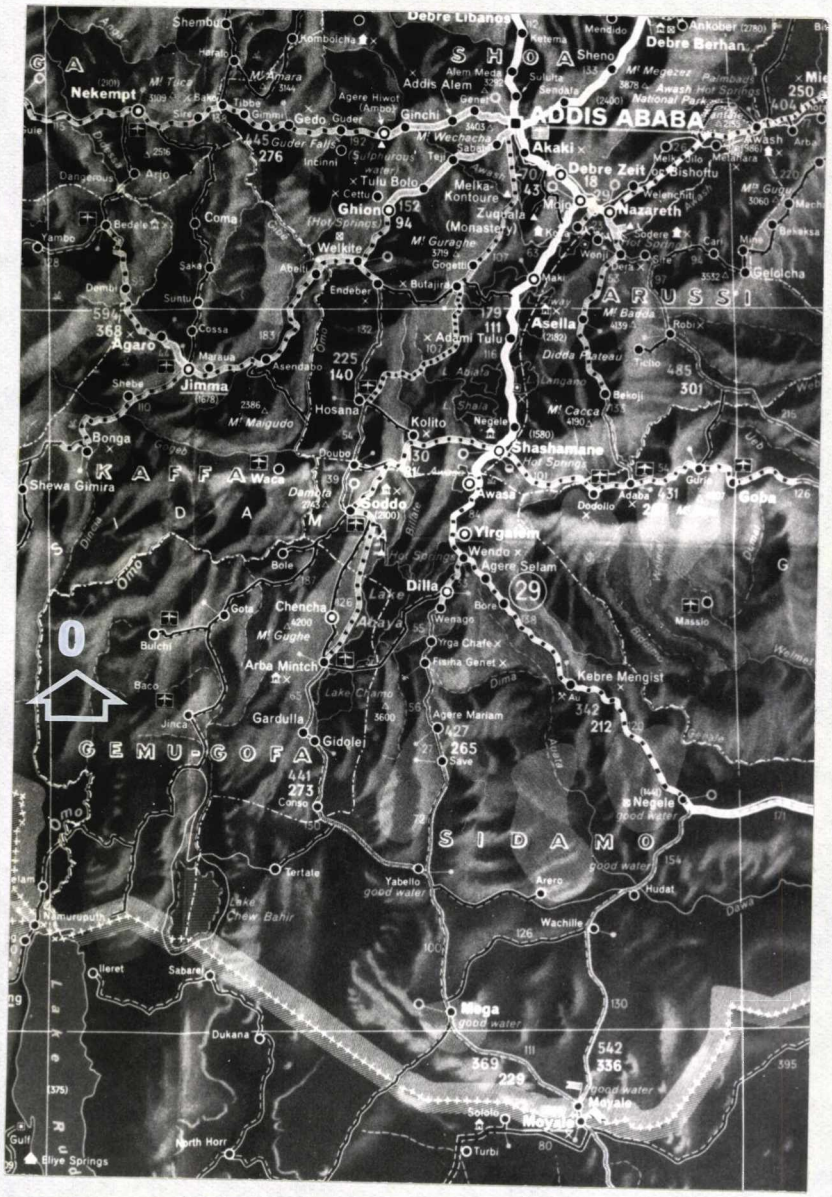
Into this vacuum came a shaman from the eastern neighbours of the Dime, the Basketo. His practice met with such success that others became possessed by spirits, and began to heal the sick, discover and punish wrongdoers, and restore social harmony. Those shamans who achieved wide acceptance became wealthy and influential.

At the same time, it became obvious to the Dime that they must handle their interactions with the District Government in the most efficient manner possible. "Middle-men" became necessary, and the most successful of these, the Government-appointed "Chikashum" (mud chief), is a Dime who speaks excellent Amharic, and has considerable knowledge of officialdom. He is by far the richest and most honoured member of the society.

Other agents of change are moving into Dimam, notably an evangelical mission, which recently established a church and clinic there. The recent revolution and subsequent nationalisation of land promises an even more radical transformation than has so far occurred.

MAP 1

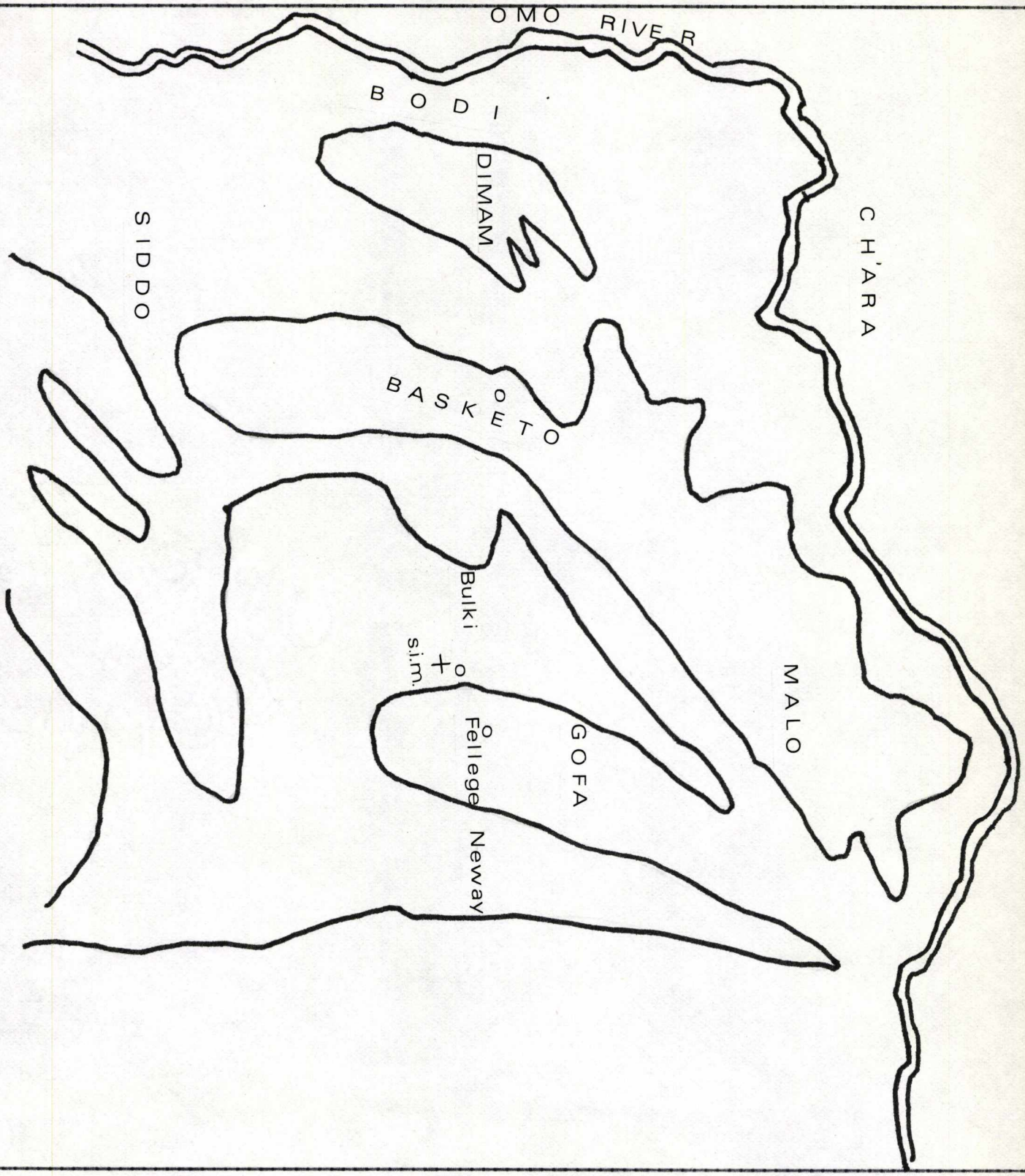
DIMAM IN ETHIOPIA



DIMAM

SCALE Approx 1 inch = 75 miles.

MAP 2



KEY

The Dime and their neighbours

BODI - "Tribal" groups

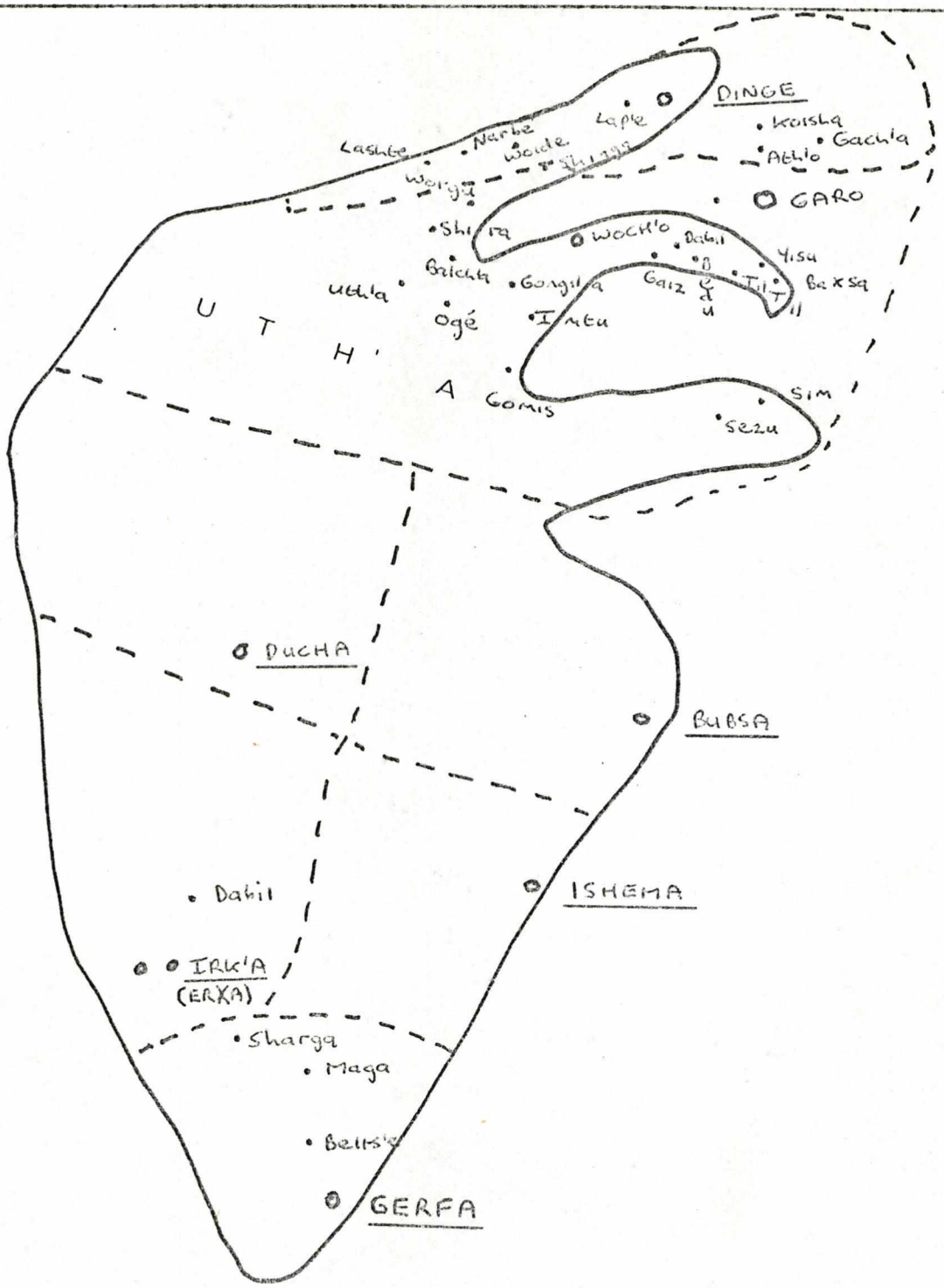
Bulki - Town

- Mountain range

+ - Mission Post

Scale; one inch equals 30 miles

MAP 3



KEY

ARO - Large settlement

HEMA - Settlement giving name to chiefdom

MIS - Small settlement

- Land over 3,000 ft.

'A - Chiefdoms

8 16 - Scale

iles per inch.

Map of Dimam.

(The map shows only those villages with which I am personally familiar. There are many others, particularly in the Southern chiefdoms).

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE DIME

In this work, I attempt to investigate the changing nature of political leadership amongst the Dime of Gemu Gofa Province of South-West Ethiopia. In order to do so, I describe first their 'traditional political structure', which focussed on chiefship (Chapter Three), and then the process of 'encapsulation', which caused its downfall. While reducing the importance of chiefship, encapsulation (Chapter 4) provided a new leadership possibility; participation in a wider 'Ethiopian' administrative system. Even today, such participation involves risks which the majority of Dime are not prepared to take (see Chapter 4), and another response to the decline of chiefship, shamanism (Chapter 5), has proved more popular to those with leadership aspirations.

Before discussing the Dime political structure, I must inform the reader of its physical and social environment. In the former I include the geography, climate, agriculture and livestock of the region; in the latter the relationships between the Dime, their neighbours, and the colonising Amharas. All of these factors affect the political system, through Dime cosmology and the expectations which 'the people' have of their leaders.

THE ENVIRONMENT

a) Physical

Figure 1 (P. 19) summarises the inter-connections between physical environment and political structure, and the reader may

like to gain an overall impression of these before continuing.

i - Geography

The land of Dimam lies in the South-West of Ethiopia, to the East of, and overlooking, the Lower Omo Valley (See Map 1). It consists of a series of mountain ridges, running mainly North to South, which reach their peak in Mount Donaldson Smith, which is just over 8,000 feet high. (This height, which was estimated by the Omo River Geological Joint Survey in 1972, is almost 1,000 feet less than previous map estimates). Haberland's map of 1951, drawn from limited travelling in the land, appears to under-estimate its width, which is perhaps 35 miles at its greatest. The length is approximately 60 miles, making the total area somewhat less than 2,100 square miles.

The Dime divide their country into three distinct terrains; highland, lowland, and in-between land. The current form of this division is, I think, derived from the Amhara usage, although residents of Dimam do not use the terms to describe quite the same elevations as do the Amharas elsewhere in Ethiopia (See Ullendorf, 1960, P. 25). The distinction between various elevations is an important element of the indigenous cosmology (See Figure 1, and P. 17).

The lowland, which is below about 3,000 feet, surrounds the country, and is hot and malarial. It is therefore the least popular zone for settlement and farming, and is mainly exploited by the Bach'as (hunters), who trap or shoot such game as buffalo, bushbuck, and waterbuck, as well as other more valuable 'big game' animals.

Despite the unpopularity of this terrain, the largest single settlement in Dimam is in it. This paradox may be simply explained. The settlement of Garo is often referred to by the Amharic term 'Ketema' (town), and has a number of satellite villages around it. Perhaps half the population of Garo proper, and one-third of that of its satellites, consists of Amharas, members of the dominant ethnic group of the region. They moved down to this site from a previous settlement in the in-between land in about 1965, when the District Government briefly set up a civil service outpost in Dimam. This it did at the first Dime village on the path from Basketo, (see section b - iii of this chapter), which was Garo.

Shortly after the arrival of the officials, a number of Amharas moved down to join them, and a dispute arose as to the appropriate location of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, which was at that time in Uth'a, a hard five hour's walk up the mountains. Since the officials were not prepared to walk that far, the church moved down to them, followed by the majority of the Amhara population. Only the priests stayed in Uth'a, travelling down to perform their duties each Sunday. About two years later, the District Government Headquarters returned to Basketo, but Garo had by that time been established as the Amhara centre in the land, and a small police post remained there to represent the Government.

To the East of Garo lies a large area of bush-land, which contains a number of village sites, whose inhabitants fled in 1970/71, when there was increased raiding, attributed to the Bodi neighbours of the Dime, although the Bach'as were also rumoured to be involved. The area is now occupied solely by the Bach'as. About 12 miles East of Garo, the path crosses the Usenu River, which is regarded as the

boundary between Dime and Basketo territory.

The second region, the in-between land, consists of mixed bush and woodland. It is excellent for farming, free of malaria, considerably cooler than the lowlands, and is preferred by both Dime and Amhara. Most of the mountain sides, including those now densely forested, were covered with large terraces, with dry stone walls by the Dime of long ago, and these remain intact even after decades of disuse. In the forest areas the leopard population mainly lives, feeding on the wild life, and occasionally removing a goat which has been left unguarded. Many Amharas, and some Dime, still trap leopards, whose skins fetch high prices from illicit traders in the towns to the East.

The highland area is cold, thickly forested, least populated, and little-farmed. The various roots and spices which grow wild here are occasionally collected by the young and poor, who carry them to villages, or market, and sell them. As we shall see later, height is ritually evaluated by the Dime, and most peaks are the site of one or more ritual shrine. So, although the highland is relatively insignificant for agriculture and settlement, it is not so in religious terms.

Dimam is fairly remote, even by Ethiopian standards. Basketo, the District Government Headquarters 30 miles to the East, is reached by a small path which crosses the Usenu Plain to Angila, then makes a steep ascent to the town, whose population is probably about 1,000. During the rains of July to September it is only occasionally possible to cross the Usenu River, which becomes a fast-moving torrent. Trading with the 'outside world' is virtually suspended during this time, and even within Dimam, people are reluctant to travel. For the rest of the year the path is well used, although reputed to be

dangerous, since many of the hunters like to supplement their income with a little highway robbery. Government officials do not generally visit Dimam, since mules which make the journey tend to die soon after it, and the officials themselves are too important to walk such a distance.

Government communications, therefore, mainly reach the Dime through the police force, whose members frequently travel between Basketo and Dimam with messages, witnesses for cases, and when transferred to one of the two stations in the land. Other news is conveyed by the numerous traders who come to the area to buy coffee and honey, which they carry to Basketo or Fellege Neway where the price is much higher. These towns are important mediating influences between Dimam and 'Ethiopia'. In them imported goods such as torches, and the pith helmets worn by notables, may be purchased, and at Fellege Neway strange sights, such as lorries and the twice-weekly aeroplane may be seen, and the news of them carried home.

In Basketo there is a primary school, although only two Dime have ever been members of it, both for a very short time. There is also a clinic, which rarely seems to have useful items in stock and which is not frequented by Dime, who distrust its personnel. In short, the Dime have as yet not benefitted from the wider educational, medical, and cultural opportunities which have affected the towns with which they are in intermittent contact.

ii - Climate

There are no meteorological records of Dimam, and I was unable to collect my own. I am therefore unable to provide more than a general impression of the climate over the one year period from

January 1973 until January 1974. The description refers to the climate of Woch'o, a village in the 'in-between' region. The highland is colder and wetter, the lowland hotter and dryer.

From the beginning of January until mid-February there was almost no rain. Between this time and mid March, there were storms of varying intersity about twice a week, but people told me that the recently-planted sorghum and corn were dying because of the unusual dryness. From the end of this period, almost every night for the next two months, there was a violent storm, with gale-force winds, and torrential rain. By mid May the storms became less violent, but the rainfall was more prolonged, and sometimes continuous for several days. Travelling and farming were almost impossible, and many house floors became permanent pools of mud. By the end of September, the rain was both less frequent and less prolonged, until by early November it had declined to one hour per day. This late rainfall was said to be unusual, harming the t'eff crop which was then ready for harvesting. Between mid-November and early January there was only one small shower, but by mid-January mild evening storms were beginning.

As for the temperature: January was the hottest month, with night time temperatures of about 16° C, rising to 30° C in the shade by about 10 a.m. The coldest period of August and September produced night temperatures as low as 8° C, with day time readings in the 16° C to 21° C area, which called for several layers of clothing.

According to local opinion, the year was unusually hot and dry between January and March, and unusually wet in late September and early November. In fact, during the early months of my stay, the conditions were near to drought, and disease was prevalent, from

the use of very poor water, often from sources usually reserved for animals. A small number of people left the area, and set up home in Basketo and elsewhere.

iii - Agriculture

This section is derived from the same year as the above. Accounts given to me of a 'typical' agricultural year coincided fairly closely with what I observed, although there were minor adjustments to compensate for the 'unusual' features of the year's weather.

In January, the vegetation of fields which have been recently in use is burned off, and left for a few weeks. At the same time, work parties clear fresh areas of trees and thick bush, and burn them off. In both types of cleared areas crops are planted at the beginning of February.

The first crop to be planted is Brown Sorghum, the seeds of which are scattered and covered with earth, loosened with hoes. It grows very quickly, and is harvested in late May, by cutting the stalks near the root. At the same time, another crop is planted, to be harvested in October. The crop is used for brewing Dime beer, (Gubzi), Amhara beer (T'alla), and arake (a potent distilled liquor, learnt from the Italians, via the Amharas). The various brews, and bundles of the crop, are sold in the market at Garo, but mostly it is stored in the house roof, or granary, so that the family always has the ingredients for beer. If there are no other crops available, it may also be used for making various types of bread.

The 'red' and 'black' varieties of sorghum are planted at the same time as the above. They take much longer to grow than the brown variety and are harvested only once a year, in December. They are used for the same purposes.

Immediately after the various types of sorghum, much greater quantities of corn are planted. Each of the three altitudinal regions requires a different technique. In the lowland, one person makes a small hole with a pointed stick, and another places 3 or 4 seeds in it, and covers them with earth. It is said that this region gets greater corn yields than the others, because it is more fertile, and less land is taken up by terrace walls. In the 'in-between' region, the seed may just be scattered on the burnt earth, although I also saw it being planted in the 'lowland way'. Highland farmers turn over the soil with digging sticks before planting, a step which is thought unnecessary in the other regions.

Corn has many uses. When green, it is roasted on the cob, or picked from it and fried on a griddle. When dried, it may be pounded and used for the Dime or Amhara styles of bread, or for gubzi and araké. Some areas of Dimam, most notably Woide, to the west of Dinge village, produce far more corn than they need for these purposes, and the surplus is sold in Garo market to policemen and others who have a shortage at the time, for example someone preparing beer for a large funeral.

Two crops a year of corn are grown, sown in early February and July, and harvested in June and November. The second crop is planted in the same field as the first, and the stubble of the latter is often cut and thrown over the seeds. After two crops the field is left empty for at least two years.

Many women plant cotton seeds in the fields of corn. (Until the arrival of the Amharas at the turn of the century, the Dime wore only bark-cloth, so the crop is almost certainly one which was introduced by the colonisers. This is reflected in the fact that cotton growing is most prevalent in Garo and its satellite villages).

At the same time as the above crops are planted, several types of yam and tuber are placed in the fields, and in small gardens near the house. They are entirely for domestic consumption.

Between mid February and April the principle agricultural task is weeding which is mainly carried out by women and children. In April, people re-plant the small coffee roots which have grown from seeds falling to the ground. This crop is grown beside the house and between the ensete trees which often surround it. It is picked in December, dried in the sun, and then stored for occasional use by the owner and his wives when guests are present. The everyday drink is an extremely spicy brew consisting of the leaves, herbs and ginger.

Coffee is also one of the main sources of cash for the Dime. It is traded to Basketo and even Fellege Neway, the sub-Provincial centre which is a 70 mile walk to the East. There are about 15 Amharas and 10 Dime who have much coffee, and in a good year these people may well make $ Eth. 150 (£ 30), which is a very large sum by Dime standards, the price of three good cows. Many other Dime make smaller profits of up to $ 40 Eth., and some young men are beginning to realise the trading possibilities of coffee, and buy small amounts in Dimam to carry to either of the two distant towns to resell. There are also a number of traders resident in the towns who travel regularly into Dimam in the dry season, buying coffee and honey.

In May, people dig up a number of roots of the ensete (Ensete Edulis) tree, cut each into four flat pieces, and replant them. Each piece reputedly brings forth about twenty roots, which are themselves replanted in July. They are then left for at least one year, and preferably two. Ensete is the most versatile of all Dime crops. Its root is boiled or roasted and eaten. The main trunk is scraped, and the shavings ground into a dough, which is then baked in leaves to produce a type of bread. The leaves are used as covers for cooking pots, placed on the floor for honoured guests to sit upon if there is no chair, and, on rare occasions, shredded and used as a skirt by young girls. The strong central stem of the leaf is plaited to make rope and caterpults, and is a string for all occasions.

In the same month, white sorghum is planted. It is either scattered and covered with earth by hoe, or placed in small holes made with pointed sticks. It is harvested in December, and used for njera (Amhara style bread) and Dime bread if there is a shortage of t'eff and corn; or it can be roasted and eaten as a snack with coffee.

The most prestigious crop t'eff is planted in June. The Dime claim to have been growing it since long before the conquest, although the most valued end-product, njera bread, is specifically Amhara. The crop requires much more work than any other. The ground, which may be newly-cleared or include the remains of a first corn crop, is thoroughly turned over with metal-tipped digging sticks before the seeds are scattered in the furrows and covered over. The crop, which is harvested from mid-October to mid-November, is used to make the 'best' beer, arake, bread, and njera, and a special dough called

Ts'aldu, which is eaten raw. T'eff has a very important place in several Dime rituals, and its yield is the ultimate yardstick of a good year. Those who grow large quantities sell the surplus to policemen and traders.

Concurrently with the planting of t'eff, runs that of the least prized, but most eaten food, the sweet potato, which is planted in fields near the house, either on its own or amongst other crops. It is mainly the concern of women and children, and is neither a general topic of conversation nor the subject of trading. However, if there are no potatoes, as during the first two months of my fieldwork, people begin to talk of 'starvation'. As soon as one set of potatoes is harvested, the next is planted, in a continuous cycle.

A number of other foods are grown, on an unsystematic basis. Peppers are a must, and are planted in the period of heavy rains, in about June. Various types of bean and cabbage both grow wild, and are planted. Tobacco, bananas, and papaya are occasionally grown in the 'in-between' area, but are more prevalent and better in the lowlands, as are limes. Fruits are mainly eaten by children and anthropologists.

A very important natural product is honey, which should be plentiful by November. Many Dime sell it in Garo market, while others travel east with it, and gain a much higher price in the towns. In addition, visiting traders make special visits to the area, travelling to several villages to gather this produce. It is an important source of income for many Dime, since it fetches a good price, requires almost no attention, and is a most useful guaranteee against the pressures of taxes, debts, and fines. Amhara land-owners try

their hardest to persuade the owners of honey to pay their dues in this medium, since their favourite alcoholic drink, T'ej, is brewed from it. As far as the Dime are concerned, apart from its price, honey is especially good to eat and to sacrifice. Although Dime enjoy T'ej, they regard beer as their main drink and food, so that of its three uses, honey is mostly sold, secondly sacrificed, and only if there is a bumper yield, eaten or drunk.

These are the major crops of the Dime and it remains only to present a brief general comment on farming methods and problems.

The heavier farm tasks are performed by groups of men and women, called together in advance, and working in return for a share of a large pot of gubzi brewed for the purpose. A work party may contain merely three or four relatives or clients of the organiser, or as many as forty people travelling from several villages. Such groups are almost always called for bush-clearing, and turning over new soil with digging sticks, and less often for planting, weeding and harvesting.

Until they are ready for harvesting the main prestige crops, t'eff and corn, are carefully guarded against birds, baboons and pigs. Young boys build small huts on raised platforms in the fields and spend their days playing crude xylophones, which are said to frighten away the birds. The more direct approach of throwing stones with slings is also adopted.

Baboons are more difficult to deter and sometimes invade the fields singly, or in packs. Boys and women shout at them, but tend to desert their posts simultaneously. Men have more success by throwing large rocks at them, and they are often chased off in this way. If they are not removed, they rapidly destroy entire fields,

ripping up the crops in handfuls. They also remove the occasional goat, and (it is said) babies.

Porcupines and wild pigs are even more of a problem, since they are less visible, and often steal crops by night. The former are often caught in traps, and pigs may be killed in this way, or occasionally by spearing.

In terms of hours spent, crop guarding is certainly the largest task of the agricultural year, and many men spend the nights of several months of the year in huts in their fields. So, heavy bush-clearing, digging, guarding, harvesting, and transporting of crops to granaries constitute the main tasks of Dime men. Women plant and tend the less highly-valued foods and do most of the weeding, which is a very time-consuming task. Moreover, farming is only one part of a woman's work load, which includes the preparation of all the crops for eating and drinking, housework, fetching water and so on.

I was unable to measure fields, since the Dime feared that such information might be used for tax purposes, and that the actual procedure of measuring might have the same effect on the crops as evil eye. Before I was made aware of their feelings on the matter, I had already measured one medium-size field. It was approximately 50 metres by 30, and was cleared of heavy bush by about 15 people in one day, which included a lengthy break for beer half-way through the task. The field belonged to the fourth wife of a very wealthy and important Dime named Mamo Dolinde (See Chapter 4).The total area of farmland which was ultimately used for this man's purposes (including the fields of all four wives and one son) was perhaps 12 times this amount, that is, nearly two hectares. This represents

the maximum area of crop-bearing land controlled by any one Dime. At the other end of the scale, there are some men whose total farm area is no more than this one field of approximately one-sixth of a hectare, which is not enough to support them. Obviously, these differences in amounts of farm-land reflect differences of social and political standing, and in Chapter Four, I discuss the value of land in founding patron-client relationships.

iv - Livestock

When Haberland visited Dimam for one month in 1951, he found the Dime practising a form of duo-local residence. The men were in the lowland with cattle, whilst cultivation and small stock rearing were practised in the mountains, mainly by old men, women, and children.

" The former prolific breeding of animals has not recovered since the decline of the Amhara influence, but large herds of cattle can still be seen in the lowlands behind Maschira (to the North-East). They are tended by young men, and at night they are driven into large thorn kraals which also enclose the herders' huts. They live here - often far from their original home - surviving exclusively on the milk and blood of the animals. The animal itself is almost always slaughtered for sacrificial purposes and then taken into the highlands. Only the butter, but seldom the curds, reach the highlands. Up there, you will rarely find any animal husbandry equipment, such as bows and arrows for bleeding, or the long-spouted, square, milk containers. I did not meet any Dime who could give me a clear description of their animal husbandry methods. ..... Because of the deterioration

of the terraces and the subsequent growth of the grass, it is now often found that the cattle are grazing here and using the abandoned huts. Cattle sheds are unknown. The farmers in the mountains keep large herds of goats, which find grazing in the woods and unterraced slopes. These are tended by young boys and returned every evening to the vicinity of the farmsteads. I was unable to establish whether they had always been grazing in the highlands, but it seems most unlikely during the period of dense population. There are no sheep, which presumably became extinct through an epidemic " (Haberland, 1956, P. 233).

Haberland's account must be used very carefully, since it is difficult to establish which of his observations point to genuine differences between Dimam in 1951 and now, and which are the result of his desire to publish everything he was told during his brief stay without checking its accuracy. But it seems clear from the above extract that some of the Dime in Dinge (Ganchire), where he spent most of his time, had enough cattle in 1951 to warrant duolocal residence. Others appear to have been keeping their cattle in the highlands, along with the goats.

The current situation is that there is almost certainly no Dime who owns more than 10 cattle, and few who own even five. The majority have none. There is obviously no reason to divide the family for so few cattle, and these now graze a short distance from the village, or even on unfarmed land within it. Goats and sheep are similarly rare, and graze in the same areas. The cows are kept either in a domestic house, or in a special cow house, and are rarely bled. The two major reasons for declining herd sizes are raiding by pastoralist neighbours of the Dime, and various disease epidemics.

The absence of cattle seems to have led to considerable changes in bridewealth procedures, and to a decrease in the frequency of ritual sacrifices. This decrease has important connections with changing attitudes towards chiefs, who are the most important of all animal sacrificers (See Chapter 3).

v - Physical Environment and Political Structure

From the brief account presented above it is obvious that the physical environment imposes certain constraints on the Dime political structure. These are summarised in Figure 1 (P. 19).

In the first place, the geographical remoteness of Dimam has meant that the Ethiopian Government has not yet thought it practicable to set up a school, clinic, or agricultural programme there, and that no trader has yet opened a shop. There are thus no 'educated' Dime who might change the nature of the existing political structure, and place it in a wider 'Ethiopian' context. There is no important clash of values between the younger and older generations, as there might have been if the former were literate, and aware of events in a wider political framework. In effect, almost all of the next generation of political competitors will be concerned with prizes internal to Dimam.

Although the 'towns' of Basketo and Fellege Neway, which are part of the environment of the Dime, export new products to their neighbours, they do not send out new values. Indeed, since the values of the towns are those of Government officials, who seek mainly to extract money from the 'pagans', it is little wonder that the Dime feel that both the towns and their occupants are hostile, and that

their own country, people and values are beneficent. This is not to say that Dime are insular, which is by no means the case. They are extremely adept at borrowing from other cultures, as we shall see later, but the items which are borrowed are not necessarily more modern, merely different.

In sum, the isolation of the region has ensured that 'bureaucratisation' has no interest for the Dime, and that the caste system can persist, with its important implications with regard to eligibility for political office. The effects of the Amhara colonisation of the region have not been dealt with here, since a complete Chapter (4) is devoted to them later.

I now turn briefly to the topography of Dimam. I have limited myself thus far to an observer's view of it, and mentioned in passing that it is divided into three regions by its inhabitants. But this tells us nothing of its interaction with political structure. Indeed, at this stage I must restrict myself to a hint of the connection, which lies in Dime cosmology, and especially in the ideology of chiefship. God (Iyaf) lives in the sky, and the most important sacrifices to him are made on mountain tops by chiefs, who are themselves 'high' people, (as symbolized by the fact that the chief sits above everyone at any gathering). Thus the highland, which is economically the least valuable region, is the most valued; and its highest points, which are shrines, are reserved for chiefs, and their assistants. This ritual power of the chief validates his political power.

At the same time, the chief's ritual power ensures that the climate is right for agriculture (although there is also a rainmaker, who is ritually and politically important). It is ultimately the chief's relationship with God which ensures that there are crops,

honey, and cattle. As in topographical evaluation, so too in agriculture, there is a paradox. The most crucial crops, sweet potatoes and ensete, without which there is starvation, are the least valued. Honey and t'eff are the most valued, and associated with chiefs and gods. Ritual value does not reflect utility.

A description of the physical environment which concentrated on utility would therefore tell us little about its connection with political structure. According to Dime tradition, office-holders are so because of certain ritual qualities which have a beneficial effect on valued areas of the environment. It is not enough for a man to farm efficiently, he must live under the ritual authority of a chief who enjoys a fruitful relationship with the gods. In sum, the physical environment is socially ordered.

Figure 1 (P. 19) summarises the connections between 'physical environment' and political structure.

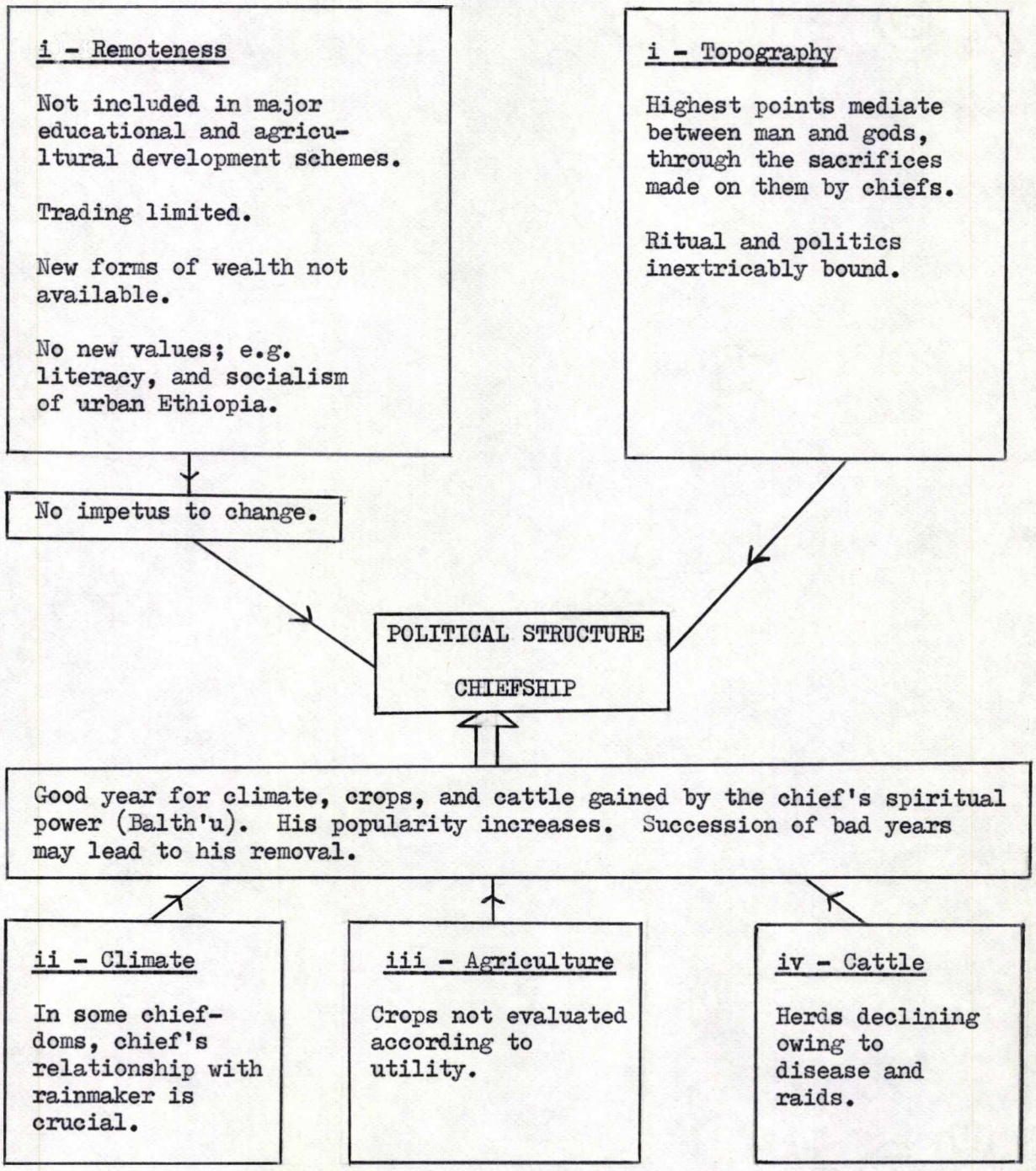


Figure 1. Physical Environment and Political Structure.

b) The Social Environment

i - The Dime

There is so much variety of skin colour, height, and other features amongst the Dime, that it is impossible to talk of any predominant physical 'type'. They distinguish skin colours as 'red' and 'black', and count themselves as the latter when compared with the 'red' Amharas. The colonising Amharas have always taken young Dime girls as servants and concubines, and children of such unions are claimed by the master as legitimate heirs. There are thus a large number of black people who announce themselves as Amharas. In this claim they are not entirely successful, since members of neither ethnic group regard them as 'pure' Amharas. Among Amharas, references to such mixed ancestry are extremely insulting, and often resorted to during arguments. The predominance of concubinage has meant that the Amharas are a far from pure ethnic group, and Dime inter-marriage with Basketos (see section iii), Ch'aras (section v), and Gofas (section vii) has meant that they too are of very mixed stock.

The language, Dimaf, is one of the Southern Omotic group, which includes the languages of the Ari, Hamar, and Banna, although the Dime now have no contact with these peoples.

Haberland's account of Dime history begins as follows;

" Without exaggeration one can say that the Dime are about to die out. Only about 1,000 or 2,000 people are living in the whole large country, the few remaining Amhara included. Earlier on, there were about 20 times as many ..... The disappearance of the people goes hand in hand with the dissolution of the culture " (Haberland, 1956, P. 235).

Fortunately, the predicted extinction has not occurred, and the culture is thriving. The population is, I estimate, around 8,000, including children, which figure excludes the Amharas, who constitute perhaps another 300. But for the disastrous raiding activities of the Western neighbours of the Dime, the Bodis, from 1970 to 1972, which caused deaths and migrations, the population would now be even larger (See section iv). Haberland's emphasis on the imminent end of the Dime was therefore unjustified. Of course, Dime reminisce about the golden days before the Amharas came, when the population was undoubtably much larger than now, and quite possibly near to 20,000. If they compare those times with the present they are naturally pessimistic, but when compared with the days of slavery, the future looks considerably brighter.

ii - The Amharas

I here present only a bare outline of the importance of the Amharas in Dimam, since much of Chapter 4 concerns this matter.

Unlike the Dime, the Amharas circumcise, and are Ethiopian Orthodox Christians. To the Amharas in this area the distinctive features of the Christian are the following: circumcision; the observance of long periods of fasting (in general those mentioned by Ullendorff, 1960, Ps 100-102), and of fasts every Wednesday and Friday; the recognition of Feast Days; and monogamy. There is little knowledge of the doctrinal bases of any of these practises, and no interest in them. The main religious knowledge is of the names of numerous saints (including Mary and Jesus) and of the calendar of feasts and fasts. Christianity provides the Amharas with a rationale for domination:- their beliefs, and more importantly their prac-

tices, distinguish them from the pagans, who are worthy only to be slaves and concubines.

The detailed history of the Amhara conquest is not unfortunately available (although there is a brief account in Haberland, Ps. 237-238), and I provide only a brief outline of the general course of events, as told to me.

The invasion came at the beginning of this century, and collapse was rapid and total. The soldiers who entered the land proceeded to remove thousands of Dime for sale elsewhere as slaves. Those who settled in the area retained large numbers of personal slaves, who were their labourers and concubines. The Dime worked the land, in return for a meagre supply of food, or the use of a small plot, which they were able to farm when not needed by the master. Disobedience was punished by torture, sale, or death.

Most of the colonisers settled in the cool, healthy, in-between area of Uts'e, which they renamed Uth'a. Here they built a township of large square houses, enclosed by strong fences, and interspersed with the small round dwellings of their workers. Those Amharas who still reside in Dimam refer to these days with great nostalgia, citing the constant supply of honey and meat which they were given, and how they never needed to work, but just drank T'ej all day. They made fortunes by obtaining leopard skins and ivory in exchange for guns and ammunition,from the lowland Bodi; as well as bartering Dime for guns, mules or money.

This blissful tranquility was threatened by the Emperor, Haile Sellassie I, who issued a supplementary law against slavery in 1931, which promised to be more effective than the innumerable previous laws abolishing it; (for the history of slavery in Ethiopia

see Pankhurst - "Economic History of Ethiopia" - Chapter Three). But the measure had still not been rigidly enforced by 1936-7, when Italian forces reached Dimam, and 'liberated' the Dime from slavery. The army made its Head Quarters at Maga, near Gerfa, in the south of the land, which gave them rapid access to the Omo Valley. At the same time that they liberated the Dime they removed many of them to work on road building projects. Despite this, some Dime told me that the tribe would not have survived but for the arrival of the Italians, since the rule of the Amharas was becoming ever harsher.

After the Italian interlude, in about 1940, many Amharas returned to the area, which was shortly hit by famine and epidemics. After Haile Sellassie I's return, the Ethiopian system of Government at last began to reach the region, and slavery as such never re-appeared, although many of the Amhara attitudes towards the Dime did not change. The combination of famines, diseases, loss of slave-trade income, and the end of slave labour discouraged many of the settlers, who left the area for the nearby towns where there were more Amharas and life promised to be more agreeable. When Garo became District Government Head Quarters in 1965, most of the remaining Amharas moved down to it and a small township grew up, which survived the retreat of the Government Officers to Basketo about two years after their arrival.

This is an appropriate place to note some of the cultural and social changes which have taken place since the arrival of the Amharas, but I leave the political implications of colonization until Chapter 4.

The Dime were never in any sense isolated, and exhibit a great talent for incorporating 'foreign' elements into their lives, often without fully understanding them. Numerous examples of such sync-

retism occurred at a funeral which I attended in Uth'a chiefdom. Acknowledged foreign elements included songs from Siddo, speeches in the Bodi language, mourning chants in the languages of the Basketo and Gofa peoples, and an Amhara-style grave and shroud. Other examples of 'borrowings' are too numerous to mention, but it is important to note that shamanism has been imported from the Basketos within the last 30 years, to become a major religious and political force (see Chapter 5).

Thus the Dime adoption of Amhara practices is not out of keeping with their general reaction to outsiders, although the Amharas were obviously able to bring pressure to bear on the Dime in many ways.

In the northern areas, which are most dominated by the colonisers, cotton clothing is usually worn, especially the Amhara 'gabi' and shorts and shirts of Chinese manufacture. Here, it is unusual for men to work naked, a practise greatly ridiculed by Amharas, and which is common in the southern areas of Dimam. It is now the sign of an important man all over Dimam that he wears as many imported clothes as humanly possible. Thus a leading shaman's dry season outfit consisted of wellington boots, shorts, and shirt, an extremely thick army-style great coat, and an imitation pith helmet.

Similarly, Amhara drinks and food have become popular, particularly in the North, although they are still very much luxury items, and familiarity with them is in many contexts prestigious. On the other hand, the Amhara square house not been adopted, and many Amharas, particularly outside of Garo, have copied the Dime-style round, stone dwelling in preference.

Many Dime have Amhara God-Parents and are nominally Christian (See Chapter 4). Some of them go so far as to prepare food and drink for major feast-days, and invite their neighbours, their God-Parents and other Amharas. At the same time, they adhere to the Dime system of beliefs and ritual practices. The operation of both Christian and pagan practices on the same occasion is well-illustrated by the series of events necessary for a Dime to kill a cow and sell its meat. He must first ask a local Amhara to come and slit the throat, since no Amhara may eat the meat of an animal killed by a Dime, even if the latter is a nominal Christian. If the owner of the cow does not do this, he limits his potential buyers to other Dime. After the throat has been slit, the owner catches the blood in the usual way, and the animal will be regarded as a sacrificial offering: prayers are said, and offerings of meat and blood made to the appropriate forces. The majority of the meat is then cut up and sold.

An important aspect of Dime social life which the Amharas tried to alter was the caste-like system of ranking, whereby blacksmiths and tanners were not allowed to enter the houses of higher Dime, own land, or participate fully in social gatherings. The status of these polluting endogamous groups ran contrary to the Amhara belief, which might be summarised 'All slaves are equal'. The colonisers tried to persuade 'chiefly' Dime to allow smiths and tanners into their houses to eat and drink with them. In this effort they met with little success: the distance which polluters were required to keep was lessened - they were allowed to sit just outside the door instead of far away from the house - but in general the threat to Dime beliefs was successfully resisted.

A major innovation of the colonisers was the inclusion of Dimam in a large-scale monetary economy, and the related establishment of markets. Before colonisation, the Dime had no money and the main currencies were iron bars and salt. A German film of 1930 shows clearly that currency bars were still being made then, although money must also have been in use. The Dime still reckon money in the obsolete Maria Theresa Dollars, one of which is worth ± Eth. 1.50. The increased circulation of money is closely connected with the increasing availability of trade commodities from the towns to the East, and the possibility of exporting Dime crops and honey. Many people still find it impossible to add up even small amounts of money in abstract terms, although this ability seems certain to improve shortly, since money is now often demanded instead of cattle as bridewealth.

It was primarily the influx of varying numbers of policemen, and the temporary establishment of the District Government Head Quarters in Garo, which necessitated the setting up of a market there. Another was inaugurated in Gerfa, again mainly for the benefit of the policemen who had no crops of their own, and therefore needed to purchase them. The markets rapidly became very popular. There are now many small cheap imported items to be found in them (razor blades, dyed cotton thread, shorts, and so on), as well as crops, and especially beer for sale. The Saturday market in Garo is the social highlight of the week, and a great occasion for the exchange of news with friends from all over Dimam, and even Basketo. Such is the popularity of the markets that another has recently begun in Dinge. The specific trigger for it was a period of famine, during which many people wished to buy crops from those who still had some.

But it persisted after the famine, and is now the occasion for beer drinking and the sale of coffee, honey, garlic and similar delicacies, as well as the more basic crops.

Most Dime now speak a certain amount of Amharic. Obviously, proficiency varies according to the amount of contact a person has with the settlers, and the skill is more predominant in the North of the land. There is a corresponding variation in the fluency with which Amharas speak Dimaf. The major land-owners, who have many tenants to organise, obviously have much broader vocabularies than the many small-scale farmers with few tenants, or none at all. The main occasions on which Dime need to know Amharic are when dealing with policemen, who are seldom in the area long enough to master its language, and when engaging in trading trips to Basketo and Fellege Neway. Fluency in Amharic may present an individual with the opportunity to become a politically important figure (See Chapter 4).

iii - The Basketos

To the East of Dimam lies the larger and more populous land of Basketo, known as Gobe in Dimaf. The town of the same name is the District Government centre, and has a Court Room, Police Station, Government offices, Hotel, market place, and small shops. There are many outsiders of various ethnic identities, who have settled here on a temporary or permanent basis, on Government business or to trade. It is through Basketo town that 'Ethiopia' impinges on the Dime, and on the Amharas who live in Dimam.

The items available in the shops include many more luxurious ones than those peddled by itinerant traders to Dimam, such as

mouse traps, torches, pith-helmets, army great-coats, and umbrellas. Such items distinguish important men amongst the Basketos and Dime. Also available are cotton frocks and dresses, greatly desired by all women in Dimam, and a sure indication of the husband's wealth. The town is thus the major source of items of 'conspicuous consumption'.

But the above tells us little of the indigenous Basketos. Unfortunately no systematic investigation has yet taken place, and I have little information concerning them. It is at least true that they share with the Dime the caste type of social organization, with chiefs at the top, and despised groups, including blacksmiths, at the bottom. Many of them dress in the modern style and use the plough, mules, and even horses. From my casual observation, I would say that their current way of life is somewhere between that of the 'Ethiopians' and that of the Dime.

One of the important mechanisms which enables polygyny to flourish in Dimam is the influx of Basketo women. But the number of Dime women who go to Basketo is much smaller. It would be very interesting to know how Basketo men obtain sufficient wives, and what advantage there is for either the woman or her kin in allowing her to leave the more 'progressive' area and live in 'the bush', as Dimam is often called. Dime men maintain that they work harder and farm more that the Basketos, so that their wives have more to eat and drink. This is none too convincing since the Basketos farm larger terrace-free fields with ploughs. A possibility is that the Basketo women who come to live in Dimam are poor, or even of low caste, and have something to gain in terms of status and income. Obviously, enquiries along this line were not appreciated or answered. One point militates against the theory: I have never heard rumours alleging this of any of the Basketo women in my village. Since gossip is a major pastime, I feel sure that any guilty secrets would have emerged.

It is much easier to see why a Dime man might want a Basketo wife. Firstly, the Basketos are regarded as more modern than the Dime, and to marry one is in this respect a gain in status (although prejudices against outsiders also operate). Secondly, a man with trading ambitions gains a set of contacts in Basketo. Thirdly, his wife does not have relatives nearby, and may therefore hesitate to leave her husband, since she has no-one to harbour her during negotiations. This saves a man the time and money involved if his wife runs away frequently, as do many Dime women. If she does run away to her family, he can be reasonably certain that she will not return, and he may not even take the trouble to visit her home to find out. It seems probable that Basketo wives cause less of the minor disturbances which characterize married life in Dimam than do women within easier range of their family.

iv - The Bodis

The people referred to in earlier literature as Bodi call themselves Me'en, and are known to the Dime as Soogoor. The Dime claim never to intermarry with them, although I uncovered rare exceptions. I gained the impression that they are somewhat less in number than the Dime, perhaps in the region of 5,000 to 6,000. I had no time to stay with them, and made only one brief excursion to Ha:na, which is in their territory but untypical of it, since it is a police and Government outpost.

They are pastoralist in ethos, largely dependent on the produce of their cattle, but they also engage in cultivation along the banks of the Omo River, and, increasingly, within Dime territory.

Like the Dime, they have suffered greatly from the decimation of their herds by disease, and more recently by drought. In December 1973 there were extremely few cattle near Ha:na, where many should have been. It is this unfortunate lack of rain and consequent loss of stock which appears to have driven them to increased raiding of the Dime, for what few cattle the latter possess, as well as the somewhat paradoxical step of sending some of their number to live in Dimam. This is, however, a simplification of the issue, since the Bodi have to contend with their own pastoralist neighbours, the Mursi and Nyangatom, either of whom may be hostile towards them in time of pasture shortage.

The relationship between the Bodi and Dime is an extremely complex one, which works completely to the disadvantage of the latter. Until perhaps 20 years ago, there were still some Dime with large enough numbers of cattle to warrant herding them in the lowlands, near Bodi country. This took advantage of the good pasture there after the rains, and avoided the problem of large numbers of cattle near crops. However, it also presented a major temptation to the Bodis, who, it should be remembered, were never decimated by the Amharas, and had accumulated large quantities of guns and bullets by supplying valuable game products to Amhara traders. When the Dime were enslaved, they were not allowed guns, nor have they been able to purchase them in any large number since they became free men. Because of this advantage Bodis easily purloined the vast majority of the remaining Dime cattle.

Even after the booty had run out, they continued to raid the Dime, with increasing boldness as it became clear that neither the Amhara land-owners nor the police would try to stop them. The period

of 1968 to 1971 saw a one-sided 'war' in which the Bodis invaded large areas of Dimam, killing people at will, including children, and stealing whatever they could find. The motive behind these attacks does not appear to have been mere acquisitiveness. It seems probable that they wished to alter the Dime residence pattern, by pushing them away from the Western lowlands and adjacent areas, into the highland, where the majority live. This would leave empty a large area of land suitable both for grazing and farming. It would obviously be much easier to gain ground from the Dime than from their much more heavily-armed pastoralist neighbours. The specific impetus of the campaign was provided by several years of poor rainfall and pasturage, which pushed most of the cattle to the Omo river banks and thus created competition between cattle and crops for the same small strip of land.

As far as the Dime are concerned, no such explanations are needed. To them, the Bodi are innately fierce and cruel. They believe that a young Bodi man needs to kill an enemy before he can marry, and that he marks his successes by circular scars on the upper arm. I was unable to corroborate these opinions. They cite as triggers to the campaign the killing by a Dime of an Amhara who was supplying the Bodi with arms: and the gang rapes by Amharas on Bodi women attending Garo market. The Bodi were unable to directly retaliate against the Amharas, since this might lead to the cessation of gun trading, or even large-scale police intervention. But by killing Dime, they hurt both the victims and their Amhara 'masters', who lost labour and income because of the deaths and migrations.

The war would probably have continued for some time, but for the arrival in Dimam of the American Linguist and Anthropologist,

Professor H. Fleming, whose timely appeal to higher authorities led to an army expedition against the Bodi. Four of their chiefs were taken to Fellege Neway as prisoners, and some cattle were returned to the Dime, but died shortly afterwards. After this, raiding reverted to its normal intermittent pattern. Since the Dime have few guns, it is very rare for a Bodi to be killed during a raid, although this happened occasionally during my stay, once in a village only 15 minutes' walk from my own.

A most intriguing situation has developed in those areas of Dimam nearest to the Bodi lands. In the lower hamlet of ErXa, a considerable number of Bodi (perhaps 50) have taken up residence within the Dime village. They plant corn and sorghum (but not t'eff) and live in their own type of hut, which consists of branches bent over in a dome shape. These houses are neither waterproof, nor warm at night, and are ill-adapted to the climate of the higher ground on which they now stand. The people who live here are young men and married couples, who have elder brothers tending the family cattle near the Omo River, which is a one or two day's walk away. They augment their diet by regularly drinking with Dime 'friends' who are too scared to refuse them.

The Bodis resident in ErXa are young people who come only to farm, and bring no cattle with them. Others in Gerfa, Maga, and Belts'e have cattle and also farm. I was told that the two were 'different' Bodi, which I took to mean that they are from different named sections, although I have no accurate information on Bodi political structure. For those in ErXa the distance to their kin near the Omo River is small enough to make regular communication,

and possibly exchange of produce, feasible. But for those at Gerfa and nearby, this distance is considerably greater, and contact much more difficult. Further, Gerfa and its surrounding region contains much open grassland suitable for grazing, whereas ErXa is in general thickly forested. It therefore seems possible that the Bodi in Gerfa are self-sufficient family units containing middle-aged and young couples, both farmers and herders. Those in ErXa are definitely not such. Correspondingly, those in Gerfa live in discreet stockaded villages, while those in ErXa have only huts in their fields.

There is, of course, no historical information which might reveal whether this co-residence of Bodi and Dime is a unique occurrence. Certainly the increasing dryness, which has recently been near to drought, of the traditional Bodi grazing lands promises to bring the two peoples into ever closer contact. Since the Dime do not have the force to repel the immigrants, it seems likely that the 'invasion' will increase, and possibly spread to other areas of Dimam. What this will mean for relations between the two groups remains to be seen.

v - The Ch'aras

The inhabitants of Ch'ara, a mountain range to the North of the Omo River, have numerous connections with the Dime. Tradition says that the chief clans of Uth'a, together with their servants and helpers, migrated from this land in the long-forgotten past. There has always been a small amount of intermarriage between the two peoples, and more recently, during the war with the Bodis, many

Dime emigrated to this land to find a peaceful home. Dime with kin or affines there make the journey to visit them occasionally. Although the two languages are unrelated, a number of Ch'ara songs whose meaning is usually unknown have found their way into the Dime repertoire, as a result of this continuing contact. One Ch'ara diviner has become extremely well-known to the Dime, and his advice is often sought on matters of great importance. Dime say that Ch'ara is culturally similar to Dimam, and that the people have a stratified social system.

vi - The Siddo

One day to the South-East of Dimam lies Siddo, which is another of the lands to which many Dime fled during the recent war. Intermarriage is possible, but infrequent, and the languages are not related. Certain cultural features, such as girls's aprons of coloured beads, and funeral songs, have been adopted by some Dime.

vii - The Malo and Gofa

These two peoples, to the East and North East of the Dime occasionally intermarry with them. The languages are unrelated, although some Dime speak one or the other of them. Both peoples have been in considerable contact with the Sudan Interior Mission, and some converts are now being used as evangelists in Dimam (see Chapter 4).

viii - White People

The first known contact with white people came in 1896, when the Bottego Expedition was in Northern Dimam for one week. In 1930, a German hunting expedition was briefly in the area, and made a film of iron smelting and forging.

For about 4 years, between 1936 and 1940, a large number of Italian soldiers were residents, with a base in Maga, in Southern Dimam. It is said that when they left they buried their possessions near the camp, but no-one dares dig them up for fear of the 'bombas' which are protecting them. Many Dime who were alive before the Italian occupation say that it saved the people from extinction by the ever more demanding Amharas. It is at least true that after it the Amharas never regained their total domination of the Dime.

The first modern ethnographical study was conducted in 1951 by Professor Eike Haberland, who was in Dimam for almost a month, mainly in Dinge (Ganchire), but also in Uth'a. His article, 'Die Dime', was published in 'Altvolker Sud-Athiopiens', edited by Jensen. I do not wish to discuss the report here, since I hope to examine it in some detail at a later date. I cite from it occasionally during the course of this work, but the brevity of Haberland's visit obviously necessitates cautious use of his findings.

In 1971-2, the American Linguist and Anthropologist, Professor H.A. Fleming, was in the area intermittently, with a total presence of about 3 months. So far one linguistic article has resulted from this research, but no ethnography has yet been published.

My own stay was from 7th January until 17th June 1973, and from 2nd August 73 until January 74. My wife, who was collecting material on Dime iron-working, was present until October 1973. Our

home was in Woch'o village, Uth'a chiefdom, next door to the Chikashum, whose title means literally 'mud chief', and translates approximately as 'Headman'. He was the only Dime to hold a Government position, and was our friend and helper throughout our stay.

In general, the Dime were not too disturbed by white people, although some young children, who had not seen such specimens before, ran screaming into the bush, and refused to return. The reaction of adults was a mixture of astonishment, curiosity, amusement, and, especially in the beginnning, distrust. My spectacles were often regarded as a sure sign of 'evil eye', and many rumours of our deeds in this direction were gleefully reported to us by friends.

Some years prior to my stay, a member of staff of the Sudan Interior Mission's post in Bulki had visited Dimam, and made preliminary investigations in Garo. While I was in the field two other members of the staff came in by mule, and cleared a landing strip. This they used to fly in the wife of the first mission dresser in Garo (see Chapter 4) and fly out the leading Amhara's wife, who was dangerously ill (see P. 214). After this, the police decided that official permission had not been granted, and placed tree trunks along the run-way.

At the same time as preparations were being made for the air-strip, the Mission established in Garo a clinic, manned by a trained dresser from Wollamo. This was still being evaluated by both Dime and Amharas when I left. It seems probable that the Dime will be in increasing contact with the Mission, and that the relationship will be an uneasy one, since the Missionaries advocate teetotalism and monogamy, neither of which seem attractive to most Dime (see Chapter 4).

CONCLUSIONS

Certain factors in those areas of the social environment so far discussed have, or had, important effects on the political structure which is the target of analysis. At the turn of the century the population was greatly reduced, from perhaps 20,000 to 7,000, by the Amhara invaders. This tragic loss has not been replenished, and the chiefdoms are accordingly less populous than previously. For about 40 years, the politico-religious system was suspended, and the power of the chiefs dormant.

The Italians may well have saved Dime society from total collapse, and freedom led to the revival of Dime politics to a limited extent. After the Italian interlude the inhabitants of those areas where the majority of Amharas remained, notably Uth'a and Garo, became more 'progressive' than those of less colonised areas. Thus new types of leaders are most likely to emerge in the North of the country.

The early Amhara settlers, using Christianity as a charter for domination and exploitation, sold many thousands of Dime as slaves and made the remainder work for them for minimal return. The land, which had previously belonged to clans, became the private property of Amharas. New elements were introduced, including money and markets, both of which were readily adopted by the Dime. Many learned the new language, which was needed for legal activities and trading. Whereas the old system of moots had been open to all, the new system was an area accessible only to those who spoke fluent Amharic, and who knew the ways of officialdom.

From most of their neighbours the Dime borrow cultural elements, and with some they also intermarry. Polygyny, which is related to

political status (see chapter 2), is partly maintained by the influx of Basketo women. Shamanism came from the same people and created new political possibilities.

Those cattle not killed by disease were stolen by the Bodis. Raiding increased so much in 1970-71, that it became a different phenomenon - war. Losses of men and cattle were signs of the political impotence of particular chiefs, and perhaps even of chiefship itself. Furthermore, Bodi began to take up residence in Dimam, blurring one of the accepted distinctions between the two groups.

The land of the Ch'ara is cited in the myth of the Dime chiefs, and helps to legitimate their status as politico-religious leaders; but the recent migration to that land because of the Bodi war detracts from the current chiefs' position.

Recently, missionaries have begun to take an interest in the Dime, and established a church, run mainly by Malo and Gofa converts. A clinic followed shortly. The political implications of this new presence are not yet clear, but it seems likely to be important in the future (see Chapter 4).

Figure 2 summarizes the inputs into the political structure from those aspects of the social environment so far covered. These will become clearer when I examine the political structure itself in Chapter 3.

HISTORY

NEIGHBOURS

ii - Amhara invasion

Slavery. Chiefs' political power minimal for forty years.

Population reduction from 20,000 to 7,000.

Land ownership removed from clans to Amhara individuals. Relationship between clanship and territory disturbed. Members of politically important clans no longer necessarily together.

viii - Mission

Threat to religious basis of chiefdom? Possibly new political resources of literacy and patronage.

iii - Basketos

Shamanism enters Dimam, and creates a new politico-religious possibility.

POLITICAL STRUCTURE

CHIEFSHIP

viii - Italian Invasion

Freedom. Possibility of chiefs as political leaders returns.

ii - Italians removed

Beginning of Ethiopian bureaucratic presence in region. Government courts, Police Posts, Taxes.

Chief not important as jural figure. New possibilities occur for political leadership for those with knowledge of Amharic and Government procedure.

iv Bodis

Cattle- raiding, followed by warfare. Loss of men and cattle. Failure of chiefs to protect subjects and property.

Bodis move into southern regions. Presence in some chiefdoms of people who are not subjects of the chief.

v - Charas

Myth of legitimation. Dime flee to Ch'ara; lack of faith in chief's power to protect his subjects.

Figure 2. Social Environment and Political Structure.

CHAPTER TWO

CASTE, KINSHIP, AND MARRIAGE

In this chapter, I examine the immediate social environment of the Dime political structure, namely the 'rules' and practices concerning caste, kinship and marriage. The most basic set of rules, which concerns caste, is also a defining criterion for office-holding in the political structure. Before describing the phenomenon which I have labelled caste, I find it necessary to defend the use of this term in a non-Hindu context, since, although eminent Indologists have stated that it is inappropriate so to do, Africanists continue to use it with varying degrees of imprecision.

SECTION A - CASTE IN AFRICA

i - Caste as an Indian Phenomenon

The essence of caste in India is not easily discovered, since there appear to be major discrepancies between the opinions of the main authorities on the subject. It is with Dumont's theoretically oriented work, "Homo Hierarchicus" that I begin, since in it he concludes that there are no castes among non-Hindus, or outside India.

For Dumont the "hierarchical disjunction" between "status" and "power" provides what he appears to regard as a causal explanation of many of the features of the Indian Caste System; (if any recognizable pan-Indian system exists at all). " The decisive step in its historical establishment was probably when the Brahmans were

attributed the monopoly of religious functions as against the King. From this flowed two fundamental facts; the existence of the pure type of hierarchy, completely separated from that with which hierarchy is usually mixed, namely power; and the form of this hierarchy, namely the opposition between the pure and the impure " (Dumont, 1972, P 259).

Thus we have, according to Dumont, a cause, the elevation of Brahmans above Royals in terms of religiosity; and a two-fold effect - a) a "pure type of hierarchy", said to exclude power, and b) the form of the hierarchy, namely the opposition between the pure and the impure.

But neither of these "effects" appear to be so. The hierarchy by no means excludes power, it merely subordinates it to status. " Power is subordinate to status in its direct relationship to it, and it is surreptitiously assimilated to status in a secondary capacity in opposition to everything else " (Dumont, 1972, P259). As for the second effect; the form of the hierarchy cannot be explained simply in terms of the dichotomy of pure and impure, since this does not explain the elevation of Brahmins over Royals, who are not "impure" but "non-pure".

Dumont concludes; " the caste system can be characterized for the purpose of comparison - partially no doubt, but adequately - by the disjunction we have described between status and power. We shall say that there is caste only where this characteristic is present, and we shall request that any society lacking this characteristic, even if it is made up of permanent and closed status groups, be classified under another label " (Dumont, 1972, P260).

If we turn briefly to a work with an emphasis on empirical data rather than ideology, we find that the "disjunction" itself

may be illusory. In "Caste, Class and Power", Beteille examines an Indian village community undergoing political, economic, and social change. He characterizes the "traditional" village structure as being one in which Brahmans held both high ritual status, and the majority of the land, which was the source of power. The non-Brahmans, apart from one family, owned little land, and were primarily agricultural workers and artisans. The polluting, landless Adi Dravidas provided the majority of unskilled labour.

According to this account, in the traditional village, the "hierarchical disjunction between status and power" was thus nowhere to be found. If this is indeed the essential feature of caste, we can only conclude that the category must be limited to those specific regions of Hindu India which happen to fulfill Dumont's criteria. This makes caste a concept of such limited comparative utility that three of the four 'caste' systems included in Leach's symposium "Aspects of Caste" prove, on closer examination, to be ineligible.

Thus in Jaffna, according to Banks, " The deference that a Vellala customarily offers to a Brahman is to his office as a priest rather than to his caste " (Leach, Ed, 1960, P68). Or as Professor Leach puts it; " The high social status of the Brahmans and of the other ritual "twice born" has disappeared. The dominant caste, the Vellala, are not ritually speaking "twice born" at all " (Leach, Ed, 1960, P 3).

The Kandyan Sinhalese village studied by Yalman goes even further awry; there are no Brahmans, the people are Buddhists, and the priesthood is not confined to a single caste. Dumont says of Ceylon in general; " We see therefore that the supremacy of the priest is an Indian fact which has remained unexportable: India has exported quasi-caste rather than caste proper " (Dumont, 1972, P263).

The "caste" system discussed in the final essay of the collection, that of the Swat Pathans, is dismissed by Dumont, since: " the fundamental opposition is not that of purity, but that between 'patrons' and 'clients' (dominants and dominated). Within the dominant group there is a secondary distinction between 'Saints' and 'Pakhtuns ..... The Hindu system is here beheaded, subordinated to a different system ".

Leach, in his Introduction to the collection reiterates Dumont's geographical limitations of caste and adds that; " those who apply the term to contexts wholly remote from the Indian world invariably go astray ". He places his main emphasis on intercaste relationships:- caste " is a system of labour division from which the element of competition among the workers has been largely excluded ..... Economic roles are allocated by right to closed minority groups of low social status; members of the high-status "dominant caste", to whom the low-status groups are bound, generally form a numerical majority, and must compete among themselves for the services of individual members of the lower 'castes' " (Leach, Ed, 1960, P6).

He continues, " The cultural rules of caste behaviour establish a dichotomy in the total field of social relationships - political, economic and ritual relations are external, kinship relations are exclusively internal ..... Caste therefore does not simply isolate an elite; instead it defines the structural role of every sector in a total organic system ".

This emphasis on features of the division of labour in caste societies does not prove the case for limiting the term to Indian contexts. The "crucial fact" for Leach is "that caste is a system of interrelationship and that every caste in a caste system has its

special privileges ". The concept of "special privileges" is one which seems to need some modification. If we examine the figures for Kumbapettai, the 'classic' caste community studied by Kathleen Gough, and presented in the symposium, we find that members of the largest single group are landless labourers. This suggests that only those at the top and bottom of the hierarchy have caste 'privileges'. Those in the middle, who may well be the majority, have none. Further, when Leach refers to the allocation of roles "by right to closed minority groups of low social status" the main groups to which the argument can be applied in Kumbapettai are the craftsmen, Toddy Tappers, and washermen, who in fact span three different social statuses from 'clean' to 'polluting'. At which level does "low social status" enter the field as an explanatory principle ?

Whereas Dumont emphasizes ideology, Beteille and Leach concentrate on caste "on the ground". If we accept the former, we must categorize as 'quasi-caste' even those parts of India where the status-power disjunction is not evident. This seems an unnecessarily limiting approach. If we adopt the Leachian view, we must first look at the division of labour in society. When we find that the Indian case is not unique, we will doubt the undefended assertion that caste is strictly a Hindu phenomenon.

ii - Caste in Africa

The term 'caste' has been used frequently and carelessly by Africanists (among others) to describe certain systems of social stratification. A brief survey of some of the literature will enable us to see whether the various authors are discussing truly comparable phenomena.

A) Nadel; "Caste and Government in Primitive Society".

I cite first a somewhat confused paper by S.F. Nadel, entitled "Caste and Government in Primitive Society" (Nadel, 1954), in which the author discusses three different African societies. These are; the Nupe and Fulani of Nigeria, the Beni Amer on the borders of the Sudan and Eritrea, and the Tira of Central Sudan.

i) Nupe

The Nupe were conquered by Fulani in the 18th century. Descendants of the conquerors became a ruling dynasty, which is numerically "insignificant" (P12), but controls the main economic resource - the land. Members of the dynasty lease land to clients, or settle slaves on it. The dynasty is classified as an "hereditary aristocracy" by Nadel, and it has an ideology of purity of descent, although marriage between Fulani men and non-Fulani women is frequent.

Below the dynasty, but "its equal in actual power" (P12), although this seems unlikely from Nadel's own evidence, lie a military and a civic nobility. These include Fulani and Nupe alike, as well as members of other tribes who had risen to eminence in the service of the kingdom. Members of the nobility had rank, privileges, and the chance of being rewarded with conquered land. There were openings for capable men regardless of descent.

Nadel sees the situation as an example of social stratification resulting from conquest, part of which is a 'caste' stratification, " if by caste we mean the rigid and unalterable apportionment of social privileges on the grounds of descent ". Partly it is a class system which permits social mobility (P 13).

ii) The Beni Amer

The Beni Amer form "the ruling class" of a heterogeneous society (P 14). Below them is a population of "serfs" of varying ethnic

origin, who were either conquered, or immigrated into the area.

" As among the Nupe, the ruling group is a small minority. Again, rights and privileges are rigidly divided according to descent and blood. The Beni Amer constitute the aristocrats, whose only pursuit used to be war: they are the owners of the main form of wealth in the country, cattle " (P 14). They also claim all land, whether used for farming or grazing. Serfs herd the livestock, milk the cows, and generally carry out the necessary tasks.

No intermarriage is permitted between the strata, although Beni Amer men may have serfs as concubines, in which case the offspring is classed as a serf.

Nadel says of this stratification:- " We may legitimately call it a "caste" structure, noting that the stratification once more goes together with ethnic heterogeneity and conquest. And this brings us to the question ..... is this the only way in which castes arise .... as a side issue of government by conquest ?" (P 15).

iii) The Tira of Central Sudan

There are a number of clans, distinguished by food taboos or ritual observances, which vary from clan to clan. " There is no differentiation in ordinary occupation, all being farmers and owners of livestock. But there is an important differentiation in ritual rights and obligations. For each clan is believed to possess certain supernatural powers peculiar to it and to no other clan, which enable it to control a part of the universe ..... so that, together, the clans ensure, in a supernatural sense, the survival of the tribe ..

We have here some of the characteristics of castes - group membership rigidly bound up with descent; differentiation of rights and obligations; and the conception of mutual inter-dependence of

a mystic and pre-ordained kind. In two of the Tira clans a fourth feature also enters, namely the aspect of a stigma attaching to the people in question .... One of these clans is believed to possess the power to control storms, and to cure or ward off lunacy ..... Yet the people who perform these essential and beneficial tasks are, for the very reason of their power, feared and avoided ..... no-one will eat or drink with them, or visit their houses. In practice then, the members of the lunacy clan are "untouchables" and isolated from the general life of the community " (P 18-20).

iv) Nadel's Summary

Nadel states that the situations of the Fulani and Beni Amer lack one feature which is crucial in India. " In India, the barriers between the castes ..... apart from being accepted as a state of affairs 'as it should be' also have the sanction of a state of affairs divinely proclaimed .... if there is no commerce between high and low castes in India, it is because contact would imply not only degredation (as amongst the Fulani and Beni Amer) but pollution, some contamination with impurity. In other words, to the distinction of status and dignity, we must add that of spiritual purity and perfection ..... caste systems of this kind then .. imply not only an inequality in rights and duties, but some inter-dependence between them " (Ps 16-18).

It is in order "to show that the same conceptions of a mystic inter-dependence, and of a mystically sanctioned inequality, degredation, even untouchability, occur also outside India, among certain truly primitive groups in Africa .. " (P 18) that he introduces the Tira material. However, he himself admits that their system is far from a caste one.

v) Conclusions on Nadel's Paper

It is clear that Nadel's three main examples are very far from 'caste' in any except the most liberal use of the term. Whereas Dumont appears to limit the term so much that it has no cross-cultural significance, Nadel goes to the opposite extreme of making it so general that it has no analytic utility.

In the case of the Nupe, he assumes that we can talk of 'caste' when there is only one group, a ruling aristocracy, which has an ideology of endogamy. When we talk of caste, as is clear from all Indologists, we must refer to a system which encompasses all strata of society. Nadel's classification of the ruling dynasty as an aristocracy is significant in the light of Leach's distinction between an aristocracy and a caste in his Introduction to the Cambridge symposium:- aristocratic behaviour "serves to distinguish and separate the rulers from the ruled. In contrast, in a caste system, caste behaviour is something which pervades the whole society ", (Leach, Ed, 1960, P 9). Further, an aristocracy is always a numerical minority, whereas a high caste may well be a majority group. Nadel himself admits that the secular nature of the system makes it inappropriate as an illustration of caste.

With the Beni Amer, we again have two blocs and not a system. The ruling group is a "small minority" and there is no religious ideology.

The resemblance between the Tira situation and a caste system is minimal. Those clans which Nadel calls "untouchables" are in fact groups with positive ritual power - they are dangerous rather than polluting. There is no economic element in the system, no exogamy, and no over-riding hierarchy.

I conclude that Nadel did not find 'caste' in any meaningful sense of the term in Africa.

B) The Ruanda

Maquet's work "The Premise of Inequality in Ruanda" made a much more successful attempt at presenting an African society in terms of caste. The ethnography is so well-known that I present here only the briefest outline. The ethnographic present refers to 1956, and ignores later developments. There are three distinct groups:- The Tutsi, who are aristocrats and pastoralists, and constitute some 16% of the population; the Hutu, who are farmers and commoners (83%); and the Twa, who are hunters and craftsmen, and constitute less than 1%.

Inter-caste marriage between Tutsi and Hutu is not banned, but a Tutsi marries down only if he is very poor, and a Hutu marries up only if he is very rich and aspires to become like a Tutsi. Both regard the possibility of marrying a Twa as an insult.

Maquet works from a definition of caste offered by Lowie :- " a caste society is one composed of several graded groups, each of which is endogamous and practising an hereditary occupation, membership of which can be obtained only by birth " (Maquet, 1961, P 135).

In Ruanda, membership by birth generally holds. Endogamy is at least favoured amongst Tutsi and Hutu and obtains with regard to the Twa. There are hereditary occupations. The groups are 'graded', and the Tutsi use racial stereotypes as "proof of their different nature, which entitled them to rule" (P 147). In essence Maquet's theory of caste is a conquest one: the Tutsi conquered the other

two groups, and " a caste society evolved from their will to stabilize the conquest situation with all its advantages ..... The most obvious rationalization of a caste structure is the belief that there are inborn and fundamental differences between the members of different castes .... A racial theory seems the only ideology perfectly consistent with a caste structure ".

The merit of Maquet's analysis is that it shows the ideology, the economic system, and the mechanism which holds the two together, namely the "buhake" clientship system: "the only means permitting the protection of socially weak individuals without destroying the unequal participation of the groups in social power".

There are however two problems to be settled before we can regard the Ruanda situation as one of caste. The first returns us to Leach's distinction between an aristocracy and a high caste, and illustrates the fineness of that distinction. One criterion is statistical: " Whereas a ruling aristocracy is invariably a numerical minority, a dominant caste may be, and usually is, a majority element in the total population ". But where do we draw the line? The Tutsi, at 16.59% of the Ruanda population compare well with Gough's estimate for Brahmans in Tanjore District as about 1/15th of the population. But in Kumbapettai, the village with which she was mainly concerned, the Brahmans were nearly 1/3rd of the population, and owned almost all of the land (Leach, Ed, 1960, P 18). In short, depending on which statistic one uses, one can change an aristocracy into a dominant caste and back at the turn of a page.

The second and more fundamental difficulty with this material concerns the difference noted by Nadel between African and Indian societies. Whereas for the Ruanda the difference between groups are "as it should be" and backed by ethnic stereotypes, in India

the order is "divinely proclaimed". Leach does not seem to see such ideological factors as a crucial feature of caste, but concentrates on a more observable feature, the division of labour. By this criterion, we must say that the Ruanda have caste. But this economic approach does not seem to provide an adequate distinction between caste and quasi-caste. We must, I believe, conclude that 'caste' has a characteristic all-embracing division of labour, as cited by Leach, and that this division of labour is divinely approved, and protected by pollution concepts and practices. This combination provides us with a useful cross-cultural approach to caste, which still has analytic utility *1. By it, it appears that the Ruanda do not have caste, but "quasi caste", as Dumont would say.

Professor Mair, in her work "African Societies" (Mair, 1974) comes to a similar conclusion. She notes that, " Descriptions of Rwanda give it the superficial appearance of a caste system by saying that there are <u>three</u> divisions ..... I have barely mentioned the Twa, and I have done this deliberately. As a population they are not part of an ongoing system of economic co-operation" (op. cit. P 179). As between the Tutsi and Hutu, with regard to cattle, " The Tutsi have a monopoly of <u>ownership</u>, but certainly not of occupation " P 179). Furthermore, a study by Gravel suggests " that certain Hutu descent groups were able to assert a prescriptive right to the position of hill-chief of their lineage land. Members of these

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*1. If it is accepted that the term 'caste' implies a <u>system</u> with a divinely approved and all embracing division of labour, we can reject the so-called "Caste School of Race Relations" which has flourished in the United States. Dumont, in his article entitled "Caste, Racism and 'stratification': Reflections of a Social Anthropologist" (1961), presents a forceful, and in my opinion successful, refutation of "Warner and his school". He notes that Oliver Cox (1944 and 1948) has already stated the crucial objection to regarding American 'racial' distinctions as 'caste": namely that "the Indian system is a coherent social system based on the principle

lineages were treated with respect, and had a say in political decision. Those who became powerful were not crushed by any kind of sanction but - held to be Tutsi " (Mair, P174). In other words, individual mobility was possible.

Mair concludes by approving Lemarchand's assessment of the situation in Ruanda, and neighbouring Burundi, whereby each category is known as an "ethnic stratum".

We must now search for African peoples with a divinely-approved division of labour, protected by pollution concepts. Nadel observed that there are in Africa endogamous "castes" of blacksmiths, which are " bound to their occupation by descent, and not only feared, but distinctly despised, shunned and avoided. Yet they are a vital section of the tribes to which they belong, providing the tools for farmers and weapons for hunters or warriors .... Finally, their position is mystically sanctioned and conceived of as pre-ordained: in myths and cosmologies the blacksmiths are specifically mentioned among the first ancestors of man, already his benefactors and already bearing the stigma of their descent and calling " (Nadel, 1954, P21). I discuss first two examples from the literature on Southern Ethiopia, and then present some of my own data.

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of inequality, while the American 'color bar' contradicts the equalitarian system within which it occurs and of which it is a kind of disease " (Dumont, quoted in Beteille, Ed, 1969, P348).

Since I am here concerned with the utility of the concept of caste in African situations, I cannot further discuss the American debate on this occasion.

C) The Gurage

W. Shack in his brief, "Notes on Occupational Castes among the Gurage of South-West Ethiopia" (Man 1964), deals with the relations between the Gurage (500,000) and the despised "Fuga" (5,000). He uses the term Fuga in two senses; firstly to cover the three classes of craftsmen - (woodworkers, smiths, and tanners) - and secondly to mean specifically woodworkers. This procedure leads to some difficulty in deciding to which group he is referring in places, but I shall use the term in its broader sense unless otherwise stated.

There are seven Gurage tribes (houses) with a small Fuga population in each, although not in every village. Fuga can settle in one of two ways:- a small plot of common land is set aside for them at the edge of the village, and they live and farm on it; or " a wealthy Gurage will permit a Fuga to erect a hut on his land at a "safe" distance behind the homestead, in which case the landowner enjoys the right of priority over the services which the Fuga performs for a village ".

" Because Gurage fear contamination from direct contact with Fuga they are forbidden to enter Gurage homesteads without permission, which in fact means until the occupants are at a safe distance, after which the homestead must be ritually cleansed ". Intermarriage is forbidden.

Fuga are not allowed to own land, and may not cultivate ensete, the staple food crop of the Gurage. Nor may they cross an ensete field or herd cattle. " These prohibitions are ritual safeguards for the Gurage, who believe that Fuga will destroy the fertility of the soil, injure the breeding capabilities of cattle, and

change the milk of a cow into blood or urine . : occupations which the Fuga perform are to the Gurage despicable, and to hunt, or eat large game (as the Eastern Fuga do) is ignoble. Reinforcing these attitudes is the belief that Fuga take the form of hyenas at night, and consume all the domestic animals that have died in the village ".

During times of war, it is said "that Fuga remained in the village lest their presence, which is commonly associated with evil-eye, should bring defeat to Gurage warriors; neither could they carry spears .. ". Legal matters between Gurage and Fuga are regulated by a village council, but behaviour between Fuga is governed by their own legal code, and Gurage do not intervene.

Woodworking Fuga render many services to the community, including felling trees, constructing essential sections of Gurage houses, and assisting in Gurage burials. "They receive no direct payment for these services, but at Festival times Fuga are given ... the lower part of the back feet .... of any animal that is slaughtered by the villagers ".

Shack sees Fuga as a "low caste .... in a caste society in which certain privileges are associated with the 'high-caste' position occupied by the dominant group ... Paraphrasing Leach, specific economic and ritual roles are allocated by 'right' to the minority low-caste Fuga, to whom the numerically large Gurage must compete among themselves for the services of individual members of the lower caste".

Fuga produce both "mundane utility items" and the digging stick, "the basic implement used in Gurage horticulture", without which the staple crop ensete could not be cultivated. "In this, the inter-dependence of Gurage-Fuga relationships is strengthened by the fact

that land cultivated only with äsät (ensete) is an index of high status to the Gurage, and attainment of status is made dependent on the labours and skills of the low-status Fuga". Fuga, especially woodworkers, also play a significant role in Gurage religious life. Thus, "while certain economic and ritual privileges accrue to low-caste Fuga, as caste sanctions and behaviour eliminate Gurage competition in these areas", at the same time Fuga have "separate but equal" legal rights which safeguard their persons and property. "It is a system which does not simply isolate a group of elite Gurage; instead it defines the structural role of Gurage and Fuga in the total system" (Shack, 1964, all quotes from pps 50-52).

The "system" has two basic blocs - the cultivators and craftsmen. The status of cultivators is not really that of a "pure" high caste, they are simply the majority of the populace who are not impure. From the classical examples of Indian caste it would seem that such a system must have three tiers; pure, non-pure, and impure. But, as I noted earlier, even in the Kandyan hills of Ceylon, as reported by Yalman, there are only two blocs, cultivators and craftsmen, and a total of five castes. An important point that does not emerge clearly from Shack's account, is whether the three different groups of craftsmen are hierarchically ranked. If they are not, and we have simply two unequal groups, it seems an overstatement to refer to this as a "caste system".

D) The Konso

In his work "The Konso of Ethiopia", C. Hallpike describes a somewhat similar situation to that obtaining between Gurage and

Fuga. Amongst the Konso, there are craftsmen groups of smiths, weavers, potters and tanners. They do not live in separate villages, and in terms of dress, speech and dwellings are the same as their hosts, although they are "more negroid" than them.

"Before 1897 (when the Amharas invaded the region) they owned little or no land, and cultivators would not eat or drink with them, and certainly not marry them. This situation has slowly changed .. and many craftsmen now have land, and eat and drink with cultivators, but cultivators still regard marriage with them as disgraceful .. . Now some cultivators have taken up weaving, which is disapproved of; although there is less prejudice against weaving than smithing, potting or tanning .... this is quite possibly the result of the money that can be made from weaving"; which seems an unlikely explanation if we regard the distinctive nature of a caste system as partly lying in the economic monopolies held by the lower castes.

Within the craftsmen, there is no noticeable hierarchy, and when smiths become too old to hammer they sometimes take up weaving. "But in spite of the entry of cultivators into the ranks of craftsmen, and the increasing number of craftsmen who are buying fields, if one is born a cultivator one can never become a 'craftsman' merely by taking up weaving, and a craftsman does not become a cultivator by acquiring fields. Status is conferred by birth, and nothing can ever alter it. It is said that even if a craftsman has fields, he ... can only grow weeds. In popular imagination they prefer to spend their money on drink and meat, rather than invest it in land " (P 141).

Craftsmen bury and are buried by ward members without distinction. They are not excluded from the valued enterprises of hunting and killing enemies. They have their own lineage priests, but are not admitted to ward or town councils. Hallpike says, "One reason

I was given for this was that if a raid or other hostile activity against another town were being planned, the craftsmen would go over and warn them from no other motive than spite and disloyalty" (P 141).

They were excluded partially or totally from the age-grading system, and where the grading practises were not so strict , and they were allowed into the system, they performed the ritual functions of outsiders.

The author goes on to analyse the situation in the following terms:- "It is a basic feature of Konso culture to give symbolic values to various tasks and materials, which are associated with groups" (P 143). The four crafts themselves have symbolic values.

"Cotton is an inauspicious substance for the Konso. It ripens in the hot months .. it is white, the colour of bone and death. For these reasons, which were explicitly stated to me, it is often forbidden even to spin it in the most sacred places" (P 143).

"In the case of pottery, someone once said to me that it was 'bad' to treat earth as food, grinding it, mixing water with it ... instead of tilling it and sowing seed in it .... While ideas of the natural and the unnatural are not prominent in Konso thought, in this case I think it is a genuine basis for their dislike of making pottery.

That there should be any religious prejudice against iron-working and tanning is harder to demonstrate. Fire among the Konso is closely associated with the production of food. I would suggest that for them the use of it to 'cook' earth as was done in the past when iron came to Konso in the form of ore that had to be smelted, is unnatural. Moreover fire, though useful, is regarded with aversion on most occasions as a hostile and destructive force; dreams

of fire are evil portents. Earth on the other hand is regarded as the source of life. So besides the unnatural use of fire to cook earth in smelting, and also iron, an inedible substance, in the later stages of work at the anvil, there is the religious opposition of earth and fire. In the case of tanning we encounter the Konso horror of death. While the drying of skins in the sun is done by everyone, the lengthy treatment of skins is relegated to the craftsmen, in all probability because of their association with death" (P 143).

He goes on to say that the reason the Konso use these articles, even though it is 'bad' to make them, is because "they differentiate between the finished article and the process of manufacture ... . Moreover, where only the actual process of manufacture is held to be unnatural, as with ironworking or pottery, this stigma will not affect the finished goods. In the case of cotton, where the material itself is inauspicious, I think it is likely that, by being made into something of totally different appearance, the nature of the material itself is felt to be different " (P 144). This theory is, to say the least, rather speculative.

Woodworking is said to be indigenous to the cultivators, and "wood is an inoffensive substance that is not subject to any taboos in their religion" (P 144).

Hallpike realises that these may not be "the sole or even the main factors" contributing to the status of craftsmen. It is said that in times of famine, craftsmen used to sell their children to a neighbouring tribe, and because of this the Konso ostracized them. They saw this as "characteristic of the craftsman's general attitude towards his fellow men: an attitude which looks on them merely as means to his own selfish ends" (P 145).

He cites other factors, all of which are equally unconvincing as an explanation of the position of craftsmen. Although he realises that the stories he was told may be a Konso "caricature" of the craftsmen, he does not try to get beyond this level. For him the hostility between the cultivators and craftsmen is "the result of a clash of values. The craftsmen were considered to ignore the canons of social harmony, loyalty, and co-operation so deeply valued by the cultivators, thereby putting themselves outside the pale of true Konso society".

Clearly, we are again dealing with a basic two-bloc system, and not with a ranked hierarchy of groups. We have simply the great majority, who are cultivators, ranked higher than the small minority of craftsmen, who are not internally ranked. As with the Gurage, the group at the top of the system are not truly pure. In the absence of an overall hierarchical system, it does not appear advisable to call either the Fuga, or the Konso craftsmen, castes.

E) The Dime

Amongst the Dime there are seven 'castes' which vary greatly in size. They are all ranked, in an order which depends on considerations of purity, non-purity, and impurity. The chief and priest castes are pure, commoners are non-pure, and ritual servants (Kaisaf), hunters, smiths and tanners are impure. Membership of a caste is by birth, and cannot be lost, except by leaving Dimam, or becoming the servant of an Amhara. The castes are ideologically endogamous, but an unscientifically collected sample suggests that this rule is followed with varying degrees of flexibility amongst the castes.

Marriages by Caste

	Female					
	Chief	Priest	Common	Kaisaf	Smith	Total
Male						
Chief	37	7	24	2	0	70
Priest	12	3	8	1	0	24
Common	11	17	38	1	0	67
Kaisaf	1	2	1	1	0	5
Smith	0	0	0	0	10	10
	61	29	71	5	10	176

Figure Three

The Basketos (see Chapter 1) have a similar caste hierarchy, and Basketo women who marry Dime men are fitted into the system by their husbands if they are of a high caste. If a man has taken a spouse from a Basketo chief clan, he will describe her as such, but if she is from a less desirable clan he will simply describe her as a Basketo, which carries a certain amount of status.

Members of the dominant ethnic group, the Amharas, do not recognize the caste system, and ignore its prohibitions on the grounds that one 'slave' is much like another. Many Dime say that the system has become less rigid since the Amharas arrived, and that the castes were truly endogamous before then. This view is impossible to evaluate. The Amhara presence has certainly created one new possibility - that of 'losing' one's caste by becoming the personal servant of one of them.

The two "pure" groups are so because of their privileged access to the gods and spirits which control the life of the entire people. "Purity" is a potential state which is most closely approximated by the office-holder within the group. Thus the highest member of the highest caste, the chief of an area, has comprehensive dietary restrictions, avoids eating with anyone in case they are temporarily polluting, rarely visits people in their homes, and avoids contact with members of "impure" castes at all costs. For those periods when purity is most crucial, namely before making sacrifice, he has a special house into which he retreats for isolation. It is said that, in the past, all members of the chief caste kept and ate exclusively cows, but now only a chief, or someone aspiring to this position, avoids sheep, goats, chickens and eggs.

In the second "pure" caste it is again the office-holder, the Bakob, or priest, who most clearly approximates the ideal. He too eats beef but not other types of meat, and has a special ritual house into which he retreats before attending a sacrifice. Other members of this caste should also avoid the forbidden meats and eggs, but in practice only those hoping to make a claim to office follow the rules closely.

With regard to the ideal of caste endogamy, the clearest barrier is against marrying an "impure" person, although it can be seen from the table that this does occur on rare occasions. Such a step is a clear denial of obligations to one's caste, and may lead to measures against the people involved. In the village where I spent most of my time, there were three such 'banned' marriages. In one case a Kaisaf man had married a woman of a priestly clan, and settled in her home village. Members of the priestly clan sought to

draw him into fights by insulting him, or beating his wife - if he retaliated, he found several members of the wife's clan against him, and he was once seriously wounded in a spear fight with two of them. The other two forbidden matches were contracted by one man, the Chikashum of the Dime (see Chapter 4), who in many ways regards himself as outside of the caste system. When one of the wives in question died, the man's peers and members of the chief caste refused to participate in the funeral sacrifices, feasting and drinking, on the grounds thatthis would pollute them.

Although there are no sanctions applied against "pure" people who marry commoners, such marriages are much less prestigious than 'correct' ones, and people tend to upgrade their spouses when discussing them with strangers. This was particularly noticeable with regard to my census-taking activities, and made 'objective' figures of cross-caste marriages difficult to obtain.

The commoner caste is ideologically residual - its members have neither the possibility of that purity which brings devout members of the two higher castes into close relationship with gods and spirits, nor the polluting impurity of the lower castes. Commoners interdine freely with members of the chief and priest castes, and may enter their houses.

The hunter caste is the highest impure one and has become an anomaly in the system. Its members live mainly in the lowland bush between Dimam and Basketo, and make their living by hunting and stealing. By trading skins with various Amhara gun-runners, they have managed to acquire for themselves a considerable number of rifles and bullets. This fire power, coupled with the extreme difficulty of locating skilled hunters in the extensive lowland bush,

has made them very much a law unto themselves. Now, if a hunter wants to marry a girl of higher caste, her parents will not generally refuse the offer too strongly for fear of retribution. The corresponding hypergamous unions do not occur. Since it is not possible to refuse hunters wives, or entry into the house, it is not practicable to regard them as polluting. Thus, even though they eat the lowest of all foods, wild pig, they are passing into the ranks of the commoners.

The Kaisaf caste of chief's ritual servants has changed its role quite considerably since the arrival of the Amharas, but its status has altered less. In the pre-Amhara days its members constituted the chief's private bodyguard and police force, and the caste's office-holder, 'Shalem' served the chief at all major rituals. Although such people were allowed to enter the house of a chiefly person, they had to sit by the door, 'below' people of higher status. It is said that they were not allowed to touch a chiefly person's drinking gourd. If they did so he had to wash himself with cow's blood or honey (which are important sacrificial offerings) or he would die. These prohibitions are no longer enforced, except on Shalem himself, who is the most notable member of the caste.

The largest impure caste is that of the blacksmiths. A man is a smith by birth, regardless of the occupation he later chooses to follow. There are only about 15 smiths who rely almost entirely on their caste profession for a living. Many more caste members are involved in such work from time to time, particularly when a relative has ore to smelt, which demands the presence of at least six people for a number of hours.

According to many Dime, in the pre-Amhara days, when the chiefs were powerful and wealthy, smiths did not farm at all, but were

dependent on the patronage of members of the chiefly caste, who supplied them with crops, sheep, and goats. Smiths could not own land and, even today, although legally able to, they do not do so.

If a smith chooses to live on land controlled by a Dime, he does not pay taxes, but is provided with a plot below and outside of the village, for his home, work-places and fields. Many of them regard themselves as clients or servants of wealthy members of the chief caste. One told me,

> "We are servants and make knives. Our wives help the land-owners wives to deliver their babies. If I go somewhere, people give me crops and I fix their sickles and knives for nothing. Some people, especially chiefly ones, give me crops for nothing, just to show their importance".

Hallpike's rather strained explanation of the polluting nature of Konso craftsmen as resulting from the substances with which they work certainly does not apply to the Dime smiths. Neither the ore nor the finished product are polluting. Furthermore, if a smith is short-handed, other Dime will work the bellows of his forge for him without fear of pollution. It is the smith himself, his house, and his personal effects which are polluting.

A friend told me :-

> "Those smiths who don't smelt iron are just lazy, they aren't different from other smiths .....they just go from place to place on other smiths' work-parties. They can't enter a Dime's field. If they come to a Dime's work-party, they must stay outside and shout to the person to send some beer in a leaf".

There are degrees of pollutability for containers. If a smith is given beer to drink in a gourd, this is then left outside the house until the next thirsty smith comes by. But if one receives his drink in a highly-valued tin or glass, made by 'town people' this can be taken back into the house, and freely used by its owner after only a rinse.

The prohibition on smiths entering farm-land is concerned to protect the growing crops and not the earth itself, since they can walk through empty fields without restriction. Traditionally, a smith who walks through a t'eff field should pay the owner the price of a cow, which is sacrificed and its blood sprinkled in the polluted field. The same fine should be levied from a smith who touches a granary. Pollution may affect a field in two ways - in the first place the crops may not grow; or if they do, it will not be possible to offer the first fruits to the gods and spirits and so the crop cannot be eaten. The most stringent prohibition is against the pollution of t'eff fields, since this crop is the most highly valued and the most used in sacrifices.

No higher Dime will eat food or drink beer that has been inside a smith's house. If a Dime is in an Amhara's house and a smith enters, the Dime will go outside and sit by the door. If a chief, or other important person is in the house, the smith will not enter it. A smith must never enter a Dime's house. A traditionally minded Dime will neither touch a smith's personal property, nor allow a smith to touch his, lest some 'Gome' (spiritually caused misfortune) should result.

It is commonly said that such prohibitions were much stricter in the past:-

> "The Amharas asked us if we would let smiths into our houses and we said, 'No. It's not our custom'. In the past they couldn't even come close to the house, but had to stay a long way off, and the owner sent them beer in a gourd ... One day, an Amhara took some smiths with him and entered a Dime's house. The Dime left the house, but he and his children got scabies. This happens if smiths enter a house, or drink from a gourd - they make people sick".

No non-polluting person will knowingly marry a blacksmith, but cases of accidental marriages of this type occasionally occur,

usually when a smith leaves his or her natal area and settles far away, posing as a member of a higher caste.

> "A woman who marries a blacksmith unknowingly can accuse her husband before the Chikashum or the old men. Her husband then takes blood, cow dung, and honey and washes his wife with them. He shaves her head and then divorces her. Her parents take her child and throw it over a cliff, or into the bush, or else give it to an Amhara.
>
> A man who marries a woman smith without knowing will get a Gome in his house - he or his children might get sick of scabies, or all his cows will die. His ancestor spirit runs away from him. He will ask a diviner or shaman why he is ill, and will be told that he married a blacksmith. He washes himself with blood, cow dung, and honey and sends her and her children away. Then he can marry an ordinary Dime. The child may go far away and live with an Amhara, or else live in another country, where he doesn't hear who his mother was, and the father doesn't hear anything about his son".

Smiths sacrifice only goats and sheep, not cows. They do not sacrifice on mountain-tops, as do other Dime, but on a stone near the house, which is always below the village to which they are attached. Today, when a smith marries, he may pay cows as bride-wealth, although this was not allowed in the past. The 'nuku' (nose) cow, given to the girl's father for her virginity is given by the recipient to his master, who kills it, and returns the head and intestines, which are regarded as poor parts of the animal. It can be seen from Figure 3 that the smith caste appears to be highly endogamous.

The final and most polluting caste is the smallest of all - the tanners. This expertise is rarely used since most Dime are satisfied to peg out skins to dry in the sun, rather than have them treated and softened by a tanner. Members of this caste may not enter the house of even a blacksmith. Since there are no more than about 50 tanners in Dimam, many children have never seen one, but they have a great dread of them, engendered by numerous tales of

their necrophagous activities. They epitomize the anti-social, being 'evil-eye' people who raid graves, and eat the bodies they find therein. Currently most tanners live as farmers and derive little advantage from their caste specialisation.

The Dime do not feel any need to explain why the polluting castes are so, since to them they could not be otherwise. In response to my incessant and no doubt tedious requests for an explanation, a former chief of Uth'a ventured the following:-

> "The smiths are low because the ancestors thought they were. God did it. He created us as chiefs, and them as smiths .... It isn't because they dig the ground or hammer iron. They eat what we don't eat; things we think are rubbish and throw away. Their wives cut umbilical cords, which is dirty. So we think they are dirty. We throw away bad meat and they pick it up and eat it.
>
> Hunter women don't enter a chief's house, but the men can. They aren't as low as the smiths, even though they eat wild animals. Hunters and smiths don't enter each others' houses. Hunter women eat pigs, but the men don't. Smiths don't eat pigs but tanners do. Tanners' wives don't deliver babies. A smith is above a tanner. Tanners aren't allowed to deliver babies because they are evil-eye and are bad for babies. Also, they scrape off bits from skins and eat them. Tanners are very dirty. They are lowest because their clans are dirty".

Conclusions on Caste in Dimam

In figure 4 I summarize what appear to be key points in an appreciation of the Dime caste system. The system needs to be viewed through Dime values, which define cows and t'eff as the most desirable products of man's labour. It will be recalled that as recently as 1951, many Dime still had herds of cattle large enough to warrant duo-local residence, whereby the men of the family lived in the lowlands with the herds. Herds do not increase by chance,

or by 'nature', but because of man's relationship with God (Iyaf), and with the powerful spirits of past chiefs. These relationships remain harmonious because of sacrifices offered to the forces by the chief and priest of each chiefdom. Similarly a successful crop of t'eff depends on such relationships. These valuables come from God and the spirits, and are returned to them by the people most fitted for such contact - namely those who have kept themselves from any food or person known to be displeasing to supra-human forces.

The rules of ritual offices separate certain members of the top two castes, who are prepared to abide by them, from the majority of members who are not. But, just as a smith is so by birth and not necessarily by occupation, so too the majority of the members of the chief and priest castes are born as potential ritual officers, but do not choose to become such. In this way caste rules define a person's potential in life. Although members of each caste have a potential specialisation (except commoners), these are unequally evaluated. If a member of a chief caste does not wish to be a chief, he may eat goat and mutton without contradicting his caste obligations, but there are lower limits of behaviour which he must avoid if he wishes to keep from misfortune.

The impure status of the lower castes appears to reflect the fact that their specialist potentials are all in one way or another the reverse of those of the positively-valued castes. Thus a chief goes to a highland shrine and kills a domesticated animal as an offering to God, while a hunter roams the lowlands, killing wild animals for food. A member of the Kaisaf caste goes to highland sacrifices, but as a servant, and takes no active part in the ritual. Smiths dig the earth, but not to grow crops, which they obtain by

begging, or in exchange for caste services. Female smiths reinforce this reversal by digging the earth in order to make pots. A smith makes private offerings near his home, which is below the village, in order to ensure his personal success in his specialisation. For a tanner, the best ox is a dead one! It does not matter to him whether the beast was sacrificed to the gods or died of disease. He regards animals as utilitarian objects, and not as vehicles of interaction between God and man.

Traditionally the four impure castes were excluded from the ownership of both the valued resources:- cattle and land. Smiths, tanners and Kaisaf members were all servants and depended on high caste patrons for the land on which they lived, and often the crops which they ate. The Amhara conquest ended this situation. Now, most Dime rent land from the Government or private Amhara landlords, and their crops are needed to pay tithes and taxes. Although some important men still allow a smith to live tax-free on their land they are usually unable to give him sufficient crops to support his family.

Hunters have always been less servile, since the land they exploit is useless to other Dime, they produce food directly from their specialization, and they have not relied on the land owner's charity for their living.

Commoners lie in between the two extremes. They may own land and livestock, but may not sacrifice to God on behalf of an entire chiefdom, as do the chief and priest. They are not polluting, and and therefore allowed, indeed obliged, to pass on to the chief gifts from their crops and cattle, which he offers to the forces which produced them. In this commoners are different from the lowest castes, whose members do not possess such items (at least traditionally). Even if they did, they could not give them to the chief

	Chiefs and Priests	Commoners	Hunters	Kaisaf	Smiths	Tanners
Terrain	Sacrifices of cows, t'eff and honey on highlands	In between	Lowlands		Live below the village	
Animals	Kept cows, which they killed for sacrifice. Gave goats and sheep to smiths to eat	Goats and sheep as well as cows	No herds. Kill wild animals to eat		Kept goats and sheep given by chiefs and priests	Specialists in dead animals
Crops	Offer crops, especially t'eff to gods	Give crops for chief to offer	Few crops		Did not farm. Begged crops. Dig earth, but not to grow crops	
Ritual	Make highest offerings	Donate gifts for offerings	No part	Go to highest offerings as servants	Make own offerings below village	No part
Land	Owners of land		Non owners of land			
Specialization	Contact with gods. Cattle herding, farming, especially t'eff	Farmers, Herders of cattle, sheep, and goats	Shoot and trap wild animals	Serve chiefs	Iron-working	Preparing skins

Figure Four - The Dime Caste System

to sacrifice, since they would both pollute him, and be unnacceptable to the intended recipients. Thus commoners have a secondary role in the ritual life of the people, but the impure have none. In this way, the ritual system defines the impure as parasites on the country, depleting its natural resources, but playing no part in their renewal.

F) CONCLUSIONS

We can see that the Dime system is more complex and all-embracing than those operative amongst the Gurage and Konso. In the latter two societies we have simply a dichotomy between a uniform (in caste terms) group of cultivators, who form the vast majority of the populace, and a small number of craftsmen, who are internally unranked. In Dimam we have a system consisting of three basic blocs of differential status, with hierarchical subdivisions within the top and bottom layers. The system controls access to the major divinity and spirits, and is defended by strong pollution beliefs. It gives all except the middle category of commoners a specialization, and those of three of the four impure castes provide potential economic niches for their members.

The Dime are by no means unique in South-West Ethiopia, but we have little data on people such as the Basketo, Maji, and Ch'ara, who have, or had, similar systems. The Kafa exhibit some elements of such a system, but this does not seem to consist of normatively endogamous groups, nor is it as comprehensive as that of the Dime. Orent, in his unpublished Thesis entitled "Lineage Structure and the Supernatural: the Kafa of South-West Ethiopia", does not discuss the subject in a concentrated manner, but scattered hints of

it emerge. The "political hierarchy of the past" (op. cit. P95) consisted of the King and royal lineage; the chief advisors; the councilors of state; the district chiefs; high clans, low clans; craft clans - weaving, gold and silver smiths and iron smiths; and "outcaste groups" - Manjo, unclean animal eaters, and Mano, hide preparers and pottery makers who have "no rights to own land" (P250). "Monkeys and wild boar are taboo for eating. Only the Manjo people dare eat them. The latter are the pariah group of hunters who may have been the original inhabitants of the region" (P47).

"Tanners and potters (the men do the tanning and the women make the pottery) are considered to be unclean in Kafa and they therefore cannot eat with anyone who is not of their own clan, called the Mano ..... Generally their homes are on the outskirts of some gasha (area of land) where the gasha shum (chief of gasha) has allowed them to stay" (op. cit. P284). They pay tax, unlike many Dime smiths.

It would be interesting to know more about this system, although it appears to be less operative currently than that of the Dime.

In conclusion, I have shown that the Dime have a division of labour, divinely approved, and protected by pollution concepts. Apart from geographically, the system is no further from the 'classic' Indian caste system as described by Gough, than are two examples presented in "Aspects of Caste" - the Sinhalese and Swat cases. If we choose to rule out Dimam, we must do the same to them. This leaves us with an 'ethnographic' concept of caste, such as that advance by Dumont, which has no cross-cultural utility and appears to be applicable only to certain areas of India. The material here

presented suggests that we can usefully describe certain African systems as caste in a sociological sense without using the term so loosely as to make it meaningless, as did Nadel and some later writers. We now need further fieldwork in South West Ethiopia to discover the spread of the phenomenon, and to supply a new body of comparative data to support the suggestion I have made, that we can speak of caste in Africa.

SECTION B - CASTE AND POLITICS IN DIMAM

The caste system is clearly an important aspect of the 'social environment' of the Dime political structure. Indeed many of the 'rules' of caste are at the same time rules of the political structure, while others pragmatically deny political opportunities to sections of the community. I turn first to the former, those rules of caste which also define aspects of the political structure.

The traditional, that is pre-Amhara, political structure of Dimam was dominated by the seven chiefs of the country. This structure will be examined in detail in the next chapter. Briefly, each chief governed a bounded territory and had superordinate legal authority in it. This derived from his approval by God and the spirits, and was exhibit ed in his 'Balth'u' (spiritual power) which caused crops to grow, herds to increase, bees to produce honey, and the people to flourish. He could pass judgements on all cases which had defied settlement at local 'moots' and was the only person empowered to act in a case of murder, the redress of which required fines and measures of ritual cleansing. He had his own bodyguard consisting of members of Kaisaf caste, who acted as police force,

and provided him with the means to enforce his decisions.

He was also in charge of the chiefdom's external relations, especially in the case of the periodic battles against neighbouring chiefdoms and tribes. Further, he was the focal point of a redistributive economy, which was connected with the ritual cycle. His subjects brought him gifts, some of which he offered to gods and spirits, whilst others were expended in large feasts. Through his contact with the highest deities he was enabled to keep his chiefdom free of war, famine and disease, and to rule his subjects with authority.

As we have seen, the chief's relationship with suprahuman forces, which was so essential to his authority, was dependent on rigid adherence to the rules of his caste. His behaviour epitomized that of a member of the caste, and others who had political aspirations nurtured them by a similar life-style. The greatest danger to a chief was from 'pollution', from eating banned foods, or contacting menstruating women, or members of impure castes. Although the chiefs are no longer such important political figures, (see Chapters 3, 4, and 5), they must still follow the rules of caste if they wish to remain long in office. Any evident lack of Balth'u, which results from an impaired relationship with the divinity, leads to removal from office.

The other main figure in the political-religious structure whose position is ensured by purity is the priest. His main political role is as referee in disputes concerning the chiefship. As with the chiefship, the priesthood is restricted to a member of one particular caste, and there is absolutely no way in which a member of another caste can take over this position.

Thus the caste rules define who is eligible to hold the two main offices and place restrictions on the life-style of such men. But as well as defining access to formal office, the system also restricts political importance of any kind to members of the top three castes. This is as true today, when there are new political opportunities, as when Dime society was independent. A member of an impure caste has great limitations on the possibilities open to him. Some smiths, and at least one member of Kaisaf caste whom I know, are wealthier than most Dime of higher caste. They may have several wives, farm large areas of land, and be well-dressed on public occasions. But they can never become patrons to people of higher caste, since these cannot enter their houses, eat their food, or drink their beer. They are unlikely to become landlords, although legally entitled to. Even if they buy cows, they can only keep them, or use them for lineage sacrifices, and cannot sacrifice them for the common good, and thereby become benefactors of the community. The pollution rules of the system therefore fix the limits of influence and prestige available to this section of the populace.

These limits apply much less to commoners, since pure people may enter their houses, and interdine freely with them, and their cows and crops are acceptable by the chief for sacrifice on behalf of the people. A commoner with several wives and kinsmen residing on the land for which he is the registered tax-payer may attract distant relatives to live near him, under his influence. But although there are no formal caste barriers against it, members of higher castes are unlikely to live under him, since this would be considered humiliating. Thus a commoner may become wealthy, and build up a small group of dependents, but is unlikely to be able

to expand his influence to acquire any measure of control over men of higher caste.

So the caste system provides a total framework for Dime society, into which all 'insiders' can be fitted, and which requires certain behaviour patterns between people of different categories. Built into the system is a bar which prevents the lower categories from acquiring the approved forms of wealth, which are convertible into ritual power, and thence into leadership. The pollution rules ensure that a low-caste man never gains high-caste followers, since a client's most basic need is food, and a pure or non-pure person cannot receive this from an impure one. At the other end of the scale, one member of each pure caste becomes an office-holder and obtains direct access to the gods and spirits which decide the fate of all men. This access offers political possibilities, which, we shall see later, were greatly limited by the Amhara conquest, and more recently by the (albeit limited) 'Ethiopianization' of the region. All members of high castes are potential office-holders, but some prefer to build up followings in other ways, knowing that they have no polluting quality to limit their scope, and that they are members of castes which have always provided the important men of the land. The system separates those eligible to lead from those fit only to follow. This division is seen as a divine ordinance, and protected by religious beliefs and practices.

SECTION C - CLANSHIP AND POLITICS

Each caste contains a number of exogamous clans, which tend to be localized to one chiefdom. These clans are extremely small, and could be termed maximal lineages, were it not for the impreci-

sion which exists concerning the relationships between members. It is probable that they were considerably larger prior to the Amhara invasion, which greatly reduced the overall population, and and presumably erased for ever some clans. A large clan now has a total membership, including children, of about 100 people; and a small one, particularly amongst the tanners and hunters, might have only 20 members. Whilst it is true that members of such small clans know their exact kinship links, this is not so within the larger clans, which are described by the same term.

The importance of clanship is three-fold. Firstly, most of the members live in one chiefdom. This relates to the time when each clan 'owned' a certain area of land, of which they were dispossessed by the Amhara invaders. Whenever a clan still has an unchallenged claim to an area of land, it is almost always currently covered by forest and unused. Once people begin to farm or build on it, there is usually a dispute over the 'ownership'. A clan member whose father 'owned' the land claims the tithe payments for it, and responsibility for collecting the tax, and is supported by his clansmen. Almost invariably, an enterprising Amhara steps in, and states that his father or grandfather conquered the area, or was awarded it for his military services to his leader.

The case is discussed in the Government Court in Basketo, in Amharic, which most Dime do not speak fluently. Financial transactions take place, which reinforce the solidarity of the Amharic speaking Christians against the 'pagan slaves' and the decision almost invariably favours the Amhara. Since the result is fairly predictable, and the cost in time and gifts is high, most Dime do not trouble to contest such matters.

In this way most of the clans have lost ownership of their lands, and often no longer live on them, although they retain

strong ritual ties with them. When the annual t'eff harvest is in, the clan head takes offerings to the shrine of the clan ancestors. If members of the clan are suffering from a Gome attributed to their ancestors, they must make an offering at this shrine. At drinking parties, when members of many clans come together, and rivalries become apparent, many of the chants refer to clan lands and shrines. At one party a member of Cobnits, one of the chief clans of Uth'a, sang, "I am a bull of Wollo" to assert the importance of himself and his clan. Wollo is a key shrine in the ritual cycle of Uth'a chiefdom, and the claim that the area belongs to his clan was challenged by members of others in song. Something akin to a 'song duel' ensued, followed by vigorous fighting with sticks, rocks and agricultural implements.

Even if the members of a clan are not living on their father's land, they prefer to be near to one another for several reasons. Other things being equal (particularly patron-client ties) a man is more likely to attend a clansman's work party than that of someone with a lesser claim on him. So if there are a large number of clansmen living near to each other, their agricultural problems will be less, and their beer intake more. If a man, or a member of his family is ill, he needs sound advice, and probably such ritual help as is most likely to come from a clansman:- either a visit to a diviner or shaman, or a sacrifice to certain ancestor spirits, or both. If he has a death in the family he needs helpers to organize the funeral. If he, or one of his family, wishes to marry he needs negotiators. In all of these cases, the people most likely to help are clansmen, and their usefulness increases with proximity.

Territoriality is thus the first aspect of clanship. The regulation of marriage is the second. A person cannot marry someone who is from his or her own clan, or who is related in any line within five generations. In the case of clans of impure castes, it is often impossible for someone to exclude 5 generations, since this would cover the whole caste. Members therefore count back only 2 or 3 generations, without incurring any penalty, since they are seen to have no alternative.

If a man marries a woman from a clan prohibitted by the above rule, I was told that the case should be brought before the chief, who calls together some old men to work out how many generations have elapsed. If guilt is established, the man, or his father pays a cow to the girl's father, who slaughters it and washes the girl with the blood, whereafter she is once more under his control and care. She is divorced by this ceremony, and the two families become "like brother and sister". The couple are then free to remarry correctly, but the man must pay a 'nuku' cow to the girl's new husband for her virginity. It is the man's family who must pay, since it is he who goes courting, sends intermediaries to the girl's house and so on, and his parents should have realised his mistake and stopped him.

The above case is hypothetical, but a somewhat similar one occurred during my stay in Woch'o village. A fourteen year old girl of Intsuk clan, together with some friends, spent the night in Woch'o on their way home from market. Kidadu, a young man of Gedaf clan, asked her if she would agree to be 'kidnapped' by him, bought her friends some beer, and told them not to shout, in case people came to stop him. In the morning, he and his friends lay

in the bush, and ambushed the girls with sticks. The victim's companions ran away, and Kidadu drove her before him with a stick, while one of his friends picked up her load and carried it after them. Kidadu took the girl into the bush, and sent a friend to ask Andarge, a member of the village not in his own clan, if he could temporarily take the girl there. Andarge agreed, so they went there and sent a message to Wolde (the head of Kidadu's clan) and Dando (a respected member of Cobnits clan, of which Andarge was a member) to come and discuss what should be done next.

They arrived outside the house and told Kidadu that he could not marry the girl, since she was already related to him. They ordered her to come out, but she refused. Finally, Dando went in, dragged her out, and took her to his house, to await Kidadu's father, Doselats, who had not returned from market owing to illness.

The next day, since Doselats had still not appeared, Wolde took the girl to an Amhara's house between Woch'o and her own village (Ogé), and went to her father to negotiate. Meanwhile, her father and his Amhara landlord came to the Chikashum's house in Woch'o by the direct path, to accuse Kidadu of Kidnapping the girl. Mamo told them to go back to their own village and discuss the case with Wolde.

The girl's father first asked Wolde whether the girl was still a virgin, and was informed that she was. He thanked Wolde for returning her intact, and pointed out that the two clans had been 'Tusu' (a word with multiple meanings including clansmen, kinsmen, and friends) "from the beginning". Gedaf may not marry Intsuk clan members, since the former are 'Gis' for the latter, a term which is used to mean 'ritual servant' and 'sister's son', which implies

the same. A man's sister's son performs many menial tasks at his funeral, and at other rituals. Kidadu's mistake was in attempting to marry into a clan from which senior members of his own clan had taken wives.

Irga cut the ear of a cow and collected the blood, brought some honey, and cleansed his daughter with both before allowing her to enter the house. He said that Kidadu must bring a goat as a fine for taking her in error.

Men tend to take wives from villages which are relatively nearby, since this makes the numerous transactions which precede and follow marriage much simpler, and gives the possibility of a close and useful relationship with the in-laws. A clan's members should spread its links to as many neighbouring clans as possible rather than marry frequently into the same one. If several clansmen of one generation take wives from the same clan, their children will all be subordinate to the same 'mothers' brothers' (see section b). This reduces the status of the clan, and raises that of the mothers' brothers' clan. The preference also ensures that each clan has a diversity of potential allies, should it encounter a situation where these are necessary, such as starvation, or, in the case of a high-caste clan, an attempt to install one of the members in political office.

The overall result of the practice is that overlapping ties of kinship and marriage link all people of compatible caste in the locality.

We have seen so far that the clan influences residence and regulates marriage. But neither of these aspects reveal the base of clan solidarity. To find this we must examine the ritual beliefs and practices of clansmen.

Each clan has its own 'Gimze' (spirit) which resides either near a large rock or under a tree. Every year the clan head (Baira) and his sister's son should go to the shrine and sacrifice a bull to the spirit. If the Gimze does not receive its annual offering, which is probably the case most years, it becomes angry, and (it is said) makes a member sick, mad, or dead. If an illness occurs, relatives of the sick man visit a diviner or shaman, who tells them the cause of their problem, and advises them to take a bull to the spirit. According to statements I received, each adult member of the clan should donate the sacrificial victim in turn, but this seems most unlikely, since in most cases there are considerable differences in the assets of various members.

Thus the Gimze does not carry out a continuous assessment of the moral behaviour of the people under its control, but rather ensures a periodic renewal of their ritual solidarity, expressed by the offering the Baira makes on their behalf, and approved by the message contained in the bull's intestines. If the clansmen fail to accept this ritual duty, one of their number is punished, and they are forced to sacrifice despite their reluctance.

As well as the Gimze, clan ancestors may cause misfortune. If the clan appears to be suffering from a series of troubles, and the Gimze has been ruled out as a cause, the Baira may call the members together and kill an animal for the ancestors. He then blesses the assembly by sprinkling them with water collected in the clan home-land.

The clan is the largest unit which frequently assembles for a co-operative purpose. Although the alleged yearly sacrifice to the Gimze does not require all of the members to assemble in one

place, the events of their life cycles do. Birth, marriage, and above all, death bring them together.

I hope in a later work, to explore the full ramifications of Dime religious beliefs and practices, examining particularly the relationship between the various gods, spirits, and devils. A clan sacrifice may be only one of a series of ritual measures resorted to when there is 'evidence' to suggest that the 'Gome' is not troubling one person only, but several of his clansmen. As far as ritual matters are concerned, the clan may be said to have a 'corporate personality'. A supernatural attack on one member does not stop with him, but goes on to attack those who are 'the same' as him.

Although all members of a clan are significantly alike to a dissatisfied ancestor, they are by no means internally undifferentiated. In the first place, the Baira mediates between the clan Gimze and its subjects, and between the ancestors and their descendants. Since religious beliefs and practices have a central place in Dime society, this makes the Baira a natural leader. Although it is said that the Baira is the 'eldest son' of the clan, this may not be the case. He should certainly be a man who fulfills the obligations of the caste, but he must also have a certain amount of resources in terms of livestock, or money with which to purchase such if necessary. A poor man is so at least partly because of his bad relationship with those suprahuman forces relevant to him. Such a man can scarcely be suitable to represent his fellow clansmen to the spirits. The Baira has, then, been approved by his clansmen as a worthy representative in ritual matters, and such recognition can be easily turned to political advantage.

The Baira is not the only man who can gain stature from the performance of clan rituals. Others have the opportunity of donating the animal to be offered to the spirits. Although it is said that the household heads of the clan donate in turn, this does not appear to be the case. Things may have been nearer to this 'norm' in the past, when there were many more cattle in Dimam, and they were not so expensive, but after the crippling losses of animals, especially cattle, to raiders and disease in the last ten years, there are now few men who own any at all. This means that cattle owners are under frequent pressure to donate their capital for sacrifices. Generally, they refuse to do so time and again, until the verdict of a shaman or diviner shows that a kinsman or clansman will suffer continuing misfortune until an offering is made on his behalf. When they finally do make a donation, they become public benefactors, and gain in reputation to compensate for their loss in livestock. Reputation is a valuable commodity, which may bring clients, wives, borrowers of money or goods (to be repaid with interest), precedence at beer feasts, and possibly, for a man in the right clan, access to office. It is therefore no small gain in a society which is relatively poor, and has only recently regained its freedom.

We can say then that clan rituals provide the opportunity for potential leaders to establish their claims, and acquire a sound basis of support among those who depend on their generosity for safety from the wrath of suprahuman forces.

In summary; it is clear that clans were more important before the Amhara invasion than they now are. Although male clan members still prefer to live at least within the same chiefdom as one

another, they are now, almost without exception, not on their traditional clan land. In the past, ownership of land made the clan a unit of great economic importance, but now its activities are primarily ritual. These must not be under-rated, since they ensure health and prosperity, and provide a channel for potential leaders. The removal of the clans' land holdings has meant that alternative strategies must be employed to obtain this necessity. Clanship still plays a part in these, since a man will not usually be denied land by a clansman who rents a large amount, but the ultimate 'owner' is now usually the Government, the Ethiopian Church, or an individual Amhara.

It is true to say of any leader, or potential leader, that his clansmen form the 'core' of his following - that is, those who are morally committed to him, rather than supporting him in the hope of a quick return. On a mundane level, when a fight breaks out, a man can rely on his clansmen to support him; or if he is accused of an offence before the old men, the Chikashum, or the police, they will argue his cause, and possibly help with the fine and gifts necessary to release him.

The clan is the widest group to which a man feels morally bound, and which in turn helps him in times of need. This solidarity, which is maintained by shared ritual responsibilities and dangers, may become a valuable political resource. At the individual level, each clan member also has his own web of ties of kinship and marriage, to which I now turn.

SECTION E - KINSHIP

i) The Lineage

A senior man should have his brothers and sons around him, so that they can help him and each other to farm. In this way the lineage will prosper, and he will become a respected man in the community. The eldest brother of the senior generation of a lineage is its 'Baira' and is responsible for his kinsmen's contact with their immediate ancestors. Lineage members have ritual and economic obligations to each other, which are similar to, but more pressing than, those they have to their fellow-clansmen.

A man's unmarried children are an important part of his work force. From the age of about 11 onwards, they farm small fields of their own, but until they marry their main work is for their father. They help his wives with the vast array of dull, routine, chores which the lineage-head does not wish to do himself. They weed the fields, fetch wood and water, watch over any animals their father owns, carry verbal messages for him and so on. As boys grow older they work less, and the burden falls more heavily on to their sisters. From the age of about 15, boys begin to take part in men's activities - beer drinking; talking politics; discussing the crops, visits to diviners and shamans, what illnesses have not been cured and what should be done about them, and other such male topics. This is not to say that men do little work. They carry out a demanding yearly cycle of activities - bush clearing, digging the fields, hoeing, harvesting, and carrying crops to the granary, and house building. But when their task for the day is finished, they go out to seek beer, while the women work on.

In all farming activities, lineage members should help each other freely. In fact, they do not quite keep to the ideal, and if a man has the choice of working with his father for nothing, or with an unrelated neighbour for beer, he will almost invariably choose the latter. But if the choice is between the same two people, neither of whom have beer, he will help his father. Fathers constantly complain that children today are not what they used to be, and do not respect their elders and work for them. Such sermons fall on deaf ears, or else the sons complain in turn that fathers do not help with bridewealth as they used to, and always want sons to work for them rather than on their own fields.

Such arguments illustrate the fact that the territorial proximity of kinsmen not only enables them to provide mutual aid, but also gives them ample opportunity to enrage one another. This was demonstrated to me by the vigour and frequency of disputes concerning kin, which ran marital disputes a close second amongst those cases discussed by the adults of Woch'o village during my stay there.

The agricultural system is such that the normative co-operation between kinsmen in this matter is not critical. Most of the heavy work is done in short bursts by parties composed of kin and non-kin, who are rewarded by sharing a pot of beer brewed for the occasion. The quantity to be brewed is decided by a careful estimation of the number of people required for the task; how many non productive persons can be expected to arrive purely to drink; how many other work parties have been announced for that day, and how generous their callers are; and how many people would find it difficult not to come to this (close kin and clients). If the beer

is not enough for the workers and visitors who arrive, the caller's reputation dives, and along with it the chance of a large work-force the next time he needs one.

If the kinship norm of agricultural co-operation is not crucial to prosperity, that of ritual co-operation is. When a man is ill, it is primarily up to his close agnates to take measures to determine the cause, and take the appropriate action. When Mamo Dolinde was ill, his brother Shigiru bought a calf, which they sacrificed to their ancestors to discover if it was they who had sent the trouble. Their reading of the intestines was as follows:-

> Mamo (edited). "This intestine is bad. Someone in my family will die. My house will be burned down for some reason. It's a terrible intestine. Not anyone; you (Shigiru) and I will die according to this intestine. You and I will die together. Takabab (a member of his clan), this intestine tells the death of me, Shigiru, or you; no-one else ..... The Gome in Shigiru's house will not come to my house: it will stay in his house and kill him .... he is an adult - a Gome can enter his house".

The brothers co-operated to sacrifice the cow and read what the intestines told them. This confirmed that one of Mamo's relatives would die, but the readers were unable to say unambiguously who it would be and why.

Agnates of the same generation should co-operate, but this does not imply that even brothers are equal. On the contrary, the eldest son (Baira) is the one who will succeed his father as ritual head of the lineage, and once he has married and has his own home, his younger brothers must respect him and do as he tells them. When a man dies, it is his eldest son who receives the inheritance, and divides it up among his brothers. He keeps more than he passes on, since it is he who will be mainly responsible for sacrifices to the ancestors, and who will help his brothers gain wives in future.

The inequality between siblings is not as great as that between a father and his children. They should be prepared to work in his fields and carry crops to market for him, even after they are married and have their own homes. If they do not, he has the ultimate sanction of cursing them. If he does this, they become very ill, and perhaps even die. But a father does not resort to this unless severely provoked. On one occasion during my stay a father cursed his daughter because she ran off with her fiance before the wedding feast. This had angered him so much because he was planning a large feast, with much beer, which would have greatly enhanced his reputation. Furthermore, as long as he had control of the daughter he could press for prompt payment of the agreed bridewealth, but once she had run off his bargaining power was greatly reduced.

Although brothers should take spouses in order of seniority, a girl can marry before her older brother, because according to Dime opinion, he has to work hard to save the money for bridewealth, whereas she has only to accept the first offer which receives her father's approval. (An observer may note that were it not so the polygyny rate would have to be much lower). The institution of bridewealth ensures that it is easier for an older man to marry than for a younger one. Thus a father may continue to accumulate wives, while his marriageable sons have none. Worse than this, an older brother, whose father has died, may keep hold of the inheritance and try to gain further wives for himself, rather than help his younger siblings, who are largely dependent on him, gain first wives. Such a situation arouses great jealousy and anger, but there is little that the younger brothers can do to influence their elder.

Their best hope in such a case is either to 'kidnap' a girl and beat down her father's bridewealth demands, or to marry a woman who has left her husband. Both of these courses have drawbacks. With the former, no matter how small the bridewealth, a man ought to pay the nuku cow for the girl's virginity. Cows are now extremely expensive, and it is almost impossible for a young man to raise the price of one without help. With the second course of action, there is the possibility that the woman's husband does not regard her as divorced, and will take legal measures against the young man, who is almost certain to lose the case. For these reasons many men remain single long after they reach the ideal marriage age of about 18 to 20 years.

No matter how badly a man treats his younger brothers in the matter of bridewealth support, they have few alternative hopes of gathering the cows or cash needed, and for this reason usually stay with him. Thus each Baira has his own small following, who are ritually and economically dependent on him. As single men, they can easily grow enough crops to feed themselves, but it is only when a man acquires a wife that he can begin to make significant economic progress, because women brew beer, and beer brings workers. Thus the Baira, who marries first and acquires the inheritance, has a head start over his brothers, and is the 'natural' leader of the minimal lineage. Furthermore, if his father is dead, he collects the bridewealth for his sisters which is at his disposal, and the men who marry them are his ritual inferiors, and provide another set of followers. By the time he is middle-aged, his sisters may have sons, who will also be subordinate to him.

b) Sister's Sons

A man's sister's son is his ritual servant (Gis). Normatively, this is so no matter how important the sister's son is in a wider social context, but in practice status contradictions can be avoided. An important man usually delegates his obligations as Gis to his own sister's sons, thus having the duty performed without compromising his position in society. Furthermore, since a man does not usually become important until he is in his thirties or later, most of his mother's brothers will already be dead, and his obligations to their sons are more easily shirked.

In the reverse situation, when a man is very important, but his sister's son is not, the sister's son will find himself with a great many calls upon his time. Firstly, his mother's brother will insist that he actually performs those tasks which the mother's brother should be performing for someone else. Secondly, his superior will almost certainly sacrifice much more often than lesser mortals, so that the 'servant' will be very frequently called upon to perform his duties. Over time this is likely to make him more subservient than the role itself implies. From this stage it is a small step to becoming a client of the mother's brother, living on his land and paying reduced tithes and no tax. In return the client works on his patron's fields without payment, as well as regularly attending his work parties, carrying crops for him, and helping him with house repairs.

At a sacrifice made by Mamo Dolinde, the Chikashum, two sister's sons were present. They fetched leaves in which to collect the blood, held the cow's legs when its throat was being slit, and helped skin and butcher it. One of them lit a fire near the offe-

ring stones, and cut and roasted small pieces of meat, for Mamo to place on the stones. Meanwhile the other went under a nearby tree and slit the cow's stomach, pouring the chyme over the ground as an offering to certain spirits. He then returned to his task of dividing up the meat for the relatives to take home and eat. There was a special portion for the sister's sons, consisting of the head (minus the tongue), some ribs, and the intestines, none of which are highly favoured parts. Mamo had only to carry out the significant acts of the occasion : slitting the throat, reading the intestines, making the main offerings, and praying. This shows clearly the unequal status of the two parties.

Although the relationship of a man to his sister's son might be considered universalist, since most men are both during their lives, the inequalities implied by it do not affect everyone in the same way. External factors intervene to mitigate the subordination of important men, and exaggerate that of lesser mortals. In this way, the difference between leaders and led emerges even in situations where it is said not to be relevant.

If a man establishes his importance in one way by side-stepping his kinship subordination, he may do the same again by the number and choice of his wives.

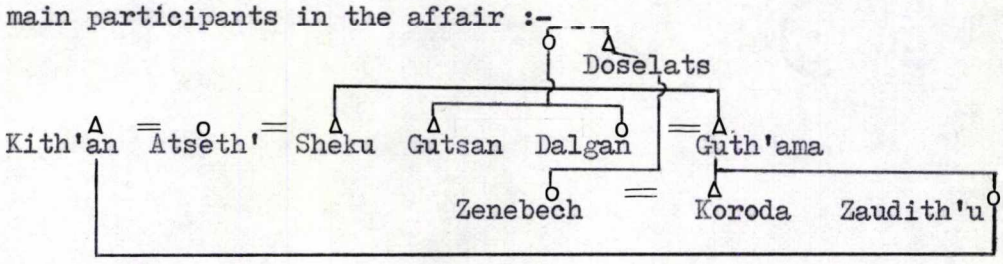
SECTION F - MARRIAGE

I have mentioned earlier rules concerning whom one may not marry. The first of these, concerning caste endogamy was obeyed in about half the marriages recorded in my census; but with rare exceptions, non-polluting men did not marry polluting women (or vice versa). The second restriction is that posed by clan exogamy,

and I heard of no marriage which broke this rule. The third prohibition is against marrying into a clan which is related in any line within five generations. This rule is openly broken by members of the smallest castes, and probably occasionally ignored by others.

There are other 'rules' which were never stated explicitly to me, but which emerged following certain marriages or attempted marriages which ignored them. I have already mentioned Kidadu's unsuccessful attempt to marry a girl from the clan for which his own clan was 'Gis'. This was rapidly stopped by Kidadu's clan Baira.

Another match which proved to be forbidden is one between a man and two women who stand in the relationship of classificatory mother and daughter. Such a case occurred in Woch'o village during my stay. Apart from marrying a 'mother' and 'daughter' the man made several other mistakes, which were considered by the old men called to make a judgement of the affair. Below is a plan of the main participants in the affair :-



Kith'an, a man of Gedaf clan who lived in Woch'o, first married Zaudith'u, daughter of Guth'ama. Her father had taken a wife from Gedaf's sister's son's clan, and her brother Koroda took one from Gedaf itself. Mamo Dolinde, who is himself of Gedaf clan, commented on this:- "Guth'ama married Dalgan, then Koroda married Zenebech, which shouldn't be. We were angry about this, marrying from the same family. Then Kith'an married Zaudith'u, so we thought

'that makes us even' ". So it seems, as I have suggested earlier, that clan members should vary the clans from which they take wives. As Mamo put it; "There are many clans in Uth'a, and they can marry Ganchire people, but they shouldn't marry always from the same clan".

Zaudith'u lived with Kith'an for three months, by which time he had still not sent any bridewealth to her father, not even the nuku cow. She became ill, and fearing that this was the result of her father's anger, returned home to try to regain her health, and to force Kith'an to bring money or a cow before asking her to return.

Atseth' was the wife of Sheku, Zaudith'u's father's brother. She left her husband and came to Woch'o to stay with her sister, who was married to Ambai, another member of Gedaf clan. She stayed there for 7 months before Kith'an asked her to marry him. She refused, because she did not know whether or not her husband regarded her as divorced. She went to Ganchire with her baby and asked her husband whether or not he wanted her to come back. He told her to go away and threw stones at her, so she went to the Amhara landowner, Ato Makonnen, and complained to him. He told her that since her husband would not let her come back to live with him, she was free to go elsewhere and remarry. He would support her if her husband tried to make any trouble for her. She returned to Woch'o and told people what Makonnen had said, and they replied that, since he is an important man, she could go ahead and marry Kith'an. It seems that at this stage, the people Atseth consulted had either not known of her relationship with Zaudith'u, or had chosen to ignore it.

Some old men were gathered, and asked Sheku whether he wanted his wife back or a fine. He replied that he didn't want her back

now she had remarried, and continued;

> "The girl Kith'an married before was my brother's daughter. He took ... a wife, and refused to pay bridewealth because he is poor. So the girl came back to her father because he didn't offer any bridewealth. Now he married my wife. So he did two wrongs .....".

After consultations, the old men decided Kith'an should pay Eth. 60 for the two crimes. When Kith'an arrived to hear the verdict, he said "I don't have this much, go and bring the police". So Mamo told Sheku to fetch the police. The old men did not want this to happen, and deliberated again, deciding that Kith'an should pay only Eth. 20. He agreed to this and borrowed 6 from a friend in the village, promising to pay the rest within 15 days.

Mamo offered the following comments on the case:-

> "According to our fathers' custom, a person who did something like this, marrying a mother and daughter from the same family, made a big mistake .... If it was in the past, we would break all his upper teeth, and consider him as a cow - as an animal - he doesn't know anything about where to marry. Or we would consider him as a smith or a tanner; he can't marry an ordinary Dime any more, only smiths or tanners. Now Guth'ama or Sheku could accuse Kith'an of marrying a mother and daughter, but they are too stupid to do so. Even though I know the custom, I can't harm Kith'an, because he is from my own clan ".

A number of 'norms' concerning marriage are clear from this case:-

a) If a man pays bridewealth for a woman, she cannot remarry without his permission. If she does, the adults must calculate how much of the bridewealth has been 'repaid'. Deductible items include the beer which her parents sent the man, and the number of children she has born him. The adults do not consider the loss of her labour. Separation is straightforward, and the wife is not fined for it. It becomes divorce when a financial settlement has been made bet-

ween the new husband and the original one, which must be witnessed by representatives of the community.

b) Marriage is achieved when a man and woman are co-resident in the same house. Thus Kith'an became married to Zaudith'u when she moved into his house, even though none of the customary gifts were made to her father. Even though she returned to her father's house, she was still Kith'an's wife, and he could claim compensation if another man married her.

c) The nuku cow for the girl's virginity is a different prestation from bridewealth. Normatively it is not open to negotiation, but is automatically payable if she is a virgin. It does not denote marriage.

d) Men and women live together before bridewealth is paid in order to be in a strong bargaining position with the girl's father or guardian. A non-virgin does not warrant as much payment as a virgin, which is to the mutual advantage of the couple, since the less they give to her father the more they retain to set up home. This need not prejudice the amount of beer they will receive, since the father gains prestige from the generosity of his return to the couple. A man who sends little or no beer is either poor or mean, both of which are despised.

e) The objection to Kith'an marrying his own 'mother-in-law' was not against sexual intercourse, but against marriage as such. There was no mention of their sexual relationship when Atseth was living with her sister. This is not therefore anything akin to an incest rule.

Returning to the case, we can explain the nature of Kith'an's main mistake without discussing Sheku's rights in Atseth. His

error concerned the unequal relationships which are brought into being by marriage. When Kith'an married Zaudithu, Guth'ama became his wife-giving father-in-law, whom he should respect, and obey. But by marrying Atseth, Guth'ama's sister-in-law, and potential wife, given the optional levirate in Dimam, he made himself Guth'ama's equal. He ignored the rules of inequality which pervade Dime society.

It is this factor of inequality which is involved in the rule of not marrying into related clans for five generations. A clan is subordinate to those clans which gave it wives, and, to a lesser degree, to their wife-givers. If its men take further spouses from such clans, its subordination increases to an unacceptable level. Conversely, if it gives them women, status contradictions arise. Kith'an's kin were quite prepared to ignore the status contradictions he introduced by making himself equal to his superior, since it offered no disrespect to them, and merely served to illustrate the stupidity of the wronged parties.

I have covered prohibitted marriages is such detail, since they suggest the importance of hierarchical distinctions in Dime social life. I must now move on to what should happen at marriages, and provide empirical evidence of some of the 'ideal' events being put into practice.

First, an account of what should happen, provided by my friend Argenu.

> " It is best for a man to have 2 or 3 wives. One is bad, for if she gets sick, he will have no-one to look after the house or entertain his guests, and he is a poor man. More than 3 may be too many, because they might argue, but a man who has much land, coffee, or cows, may have 4 or 5. The customary bridewealth is 6 cows, with £ 10 on the back of each. This is the same for Dime of any caste, if they have enough money - even a tanner or blacksmith might pay this. If a man can only just afford 6 cows, and paying them makes him broke, the girl's father should return 2 cows. If he is

not poor, and can afford the cows, the girl's father has to send 6 to 10 gourds of beer every year in order to pay back the gifts he received for the woman. If the couple have poor crops, or other problems, the girl's father helps them with money or crops, and sends the beer as well ...

If a man has no cows, he may be allowed to pay the equivalent amount of money. If he doesn't have enough money and there is a woman who loves him, he may try to get her for nothing. They will set up home and work together to make money, and give something to the girl's father later. If a boy can't afford the bridewealth, his clansmen and relatives must help him; brother, sister, father's brother, father's sister and others in the clan might help .... If the girl's father doesn't have much beer, his brother can help out with a gift of crops.

Since the Bodi war people have few cows. People get together and buy one or two cows. The girl's father will accept this because times are bad. He can't insist on the right amount. When there are more crops and cows, people will try to make the bridewealth up to a reasonable amount. Even if a boy gives nothing, the girl's father must give beer. It is the custom to do these things. If someone just takes a girl without paying it brings shame on him. It is a kind of boast to give cows and beer ....

It takes about a week to arrange a marriage. The boy sends a girl who is a friend of both parties, to ask the girl is she likes him. If she does, he sends his father and some other old people to her father's home. They ask her father if he will give her. He says 'Yes' because if he said 'No' and she wanted to go, she would go anyway. He fixes the price. Then the boy brings one cow to the father's house. Between the first arrangements and the marriage, the boy avoids the girl's parents - he runs away when he sees them coming.

Later on, about 6 months or a year after the marriage, the girl's father buys clothes for the couple. He also slaughters an ox from his own herd, and prepares t'ej ..... All the boy's relations who helped him come too, and eat and drink. They stay 2 days, then go home. If she was not a virgin, or he doesn't like her, he stays married, but takes back the cow, and doesn't give anything. They still have to give him beer. The feast goes on, and the girl's father gossips to old people of the boy's clan, and tells them he didn't pay anything. The old people talk with the boy's father, and tell the boy to give something. If the girl doesn't like her husband early on, her father can give back what he received, and cancel the marriage ".

I now cite an observed match which featured some of the elements mentioned by Argenu. Doselats, an old man of Gedaf clan, and a resident of Woch'o village, was a poor man who had one daughter (Turunesh) and one son still living with him. Kidadu, a young man living in another village, (Woide) sent some old men to Doselats with two cows. They discussed the bridewealth, and agreed that the boy should send one more cow, and $ Eth. 60 as bridewealth, and another cow as the 'nuku' for Turunesh's virginity. She went to a funeral ceremony in Shinga, and the boy met her there and took her home with him. This eliminated the necessity of a feast with dancing and drinking. From this time until the boy sent the nuku cow, Doselats could not visit the girl in her new home. If he did, his ancestors's spirits would go with him, bring a Gome on the girl, and make her ill, because of the unpaid bridewealth, and in particular the absent nuku cow, through whose intestines they should show approval of the match.

The members of Gedaf clan were to eat the nuku cow when it arrived. Of the three bridewealth cows, one was to be kept by Doselats himself, one by Wolde, and the other by Mamo Dolinde, since both of these latter were wealthy clansmen, and would be providing the bulk of the counter-gifts of the girl. The cash was to be divided between several other clansmen who had agreed to send beer to the couple at appropriate times. The three men who received a cow would each give ten gourds of beer, and two head-loads of ensete. They should also gather together some money and buy the couple several items of clothing. Those who received money were to give three or four gourds of beer, and buy a small article of clothing. Doselats told me :-

> "Someone who wants to show his importance makes extra beer and invites the girl's husband and parents to come to

his house and drink, or just sends it if it isn't very much. He becomes an important relative to the girl, and if she runs away from her husband, she might go to him ". (In such a case, the husband should give the man who looked after his wife a gift of money or beer. By being a key figure in the negotiations for the girl's return, the man will also gain repute in his own and the husband's villages.)

Three month's later, Thurunesh's husband had not payed the money, and she came back to Wolde's house to stay. Her husband came with some 'adults' from Woch'o, to ask her to return, and told Wolde and Doselats that he needed her back to guard the crops. After that, he would go trading to make the money. Wolde and Doselats replied that he should first get the money, then they would send her back. He went home without her. Doselats said that if her husband didn't pay the money, Turunesh would marry someone else, and they would give him back one cow, and keep the other as nuku.

It is clear from this example that unless a man is wealthy himself he needs the assistance of his clansmen (or a patron) if he is to pay a reasonable amount of bridewealth. On the other side, the girl's father may not have the resources to prepare beer and food, and buy clothes to send back, and so he too needs help. This is where the clan emerges as a co-operative economic unit. The parties who give also receive, and do not make a loss on the proceedings. They exchange one kind of valuable for another plus prestige. They can even make a gift over and above the necessary level, to display their resources and increase their fame. In a society where there are relatively few opportunities to exhibit wealth, and in which it is unwise to do so, (because of the police and Amharas who are constantly seeking to fleece all but the poorest) the acquisition of prestige based on wealth is often best accomplished by such transactions.

The payment of bridewealth and of the return gifts are important factors in the relationship between affines. If one side or the other does not honour its obligations, this becomes a source of discontent, and is always raised in arguments between husband and wife, or the man and his affines. Such arguments often lead to violence, moots and divorce.

Polygyny

Polygyny brings a man four distinct advantages. Firstly, he gains many affines who may be useful allies. Secondly, he acquires women to work in his house and fields, and to brew the beer which lures others to his work parties. Thirdly, he gains potential child-bearers. Children are an economic, political (in the long term) and religious gain. When adult, they create fresh affinal links at the time when their father is at his most authoritative. Finally, the wives produce the agricultural surplus necessary for him to be a hospitable man, always able to entertain guests with food and drink. Only such a man is readily able to attach clients to himself, and further increase his power and prestige.

It should be recognised that polygynous men are in the minority, and that they mainly acquire extra wives at the expense of those who have none. Such inequality, which concerns access to a crucial economic and social asset, has clear political implications. It is notable that the 'adults' who hear cases are primarily defined as heads of households, and not by age.

It seems that the Dime achieve polygyny primarily by three mechanisms; firstly, the higher marriage age of men; secondly, by marrying Basketo women, while few Dime women leave to marry Basketo

men; and thirdly, by a high divorce rate, which keeps women circulating. Usually a man's second wife has been divorced at least once. Such women do not warrant bridewealth payments, but only a small personal gift, which makes them less of a financial investment than virgins. A man prefers to marry a virgin as his first wife because she is beautiful and prestige attaches to such a marriage. But his later wives are needed primarily for their economic contribution. Even if a woman stays for one harvest only, she will more than repay the small gift she has received. Such marriages are more likely to be short-lived than are first marriages, so that many men benefit for a short period from a woman's labour, and she collects frequent personal gifts. Wives need not lose the fruits of their labour by leaving a man, since they can and usually do claim half of the crops from the fields on which they have done much work.

It follows from the above that the successful polygynist either has a high turnover with constant supply, or else keeps his additional wives from leaving. In Woch'o there were examples of both methods. Mamo Dolinde had four wives, three of whom had been with him for over ten years. They were constantly at odds with one another, but by a mixture of force and diplomacy he had so far retained them all. Dando Gush, the leading shaman of the area, employed a different tactic. Although still a relatively young man, he claimed to have had a total of 26 wives, and maintained three during my stay in Woch'o. The two men were by far the wealthiest and most influential in the village. A successful polygynist must be a tyrant, a diplomat, or alternate between the two. Arguments between his wives eventually involve him, and he must reach a

decision to please all parties. If he fails, the dispute broadens, and his beloved becomes angry at him as well as at her co-wife. It is then difficult to persuade her to stay, although a gift may succeed for the time being. If the marriage involved bridewealth, separation is simple but divorce complicated, since the man can claim the return of all or part of his outlay. Since the woman does not receive any of the cows or money paid to her father, there is no reason for her to regard this as a deterrent to divorce. Any repayments must be made by her clansmen to her husband, or by her new husband to the old, and the trouble is theirs. Bridewealth is something negotiated by men, but divorce is almost always a woman's initiative. No matter how much a woman has annoyed her husband, he will not tell her to go, since her labour is invaluable, although there are rare exceptions to this as the actions of Sheku in the Kith'an affair previously discussed showed. It may well be that the economics of bridewealth being an exclusively male field contributes to the frequency of divorce in such marriages, although this is still not so high as in non-bridewealth marriages. If a woman suffered economically from divorcing she would perhaps be less likely to do so. But on the contrary, it is when she changes husbands that she may profit, by retaining half of her crops,which is certainly not less than she would retain if married, and by receiving items of clothing, or money from her new spouse. This manoeuvre is particularly appealing if her present husband is poor, or mean, or both.

For a woman, a polygynous household has good and bad points. If there are several wives and children, she can surreptitiously do less work. On the other hand, she receives less attention, and

suspects that her husband is sleeping with the others more, buying them secret gifts, taking visitors to their homes rather than hers, and even hanging his wellington boots elsewhere ! The more wives there are, the more difficult it is for the husband to keep track of the amounts of coffee, grain, and other crops that each has. In the long run, a wife in such a household can gain considerably by selling small amounts of crops at the weekly market, and secretly hoarding the money. Since the cash is gained illicitly, she cannot spend it openly, but saves it for her children. If she prefers money to spend on herself, frequent divorce and remarriage is a better tactic and that chosen by many women.

For a politically ambitious man polygyny is essential (or almost so) since he needs the crops, beer, work parties, affines and prestige which it brings. It also seemed to me that a man who could control four wives could easily control a chiefdom !

SECTION G - SUMMARY

It is clear that aspects of the realms of caste, kinship, and marriage are important to the workings of the political structure.

The caste system defines polluters as people with no possibility of political advancement. Commoners may take advantage of the new political possibilities, but rarely do so, although in the next chapter, I shall discuss one who has, the rainmaker of the northern chiefdoms. Essentially, members of the top two castes still dominate Dime politics.

Clan membership is no longer the assurance of land rights that it used to be. Current patronage structures primarily feature

Amharas as landlords, although some important Dime have tenants. Clansmen still have a preference to live near to one another, and benefit from this in terms of the economic and ritual co-operation which proximity makes possible. The clan is ritually co-ordinated by its Baira, or eldest son, who offers animals and crops to the clan ancestors and Gimze. His position as intermediary between the world of the supra-natural, and his lesser clansmen, makes him a small-scale leader, and provides a springboard for wider political activities. Other members of the clan may gain fame by donating an animal for sacrifice, and this evidence of wealth may attract relatives or strangers to come to live with them. Rich men may also help poorer clansmen with marriage payments and in time of need. Thus the Baira, and other relatively wealthy men, acquire the core of their following within the clan.

Within the lineage such inequalities occur on a much smaller scale, and the eldest son is again a respected figure. Further, he has control of the inheritance, and of ritual contact with his siblings' ancestors. His age and resources may well enable him to become the head of a polygynous household while his younger brothers struggle to pay for their first wives. He thus gains a head start in life, and can expect to be more important in the community than his siblings, who provide the nucleus of a following.

Outside of the lineage, the link between a man and his sister's son is a most important one. The latter is defined as the ritual servant of his mother's brother, but an important man may delegate this servility to his own sister's son, and thus emphasize his authority. It sometimes happens that a man's sisters' sons come to live with him as clients, paying reduced tithes, and tax, and working for him with no immediate return.

A man should marry someone of the same caste but a different clan. Since he is defined as a subordinate to his father-in-law, a man who marries into a lower caste causes status contradictions, and is often resented by his fellow clansmen. An important and ambitious man tries to gather both his sons-in-law and his sisters' sons around him. He thus has a body of men to help him with farming, house-building, rituals, and any other tasks. At the same time, he accumulates wives, who carry out the routine household and agricultural chores, and brew the beer with which he rewards his workers and entertains his guests.

Thus caste, clanship, kinship and marriage create inequalities, which ambitious men manipulate to their advantage. In such a remote, small-scale and exploited society the difference between importance and mediocrity is not spectacular, and rests on such manoeuvres. To see where they lead, we must turn our attention to the traditional offices of the Dime, and then to various new possibilities.

CHAPTER THREE

THE TRADITIONAL POLITICAL STRUCTURE

I have now discussed those aspects of 'the environment' which are immediately relevant to the workings of the 'traditional political strucure'. By the latter I mean primarily, in Bailey's words, " a set of rules for regulating competition " (Bailey. 1969, P 1). between members of the political community. I have already mentioned briefly that the Amhara colonisation, followed by the Italian occupation, suspended all independent political activity in Dimam between about 1900 and 1945. After this, when the Dime ceased to be slaves and regained a limited degree of autonomy, their previous politico-religious structure re-appeared. There are two main problems for any analysis of this structure; firstly, what is the connection between the current version of it, and that which existed prior to colonisation ? Secondly, what is the importance of the structure after the 'Ethiopianisation' of the region ?

I believe that the answer to the first question is that the normative rules of the structure are the same now as prior to the invasion, but that its role has changed greatly. It is partly for this reason that I believe Bailey's approach to politics through the 'rules of the game' is particularly appropriate for Dimam. This chapter attempts to provide a picture of the normative rules which apply to the offices of the traditional political structure, and then examines certain witnessed 'confrontations', during which pragmatic rules became clear. I shelve the second question until I have dis-

cussed the 'encapsulation' of Dimam and its consequence.

Before commencing, I must explain to which area my account refers. Dimam is divided into 7 territories, each of which is presided over by an official entitled 'Zimu', which I translate as chief. Prior to the invasion, there was no authority over the 7 chiefs, and no regular co-operation between them. Each chiefdom was then politically and jurally independent, but the rules of caste endogamy and clan exogamy ensured that they were in perpetual relationship with one another.

Even today, when the chiefs are subordinate to wider authorities, their independence of one another is emphasized by the rituals which each performs in his own territory. Each has supporting officers, but their names and number are not the same in each territory. My home was in the chiefdom of Uth'a, probably the largest and most populous of the seven. There is no 'typical' chiefdom, since each has been differently affected by the events of the past 75 years. Uth'a has had intimate contact with the Amharas, and it was here that a large Amhara township flourished at the height of their power. Since then, most of them have moved to Garo, which is also within the boundaries of Uth'a, and an easy walking distance from the main villages of the chiefdom of Uth'a, and to its north-west, Ganchire. Since Uth'a has had so much contact with the Amharas, it is highly suitable for an analysis of political change in Dimam.

The following account mainly applies to Uth'a, although data from other chiefdoms is occasionally introduced. Although the analysis would not fit the other territories without modifications, they can be assumed to be broadly similar, and to hold the same ideology of chiefship.

I must introduce one further factor before proceeding. Within the chiefdoms are a number of 'village chiefdoms'. I was for some time in a state of confusion concerning the relationship of the latter to the former, within which they lay. A chiefdom is an area which, ideally, extends for a considerable distance, and has a relatively large population. But Duch'a, a chiefdom south of Uth'a, now contains only one village, and that a very small one. This is the result of population movement, and the territory is still referred to as a chiefdom, rather than a village chiefdom. Thus the distinction between the two is not one purely of area and population, but has a historical foundation.

A village chief has ritual power only over the small area of the dwellings and farm land of his own village. He performs rituals for this limited area, and may have officials under him. A chief performs rituals for a much larger territory, including any village-chiefdoms within it, and his rituals determing its well-being - whether there is famine or plenty, drought or rain, and so on. The rituals of a village chief affect such matters as slight differences of crop yields between villages of the chiefdom, the presence or absence of crop-raiding animals, and, especially, the abundance or absence of honey in one village, as opposed to others. The chiefdom may have a bad year, but within it, some villages will be noticeably better than others. If such a village has a village-chief, the credit for the situation will go to him. Within Uth'a, Shinga is the only such village.

The Chiefdom of Uth'a

" When analysing a particular structure, the first task is to

describe the boundaries of its political community. This is done by identifying rules which mark off members from ousiders ". (Bailey. 1969. P 23). There are four basic questions to be asked to determine the membership of the chiefdom of Uth'a as a political community.

a) " What political roles constitute membership of that community ? " (Bailey. 1969, P24). The political roles of the chiefdom consist of two offices, and a population which accepts the holders as legitimate.

b) " What other roles (political or not) qualify a man to play membership roles ? " (op. cit. P 24). The basic membership qualifications are residence and ethnic identity. Members of the political community of the chiefdom of Uth'a are resident within its boundaries and are Dime, or married to Dime. There are also within the territory many Amharas, who are not members of the community, since they do not accept the chief as their ritual or jural leader in any way.

c) " What are the symbols of the political community ? " (ditto). The symbols concern chiefship, and consist of objects, places, actions and words which are endowed with ritual power, and ensure the well-being of the community.

d) " Are the boundaries closed or open ? " (ditto). The residence qualification is open - people move between chiefdoms, and become subject to different chiefs without formality, and 'outsiders' marry Dime and become members of the community.

This provides us with the membership rules. We now need to answer the same questions with regard to the 'political elite' ; " those within the community who are qualified by the rules of the

political structure to take an active part in political competition " (P 24).

The political roles involved are those of chief, priest, and of people eligible to be such. Eligibility is limited by the two criteria, sex and caste. The chief must be a male member of the chief caste, and the priest a male member of the priest caste. The male members of these two castes constitute the political elite. The office holders adhere strictly to the dietary regulations of their castes, and retreat into isolation before performing any of the rituals of their office. These and other symbols will be discussed in more detail shortly. The boundaries of the elite are closed and members of other castes can never be eligible for office.

We have now briefly identified the political community and its elite. Within an elite, there are often competing teams. In Uth'a there are two 'moral teams' or 'cores' competing for the chiefship. These are the Cobnits and Lassnits clans, whose clan Bairas are the candidates for chiefship. The situation with regard to succession is that if a chief is successful until he dies, a member of his clan, (usually his eldest son) will be chosen as the next zimu. If, on the other hand, his period in office brings misfortune to the people, he will be deposed and a member of the rival clan put in his place.

Obviously, with two rival 'cores' in the chiefdom, there are rival interpretations of its situation at any time. Members of the incumbent's clan will try to provide excuses for any evident problems in the territory. Particularly, they will maintain that members of the rival clan are not fulfilling their commitment to provide the chief with crops, or an animal, to offer to the suprahuman forces.

Members of the other clan will say that the chief is too poor or too lazy to sacrifice, that he does not know how to, or that the gods do not accept his offerings.

Members of other clans must decide for themselves which account of the situation is true, and act accordingly. If they feel that all is not well, 'adults' amongst them should go to one of the intermediaries between the chief and his people - usually the Bakoɓ, but also the head of the hunter caste, who has a special relationship with the chief, or one of the ritual officials who took part in the chief's enthronement. The intermediary passes the complaint to the chief, who attempts to rectify the situation by making an appropriate sacrifice, which is discovered by consulting a diviner or, nowadays, a shaman. If this does not improve matters they may again contact the chief, or they may decide to replace him. Such a decision should be reached by the consensus of important people in the chiefdom, decided on the criterion of the efficacy or lack thereof, of the chief's Balth'u (spiritual power). I reserve further discussion of this issue until I have fully examined the concept of Balth'u, the means of obtaining it, and ways of assessing it. I have said that there are two 'core' teams, constituted around their clan heads. I must now show what it is that they are competing for. What are the 'prizes' of Uth'a chiefdom, who is eligible to compete for them, and what actions or qualities merit them ? (See Bailey Ps. 19 and 20). The first and most important prize is the honour which chiefship brings the incumbent and his supporters.

SECTION ONE - Chiefship

The present chief (zimu) has now only a vestige of the power

of his predecessors. But although the value of the prize has diminished, it is still greatly desired.

There is a myth concerning the origin of the Uth'a chiefs, and I provide here a composite version of it. Myths in Dimam are not major items of political debate and a chief does not legitimize his position by a detailed exposition of the dramatic feats of his ancestors. Indeed, such tales are extracted with the greatest of difficulty, and usually only after beer has loosened the tongue of the reluctant narrator. For these reasons, I do not regard the slight variations between versions as having deep significance, and do not present them.

Cobnits, Lassnits and Gedaf clans came together from Ch'ara, (Gimber in Dimaf) in Kaffa Province, about two day's walk to the north of Ganchire, on the other side of the Omo River. They settled in the in-between region of Uth'a, and the group of hunter caste members they brought with them lived semi-nomadically in the bush nearby. These hunters were unable to find sufficient game there, and moved to the lowlands, where they were able to eat well, and acted as guards against the raiding activities of pastoralist neighbours.

The 'immigrants' met with the original inhabitants of the area, including commoner clans and Gayzaf clan (of Kaisaf caste), whose members later became servants of the chief. The aboriginals lived mainly on cows' blood and milk, and were poor farmers, so that the newcomers soon farmed larger fields and produced better yields. They brought with them belief in mountain gods, and the practice of sacrificing to them, which gained the approval of the aboriginals. " Now, when Dime pray at the Holy Places, they start by calling

the names of the earliest chiefs. All the words were given by the past chiefs ". Because of the immigrants' knowledge of farming and ritual the aboriginals invited their leader to become chief. He already had a priest under him in the religious hierarchy which came from Ch'ara, and selected Gayzaf clan as his servants. The period between the mythical foundation of the chiefdom and the years immediately before the conquest, is a blank, and there is no speculative interest in it.

There are a few people still alive who remember the country, prior to the arrival of the Amharas at the turn of the century, and others between 40 and 50 years of age have a picture of the period, obtained from the accounts of their parents and grandparents. It is clear that each chief made his own legal judgements, no matter how serious the case was, since there was no centralized government of any kind. The zimu dealt with disputes in his own house, and the parties each brought him a gift of honey or a cow, since he might curse them if they did not. His servants acted as his police force, and he might keep a man prisoner, or alternatively, send his servants to seize the cattle of the man or his close kin as a fine. He tried cases, gave judgements, and passed sentences, which he had the power to enforce.

In cases of murder involving members of two clans, members of the involved groups could not eat or drink together, until they came to perform a sacrifice under the supervision of the chief. The latter washed the two groups in the blood of the cow, and then sprayed them with water, after which they could eat and drink together once more. Commensality is, of course, a key symbol of social relations, and the main agricultural tasks are performed by work-parties, whose

members are rewarded with a beer drink afterwards. If two groups are banned from these activities, economic and social co-operation is impossible, the health and wealth of the community is threatened, and members of all clans suffer. Only the chief had the authority to intervene in such a charged situation, and was able, by virtue of his Balth'u to heal the social rift.

As well as paying specific 'fees' to the chief for hearing a dispute, people were expected to bring him frequent gifts of crops and other items in recognition of the fact that these came as a result of his good Balth'u. They had also to bring him specific portions of each harvest, which he offered to the gods and spirits at the appropriate shrines. Gifts did not flow only one way. The chief redestributed some of them to his subjects in feasts, while others went to the suprahuman forces whose blessing enabled further crops to grow. He also supported certain 'poor' sectors of the community, notably smiths and tanners, who had few crops, because of the ban on their owning farm land.

The chief was also the political head of the chiefdom, in charge of defensive or offensive campaigns. There were occasional fights with other chiefdoms. But more regularly they fought the lowland pastoralists to the west of Dimam, since the men of Uth'a spent much time in this region with their large herds of cattle, and grazing rights were frequently disputed. The chief initiated such actions and gave them ritual backing.

Thus the chief had political and jural authority and power, sanctioned by his position as the ritual head of the chiefdom. His status involved a bundle of rights and duties, each strand of which supported the others. Although he is remembered as an almost divine

figure because of his frequent contact with the gods, and his commanding power, he was ultimately responsible to his subjects, who held the sanction of deposition if he was unsatisfactory. Although the people were ruled by the chief and obliged to obey his decisions and bring him gifts, they ultimately had control of their own destiny, through the possibility of removing an unsatisfactory ruler.

So, until the conquest, the prize of chiefship had several facets - political, jural, economic and religious. The chief had physical as well as spiritual power. Today he has only the latter, but this is still valuable enough to warrant fierce competition. Such power is gained through successful contact with supra-human forces and is essential if there are to be crops, animals, children and peace. Such power, known as Balth'u, is so central to the nature of chiefship, that I must discuss it before any other matter.

a) The Chief's Balth'u

The word 'Balth'u' means literally 'forehead', and there is no suitable word which might render it in English. The nearest translation I can provide is 'spiritual power'. The Dime themselves cannot concisely explain its meaning, and do so mainly by discussing the results of good or bad Balth'u. My friend Argenu told me :-

> " If we install a new chief, and then plant crops, and they grow more than usual, we say 'These crops are better than before because the new chief's Balth'u helped to make them many. His Balth'u is good and makes things grow properly'. But if a chief is made, and then the crops are bad and we have a poor harvest, we say 'We must get rid of him; the thoughts he has for the country don't work' ".

The term may be used in two closely-related contexts. Firstly, as above, to describe the spiritual power of the chief, which affects all his subjects. Secondly, to describe this force in any other person, including Bakob and Shalem, which affects the affairs of

his own family, and perhaps, in the case of the former, the local rituals at which he officiates.

> " If a chief's Balth'u is bad, the spirits and Iyaf (God) won't accept what he offers; something unusual will happen; things will be bad. It means he has a 'Gome' (spiritually caused misfortune) on himself, which makes everything he does go wrong. People notice when things go wrong - if the cows give no calves, starvation begins, the children are always hungry; they put hives in trees and the honey is eaten by animals, or there is none; they plant crops and they are raided by wild animals. Old men look at all of this, come together to discuss it, and decide his Balth'u isn't good any more, so they must get rid of him ".

Balth'u is not a facet of the chief's personal nature, but of his relationship with the gods and spirits. He cannot have good Balth'u unless he is in a state of ritual purity. He should work as little as possible and keep himself apart from the rest of the people. He builds a special house, known as the Mish-Eh, into which no-one but himself, his Gis (ritual servant) or children may enter. Women may on no account enter it, neither may any man other than Gis, in case he has recently slept with a woman or eaten a prohibited food. The chief should live mostly in the Mish-Eh, wearing the traditional ritual garb of black cow skin, and should rarely sleep with his wives. Women have negative ritual status. They are strictly excluded from many rituals and take no active part in those which they are allowed to attend. Their polluting nature is most characteristically linked by the Dime to menstruation and childbirth. A chief may not allow a menstruating woman into the house he is occupying, or eat any food she has prepared. This causes no practical problem, since he either has more than one wife, in which case he moves to the house of a 'clean' one; or he has relatives nearby with whom the wife can stay, and who prepare him food from his crops. If neither of these are possible on a particular occasion, he ret-

reats to the Mish-Eh, and has a young girl bring him food in there.

When the chief travels, he does not pass in front of the door of those people who eat chicken, goat or sheep; nor near any hut where a baby is to born (a special temporary construction); nor near a house in which there is a woman with a child whose teeth have not begun to grow. Added together, these prohibitions exclude almost everyone, and so he usually skirts around villages, either on a back path, or through the surrounding bush. If he wishes to visit someone he avoids the rest of the houses, and emerges from the bush just behind the house, and approaches the door without using any main village paths. Since he need not avoid people on the road, it seems that the 'polluting' qualities of people are most potent in and around their homes.

The chief has special dietary prohibitions, which exclude chicken, eggs, fish, sheep, and goats, and he should not enter a house where there are such delicacies. If he comes near to such food, or breaks any of the other 'taboos', it is said that he will contract scabies and become very thin. This scabies can be regarded as external evidence of internal pollution ; it can be contracted by any Dime who fails to avoid smiths, and tanners, as has been mentioned in Chapter Two. The remedy for such pollution is a ritual one, usually requiring the sacrifice of an animal.

The belief that the chief will become thin is more specifically tied into the realm of chiefship symbols. If he is thin, it is not just an external sign of internal pollution, but the reverse of the constitution of a chief. When a chief receives his food, he does not eat it all, but leaves some of it in the house. He is replete before he has finished all the food which has been brought to him - " People will get enough crops when it happens like this. They will have enough to eat, and even some to throw away ". If

he is 'thin', it means that his food does not satisfy him, he cannot eat enough, and it will be the same for all his subjects. If he ignores the ritual prohibitions which enable him to maintain a good Balth'u, he and his subjects suffer. The offerings which he makes are revealed as unacceptable by the reading of the intestines, and the anger of the gods and spirits brings disaster.

Before performing any sacrifice for the chiefdom, the chief must retire into his Mish-Eh for three days, and be fed by young children. He has no contact with his wives during this period, and must emphatically not have intercourse with them. As well as protecting the chief from pollution, this seclusion ensures that he will not be attacked by the quite distinct force of 'evil-eye', which will make him sick, and possibly too ill to carry out the sacrifice.

When he has been in the Mish-Eh for three days, clear of pollution of any kind, he is ready to go to the sacrifice place. He sends messengers out to clear the path before he leaves the house, and travels to the place without meeting anyone. He meets his ritual assistants at the shrine, carries out his role in the sacrifice, and returns to the Mish-Eh, again without seeing anyone. The avoidance of people during the period surrounding a sacrifice is couched in terms quite different from 'pollution'. At this time, it is not only that others will harm the purity of the chief, but that the very sight of him would kill them! 'Purity' and 'danger' are here complementary aspects of the same condition. The chief isolates himself to ensure that no-one pollutes him. After three days, he is pure enough to sacrifice to the gods. Such purity is the pinnacle of man's ritual possibilities, the opposite of everyday man,

and highly dangerous to him. Only the essential officials are allowed at a sacrifice, and if a person happens to come to the shrine even when it is not in use, the gods may decide to kill him. For this reason, people avoid these places, which is simple enough, since their approximate location is well-known and they are never on a path.

Dime cosmology embraces several hierarchies. There are men, women and children. Men are the highest, and deal with suprahuman forces; women are lowest, and hinder contacts with these forces; children are neutral, and neither aid not hinder contact. Within humanity, there are those with a positive ritual status (chiefs and priests), those with a negative ritual status (smiths, tanners, kaisaf), and those with neutral religious status (commoners). Among animals, cows are the highest, pigs are the most polluting, and others may be roughly ranked in between.

The chief is the most dedicated follower of the rules of hierarchy, which forbid ritual contact between categories. On the most obvious level, the village of a chief displays the rules in spatial terms : the chief's Mish-Eh is the highest house in the village (remembering that most villages are built on terraces). Below it are his other houses, and then the houses of ordinary villagers. At the lowest level come the houses of smiths and tanners, if there are any. When the chief attends a public gathering, such as a wedding or funeral, he sits on a terrace above everyone, whilst smiths should disport themselves below; (although in the case of funerals certain 'symbolic reversals' occur). The chief receives his own pot of beer and supply of food, which he shares with no-one.

The result of the chief's pursuit of purity is successful

intercourse with the suprahuman beings which control the chiefdom. This leads to a period of plenty, and public recognition of his good Balth'u. To be a chief who is acknowledged in this way by his subjects is the greatest prize of the traditional structure. To be a chief without public acceptance is a dubious honour, since the probability of deposition increases with each misfortune the chiefdom suffers. In other words, a chief loses the prize if he does not carry out the actions, and attain the quality, which merit it. The essential actions are; firstly, the avoidance of impurity by such measures as skirting round villages when travelling, eating only food prepared in his own home, and retreating to the Mish-Eh before rituals. Secondly, enacting the rituals which necessitate such purity. I have covered the first of these, and now turn to the second.

b) The Chief's Rituals

Details of the rituals performed by the chief with the help of his subordinate officers proved very difficult to obtain. I have mentioned that even other chiefly Dime (with occasional exceptions) avoid being on the roads near a shrine on a sacrifice day. Since I ate several of the forbidden foods, and had contact with blacksmiths, I was classified as 'like an Amhara' as far as pollution was concerned - that is, as someone outside the caste system, with no legitimate place in its cosmology. I was therefore excluded from chiefly rituals, since the reaction of the gods and spirits to such outsiders at their shrines is not thought to be favorable.

Most Dime had, of course, never been to such a ritual, and their accounts of them were a mixture of received information, and extrapolation from the more familiar proceedings of lineage rituals.

My discussions with past and present chiefs and with the Bakob suggested that chiefly rituals are not essentially different from any others. They are of three basic types ; calendrical, 'rites of affliction', and life-crisis.

i) Calendrical Rituals

One of the most important calendrical rituals takes place at Wollo, to the east of and above the village of Shira. Wollo is the place where the first Uth'a chiefs settled, and is where new chiefs are enthroned. In the past, the chief lived there throughout his reign, but it is now deserted. The offerings of a bull and crops should be made soon after the t'eff harvest in November. If they have a bull to kill, which they certainly do not every year, the priest holds it, while the chief hits it on the head with a rock. They offer the spirits of the past chiefs blood, meat, beer made from the new t'eff crop, t'eff dough, honey, and cooked ensete. The food that remains after the offering is buried by Bakob. The chief prays with words such as ; " You earth; you gave us these crops to eat. Now we are giving some of them back to you. Give us more". A sister's son of the chief cooks the food, whilst Shalem, his ritual servant, brings wood and water, cuts up the meat for cooking, and generally carries out the labouring tasks. Zimu and Bakob eat some of the meat.

In 1973, when I was in the country, the sacrifice was delayed for several months, because the people had not given the chief t'eff from which to make the offerings of beer and dough. He claimed that during his six years as chief he had made the sacrifice at Wollo every year, as well as several offerings there to remedy specific 'Gomes', although I doubt the veracity of this statement.

The other important calendrical offering, which is to Iyaf, takes place on Jimshu (Mount Donaldson Smith), which at over 8,000 ft., is the highest point in the country. It is the pinnacle of Dime height symbolism, as Iyaf is the pinnacle of the pantheon, and is the only Uth'a shrine that lies outside the chiefdom.

Mamo Dolinde, who was himself eligible to be Bakob, told me :-

> " The Jimsha god is the biggest and highest one. He likes honey, cows, and milk. He protects the country from war, the cows from disease, brings honey, and makes the cows give milk. He lives on the top of Jimsha mountain, and no-one can see him - he may decide to kill them or not ". (A reference to the dangerous nature of shrines, as previously discussed).

Mangada Elan, a former chief, said :-

> " The animal killed at Jimsha is a young, black, bull calf. The chief prays at a distance from where the god is. Intsuk (a lesser official) kills the bull, and Zimu takes the heart, liver, meat, and blood to the shrine. Zimu and Bakob don't eat any of the meat.
>
> All those attending wear black cow skin on their hips and as a hat. (They used to wear leopard skins, but do not now do so since the Government banned the killing of them, and trading in their skins). Intsuk and Zimu pray, both using the same words. They call the god of Jimsha, and say ; ' We give you this bull to give us enough crops. Send out sickness and make the country overflow. Give us more honey and milk (and other desirables) '.
>
> When we carry honey to the shrine, we must carry the whole hive, and take out the honey on the spot. God protects us from bites .... ".

The remains of the animal are taken home and eaten by Intsuk, and the shrine should be referred to as 'the ugly place' to avoid calling its name during the period surrounding the sacrifice. These are clear indications of the 'danger' which is inherent in such an important contact with gods.

There are other shrines at which calendrical rituals are said to take place, most notably Umfin (south of Woch'o) which is the traditional burial ground of the Uth'a chiefs. But sacrifices are

not taking place at these shrines with any regularity, and they have effectively become sites of 'rites of affliction' only.

ii) Rites of Affliction

The chief performs rites of affliction when his territory is going through a period of misfortune in terms of poor crops, disease, lack of honey or other such tangible considerations. A particular incident which occurred during my stay necessitated a sacrifice at a shrine called Doong, immediately to the north of, and above, Woch'o.

A man called Nagu had promised to sacrifice a certain cow at Doong, but instead took it to the village of Gach'a, near Ganchire, and sold it for meat. This became a 'Gome' to him, and enabled a member of the Bodi tribe to shoot and kill him. Mamo Badji, the chief, and Wolde the Bakob were afraid because the spirit of Doong had been promised a cow and not received it. The preceding death confirmed that there was a 'Gome' in the chiefdom, and this might transfer to them since the area is their responsibility.

So Zimu, Bakob and Shalem went to the shrine with honey in its hive, and placed it on the large sacrificing rock. The chief said (according to Wolde) : " Father Doong. Our grandfathers used to sacrifice to this place, and we continued to sacrifice instead of them. So we are asking you not to bring this Gome to us, and to stop the disease which is killing our cows. We regard this honey as a cow, because all our cows are gone ".

After placing the honey on the rock, they dropped the hive, together with the bees, below the rock. The bees emerged and flew to the uplands, an omen that life would be good there, and that the sacrifice was accepted.

The chief does not usually act on his own behalf when performing such a ritual, but is requested to do so by certain 'adults' of the area, who have high status by virtue of their large households, special wisdom, or great age. They may either approach the chief directly, or through a recognized intermediary, such as the Bakob or the leader of the hunter caste, who is thought to have an especially close relationship with the chief. The chief is told of the distress among his people, and that he should take suitable measures to discover which force is bringing the misfortune, and what must be done to placate it.

He then sends representatives to a shaman or diviner to discover what he must do. When he has the necessary information, he must then produce the offering, call together his assistants, ritually prepare himself, and perform the sacrifice at the appropriate shrine.

Since there are several steps between the subjects' feeling of discontent, and the sacrifice necessary to restore their well-being, it is rare for the process to be completed. I shall shortly examine the implications of this in the context of current relations amongst Uth'a officials. But at the moment I must move on to the final type of ritual, which concerns the 'life-crises' of chiefs.

iii) Life Crisis Rituals

If we temporarily ignore the possibility of deposition, a chief goes through two life crisis rituals : he is enthroned and buried. Since one man's enthronement is often another's burial, we may examine the two together.

Death and Succession

When I asked various Dime to give an account of what happens

when a chief dies the accounts they produced varied greatly, and tended to dwell on the allegedly magnificent funerals of the past. The following account is therefore based on the witnessed funeral of the village-chief of Shinga (there being little difference between this and the funeral of a chief apart from its smaller scale); reports from participants in the funeral of the chief of Ishema, which I was unable to attend owing to illness; and a large number of interviews on the subject. It presents a 'composite' event, to which any actual funeral will only approximate. I must omit most of the intricate details of the funeral rites, since I wish mainly to show the process of death and succession, and to convince the reader that chiefship is still very much a central institution in Dime society, even though its political-jural powers have been removed.

When a chief feels that he is dying, he calls for Bakob and Shalem, and possibly his sister's son, and tells them whom he wishes to succeed him. This should be his eldest son, if he has one. If he has not, it will be the closest agnate who is old enough for the responsibility: (in the case of Shinga the deceased's father's brother's son became village-chief). When the chief dies, it is not immediately announced, but the relatives begin to prepare beer and food for the funeral guests. The body is placed in the Mish-Eh, and visitors who come to enquire as to the chief's health are not allowed to see him (he is usually behind a cloth curtain), and are told that he is sleeping, and very ill. They understand the meaning of this, and spread the news rapidly, although they do not explicitly

state that he is dead.

Before the funeral of the deceased, Bakob, Shalem, and Gis inform his chosen successor of the death, and anoint him. They kill a black cow from the herd of the old chief, and put its warm skin around the successor's shoulders, and its peritoneum around his neck. Shalem paints the chief's right hand with cow dung and ash, and a line of ash from the hand to the shoulder. (I can not discuss the wide realm of Dime symbols in this context, but can briefly say that cow dung and ash are distinguishing marks of a kinsman of a deceased person, and that the line from the hand to the shoulder alludes to a method of reading intestines by measuring the width of certain of its features with one's hand, and counting out this distance along the other arm. A measurement from the hand to the shoulder symbolizes death). Bakob coats the cow skin with milk and honey, and anoints the new chief's head with the same. (It seems appropriate that Shalem, a 'polluter' deals with death, and is followed by Bakob, a pure person who brings new life). Bakob and Shalem then sing the appropriate chief's songs and go out to the village to announce the news. The candidate is now in the process of becoming chief, but is not so yet.

On the night of the new chief's anointing more cows are killed, from the herds of both the old and new chiefs, and the horns and jaw bones are placed on the roof of the house where the body lays. The intestines are read to determine whether the sacrifices are satisfactory to the ancestors. Messengers are sent out to call the mourners, and before it is fully light the relatives begin the first day of mourning. A bullet is usually fired in honour of the deceased, to officially open the funeral. Then horns are

blown to call visitors from villages within earshot.

The visitors arrive in village units, and perform elaborate rites which I shall not detail here. When they have finished these, the new chief stands up from behind the kinsmen of the deceased, wearing the black cow skin, an ostrich feather in his hair, and a necklace of leopard's claws. The visiting men dance around him in a warlike manner, and sing chiefly songs. By these actions, they give their public assent to the choice made by the old chief, and enacted by Bakob and Shalem. It is thus the public assent of all the villages in the chiefdom which finalizes the appointment of a new chief, and not the words and deeds of the old chief and his assistants.

Towards evening, sister's sons and sons-in-law of the deceased carry out the body, which is wrapped in a black cow skin, sewn tight at the neck. It is placed inside an inverted house-roof, and the same relatives carry it out of the village to the burial place, which is usually some distance away. Women are not allowed at this spot, but many men accompany the body.

The new chief accompanies the body of the old, and the people dance and sing in honour of both. The body goes before the people and the new chief goes behind. In the case of the chief of Uth'a, they first go to Wollo, " along the same road on which the chiefs walked in the past ". The new chief sits on 7 large stones which are situated at intervals by the side of the road. When they reach Wollo, where the first chiefs settled, the new one sits on the large stone there, and is formally enthroned (or perhaps 'enstoned'). People raise the corpse of the old chief, and put the forehead, (Balth'u) of the old and new chiefs together.

The ceremony now follows two directions. The new chief continues with certain rituals to ensure that his 'Balth'u' is good, details of which I must omit. Meanwhile, the mourners take the body to the official burying ground of Uth'a chiefs at Umfin, half an hour's walk from Wollo. There are now two other sites at which Uth'a chiefs may be laid to rest, and the burial is in a deep grave, with the head protruding above the ground. The physical fate of the body is watched with great interest. If the grave fills with maggots, it proves that the chief did well when he was alive, and that the chiefdom is in a satisfactory state. But if no maggots come, he was bad, and the chiefdom will be 'destroyed'. In present times, once the body has decomposed to the satisfaction of the watchers, they cover it with earth, put the house roof over it, and leave it. This marks the end of the rites to dispose of the dead chief, although on rare occasions the incumbent may perform a nominally calendrical sacrifice here for the spirits of past chiefs. The shrine may also be the venue of rites of affliction, if a diviner or shaman suggests that the spirits which linger there are the cause of a problem in the chiefdom. But in general, the site is now left alone.

Back in the dead chief's village, on the seventh day after the funeral, at the end of the most intense period of mourning, the close relatives cook some meat, kept from the black bull killed to mark the chief's death. Each relative eats a piece of this, and if any of them have been in any way responsible for his death, by putting evil eye on him for example, they will die from eating this. Then they take a piece of the black skin, which has been especially

kept, and each relative ties a small piece of it onto a thread, and wears it around the forehead or neck. It is worn for one year, to show that the wearer is mourning the chief's death. Individuals may also daub the forehead, face and arms with mud for this period, or a part of it, and perhaps shave off all hair.

There are clearly at least three stages involved in the safe departure of a chief - the funeral day, the seventh day ceremony, and the termination of mourning after approximately one year. It did not prove possible to gain any interpretation as to what happened to the deceased at these times, apart from the physical event of the burial. On the funeral day, the relatives honour the deceased by their mourning, and the sacrifices they have performed. The more ostentatious the mourning, the greater is the honour of the deceased, and the greater the prestige acquired by the living. On the seventh day, the relatives are exonerated from the death, by their public eating of the meat from the sacrificial cow, which may be likened to a 'poison oracle'.

From this day, the relatives need no longer wail for the deceased, but merely wear a sign of their continuing sorrow. At the one year ceremony, now usually called 'Tazkar' (a borrowing from Amharic), they are released from mourning. My informants were unable to say whether this corresponded with the final acceptance of the spirit into the world of the ancestors, or any such event. Questions of such a hypothetical nature received blank stares, or a dismissive " How do I know, I've never been there ? "

Inter-regnum

There is an institutionalized inter-regnum complex, which

occurs even if chronologically there is no such period. It lasts from the first day of the funeral until the Seventh Day Ceremony, and is marked by a situation of anarchy in the chiefdom.

This becomes explicit as the funeral progresses, and numbers of visitors can be seen stealing the deceased's crops, especially his ensete, t'eff, taro, tubers and honey. They are not limited to his personal crops, but may steal from anyone and anywhere in the chiefdom. There is no fear of reprisal, since such activities are usually encouraged by the new chief, and identified as the express command of his predecessor. The wealth which has been built up by the Balth'u of the deceased is redistributed amongst those who come to honour him. The 'raiding' is a display of confidence in the chiefship, and in the new chief's Balth'u. One chief made the crops grow, the cattle fruitful, and the bees come, and the next, being duly chosen and approved, will do the same. Not to steal the crops provided by the old chief would be a vote of no-confidence in the new one.

This custom has been restricted considerably by the arrival in Dimam of a police force of outsiders, who do not find it acceptable under Ethiopian law. In about 1965, on the death of Futdub Kolomash, who is remembered as one of the great chiefs of Uth'a, large numbers of people descended on Garo village on market day and destroyed crops and property, including some belonging to Amharas. Nine cows were taken from the market, and all the clothes for sale were stolen. Crops were taken from granaries, honey from hives, and corn from the fields. The looting lasted for 3 days, and the police ran off into the bush because they were afraid of being

beaten. When things calmed down, they returned and took some people to Basketo and had them put in prison there.

Before the police came, it is said that people threw stones and spears at each other during this period, and perhaps half a dozen would be killed. It was not a crime to kill at this time, and no compensation could be claimed, as would normally have been the case.

In the inter-regnum 'insiders' act as 'outsiders', by raiding, stealing, wounding and even killing members of their own tribe without paying compensation, or being brought to justice. They enact the situation which would arise if there were no chiefs, and recall that it was they who established the interwoven moral, political, ritual and legal order, which would collapse without them. Many other events in the funeral rites emphasize the breakdown, or reversal of normal practices and hierarchies.

Summary of the Chief's Rituals.

The prize of the traditional Dime political structure is the office of chief, and the honour which successful incumbency of it brings the individual, his 'core' of fellow clansmen, and other followers. An important factor in the success or otherwise of the chief is the response which his rituals draw from the forces to which they are addressed. Calendrical rituals seek to persuade these forces to provide a time of plenty for the people of the chiefdom. If this arrives, it is evident that the chief's life-style has ensured his purity, that he has offered sacrifice to the approval of the gods and spirits, and that they have blessed him with good Balth'u. If life is poor, then the chief has erred in some

way and his 'Balth'u' is bad. He must rapidly attempt to redress this situation by living according to the rules of his office, and offering a rite of affliction on behalf of his people to the force which is identified as the cause of the problem. If this fails, he may find himself removed from office, which is a distinctly dishonourable fate for himself, and an affront to the pride of his clansmen.

Life crisis rituals are somewhat different, since the chief is passive in them, although they concern his well-being. If he dies, such a ritual ensures that he is disposed of properly, and joins his ancestors, and that his successor is duly presented to the people for acceptance. If he is to replace a deposed chief, another ritual presents him to the people, the spirits, and God, and assures him that his subjects are convinced of his capacity to bring them abundance.

Thus the chief's rituals serve to install him, to maintain his favour with gods and men, and to properly dispose of him. They are essential if a man is to receive that honour which he seeks by becoming chief.

c) The Normative Rules of Chiefship in Uth'a

Bailey points to five subjects which the rules of a political structure commonly concern. Some of them, I have already mentioned in passing, but it may be useful to summarize their content in Uth'a.

1) The nature of the prize and what actions or qualities merit it. The prize is to be a successful chief - recognized by his subjects as having good Balth'u. The actions necessary to merit this are

the avoidance of impurity, and the performance of calendrical rites, and, if necessary, rites of affliction. The qualities required are a good Balth'u, obtained largely by the above actions; and popular support, which results from this Balth'u.

2) Who is eligible to compete for the prize ?

There are two basic criteria : a chief must be a male member of one of the two clans of correct caste, resident in the chiefdom, and must adhere strictly to the purity rules of that caste. It is also helpful to be the son of a previous chief, although this is not absolutely essential.

3) The composition of competing teams.

The two clans provide the 'core' of support for rival candidates for the chiefship. There may also be a small number of clients of each man. Other members of the territory tend to be uncommitted, and are mobilized only when opposition to the incumbent arises in response to a period of scarcity or other misfortune.

4) How the competition shall take place - especially a stringent division between fair and unfair tactics.

In the case of an active competition occasioned by misfortune, the movement should be based on the consensus of the people of the chiefdom. In the first place, their representatives should tell the chief of their dissatisfaction, so that he may make the necessary rites of affliction. Only if no improvement follows should they take more drastic measures. In the current situation the most unfair tactic of all is to enlist the aid of someone outside of the political community - such as an Amhara landowner with many tenants among the chief's subjects. I shall shortly show that this tactic

(or accusations of it) is now very important in the competition.

5) What is to be done when a rule is broken ?

The rules likely to be broken are the first and fourth. With regard to the first, the chief may fail to merit the prize - and the measures mentioned above are set in motion, to spur him into action or remove him. If the fourth rule is broken, and unfair tactics are used to remove a chief, the redress is not so evident. Whilst it is conceivable that the removed official be re-instated, it is unlikely. But it is certain that the new chief's Balth'u will be poor because of the anger of the suprahuman forces which ultimately control the system. If he has 'cheated' to obtain the office, no matter how many rites of affliction he performs, these forces will not be placated. Eventually he will be removed, in which case the office returns to a clansman of the original holder.

So much for the norms of chiefship. Before I produce evidence of recent competitions, I must discuss the offices of Bakob and Sagod (the Rainmaker), which are related to that of Zimu.

SECTION TWO - The Bakob

Bakob, the priest, must be a member of Gedaf clan in Uth'a. Succession to the office theoretically passes to the eldest male of the clan, although certain people are ruled out on other criteria such as infirmity and poverty, which are both expressed in terms of a man being 'too old' to carry out the duties.

The current household heads of the clan claim that the name Bakob comes from as recent a person as the grandfather of their generation. This man achieved such renown that people ceased to call him by his own name, conferred Bakob on him as an honorary title,

and even went so far as to alter the name of the village of which he was Baira to Bakob. They maintain that prior to this time, the office existed, but was known by another name, which they have forgotten.

A friend expressed the relationship of Bakob to Zimu in the following words:

> " Cobnits (one of the two chief clans) are masters of Gedaf. Bakob is like a servant for Cobnits. A servant's clan cannot marry into its master's clan. Gedaf are like a wife for Cobnits; they give the chief the things he will sacrifice. Sometimes they take food and put it into the mouth of the chief because he is proud ".

Bakob shares the food taboos of the chief, and those against contact with menstruating women, houses containing babies, and cohabitation with wives within three days of sacrifice. He does not live such an isolated life, and can move freely within villages, be seen eating, and share food and drink. At a public gathering, he sits with everyone else, below the chief. He has Balth'u, but its effects are not as far reaching as that of his master.

At one shrine Bakob holds a bull, while the chief kills it, and he then buries some crops as an offering to the earth. The chief says the main prayers, and offers meat to the chiefly ancestors. At another, he reads the intestines with the chief and another ritual officer. At others he passes the sacrificial meat to the chief, and empties bees from the hive before the chief offers honey. He is not empowered to instigate a sacrifice, but goes to the shrine when he is told to, and acts as the chief's assistant, so that the latter need only say prayers and place the offerings.

Bakob may be asked to take part in sacrifices in and around his own village, because his Balth'u and knowledge of ritual procedures makes the contact he makes with the ancestors especially

fruitful. The current incumbent takes part in sacrifices which are below the chief's consideration, and thereby uses his office as a springboard to a wider sphere of ritual authority than it theoretically involves. He is not paid for his participation in local rituals, and in the ones I witnessed, he did not receive any free meat, apart from the few morsels which remained after the ancestor's portions had been disbursed. His gain is in the recognition of his ritual power, an important factor in his overall standing in the community.

He may also be an intermediary between the people of the territory, and their chief, if the former are dissatisfied with the latter. He conveys their discontent, and may be sent by the chief to a diviner or shaman to discover which force is causing the problem.

If one chief is deposed and another enthroned, certain items of ritual paraphernalia must pass to the new one. Naturally, the rejected officer is reluctant to part with these, and, if his successor were to come and demand them, violence might result. It is the Bakob's duty to act as a negotiator in this situation, by begging the ex-chief for the items, and himself taking them to the new man.

Thus the Bakob's position as the chief's ritual helper makes him appropriate as an intermediary between the people and their leader in situations which contain considerable tension.

The office is a smaller prize than that of chief, but nevertheless important. Its incumbent ensures the internal peace of the chiefdom, and thereby gains considerable honour.

SECTION THREE -Sagod, The Rainmaker.

The Rainmaker is drawn from Eznits clan, of Commoner caste, and the position passes from father to son whenever possible. Attitudes towards him appear to have undergone some change within the last 50 years. The chiefdoms of Duch'a, Ishema, Irk'a and Gerfa used to have a Rainmaker, but have now abandoned the office, and instead the chiefs sacrifice directly to God for rain. The chiefdoms of Dinge and Uth'a still support one - the same man for both. As far as I know, it is a unique occurrence for one officer to serve two chiefdoms at once.

There is a concept of 'natural' rainfall, and the present chief of Uth'a, Mamo Badji, once told me, " The rain at the moment isn't because of Sagod. It's just the rainy season ". Sagod is mainly called into a crisis situation, when the expected rain has failed to arrive, which gives the office great potential for financial manipulation. This is fully recognised in a version of the myth which tells how this peculiar power came to Eznits clan.

> " Long ago, two brothers were born in Sharga. The younger one was a thief, who stole hives from everyone. Eventually his older brother tied him up and beat him, to make him stop stealing everyone's honey, but still he wouldn't stop. So the older brother thought to himself, ' How can I stop him ?' Then one day he took his brother into the forest to get honey from their hives. When they got there, the older brother cut two large logs, and tied them round the tree with vines, to help him climb up to the hives.
>
> The older brother said, ' You climb up to the top, and send me down the hives '. So up he went. Every time he came down with a hive, his older brother said, ' How many are there left now ?' and his brother would tell him. ' All right, tell me when there is only one left '. Eventually he said, ' There is only one left now '. The older brother said, ' Go up and get it down, and we can go home '.
>
> But when the younger one had got up the tree, the older brother cut down the logs, took the hives, and went home.

He wanted to leave his brother up the tree so he would die, because he hated him for being a thief. The younger brother came down with the hive, and called to his brother to take it, but he wasn't there, and neither were the logs. So he said to himself ' Well he went, so he wants me to die '. So he climbed back up with the hive, took out the honey, and ate it. He stayed up there all night and the next day he sat there and prayed to God: ' My brother wanted to kill me, and left me up here. So what can I do to get down, my Iyaf ? '

By chance, the longest snake in Dimam, called Wogog, (a type of python), climbed up this tree, passed to the top of it, and went into the sky to eat the stars. Wogog's head was in the sky, eating the stars, and his tail was still on the ground. On his body there was some kind of steps (the scales). The brother was amazed by this, but eventually decided to try the steps. They were strong enough to hold his weight, so he went down to the ground, and stood there staring at Wogog for a time.

He decided it was something good, took out his knife, cut off a piece of its tail, and cupped it in his hands. Before he got home, he opened his hands to look at it again. All of a sudden there came terrific lightning, torrential rain and huge winds, which blew down trees in the forest. He was very frightened by this, and ran off at once to get a leaf, in which he wrapped it. Then the storm and lightning stopped, and he was even more surprised. He hurried on homewards, but couldn't resist opening the leaf to look again. Again there was a huge storm, wind, rain, and lightning.

When he got home, his older brother was very surprised to see him. ' I thought you were dead. I left you in the tree and took away the logs. How did you get away from there ?' He said nothing, but he knew that everyone hated him in their hearts, even his mother. He kept the Wogog wrapped in the house.

One day his older brother arranged to have a work party. The younger brother was very angry at him, at his mother, and at everyone nearby, because he knew they all hated him because he was a thief. He told his mother to go down to the river to fetch wood and water. As soon as everyone was working in the fields, and his mother was on her way to the water, he took the leaf from its hiding place and opened it. There was a huge storm. Everyone at his brother's work party stopped and came home, and his mother came in soaking wet.

The next day, everyone had to go and work for his older brother again, because they had drunk all the beer the day

before, and not done the work. Again he took out the Wogog and a storm came. On the third day, he had his own work party, and it was a beautiful, clear, sunny day and he did much farming. On the fourth day one of his neighbours had a work party, and he brought the storm again. Then the people knew that he had some secret medecine. They came to him and begged him not to make the storm, and gave him money, food, meat, and so on. He became Sagod for some years.

Then one day, he met a beautiful girl, whose clan was Eznits. He straight away went to her father and asked him how much money and cows he wanted for her. But the girl's father had heard about his medecine for making rain, so he said,'I don't want cows or money, just give me the thing you use to make rain '. So he gave him the Wogog and lost the power of making rain. From then on Eznits people were Sagod as they are today '.

In theory, members of Eznits marry commoners. According to Mamo Badji, the Uth'a chief, the Eznits clan " used to live in Woch'o and marry Dinge (Ganchire) girls, but eventually moved down Dinge!! This may be an attempted slur on their good name, implying that they left their ancestral lands to live on the land of their fathers in law. A sagod cannot be removed from office " even if there is no rain, because he has a medecine he mixes with honey in a cow horn, which he puts somewhere in the forest, no-one knows where ".

Sagod's rituals are not part of the formal ritual cycle which the chief is expected to follow. They are entirely on his initiative, and he performs them when people demand, provided they first put him in a good frame of mind with suitable gifts. Only he knows what he does, what force he contacts, and whether he makes any elaborate preparations. Thus he has far greater freedom of manoeuvre than the other officials, and the position rises or falls in importance according to the talent of its incumbent. This has been an

important factor in the changing balance of power in the chiefdom of Uth'a within the last ten years, as I shall demonstrate shortly.

SECTION THREE - Confrontations in Uth'a and Dinge

a) The chiefship of Uth'a 1966-74.

In 1966 the chief of Uth'a was Mangada Elan of Cobnits clan. He was deposed, amd Mamo Badji of the rival Lassnits clan took over the office. I was fortunate in being able to question both chiefs, as well as many of their subjects.

I begin with a relatively 'independent' account given by my friend Argenu, of Gayzaf clan.

> " When Mangada was chief, Sagod co-operated with him to bring rain. One day he (Sagod) was put in jail in Garo by the police. He was there for a long time, and Mangada did not go down to visit him. Sagod has the same food prohibitions as the chief, and was in jail with people who eat anything. He thought to himself, ' Since the chief and I co-operate - he gives to the holy places and I bring the rain ... how is it that he doesn't visit me? Does he think he can get the sun and rain for the people ? '
>
> When he got home from jail he said, 'Iyaf, don't bring rain '. The country became hot and dry, and the Bach'as did not kill animals. They shot at many, but did not kill them. There was some kind of Gome because Sagod and the chief were at odds. There was still no rain, and people wanted to know what was wrong. They heard why Sagod was angry, and went to beg him. He refused to bring rain unless the chief was changed. Mangada bought a big overcoat for Sagod, and took him $ Eth. 75. He said, ' Forgive me '. Sagod said, ' I have money. I wanted you to visit me. When I was in jail with people who eat anything, you never visited me '.
>
> Mamo Badji wanted to be chief, but had not had a chance until then. He heard what was happening, and went to Sagod's house to talk to him. He brought Sagod up to his house, and gave him much gubzi. Other people came, including many Bach'as. They all got drunk, and Mamo said he wanted to be chief. Sagod said, ' As far as I am concerned, I choose you '.

Next day, Mamo Badji chewed some ginger, and spat on the Bach'as hands to give them good hunting. They went to the bush, dug out a hole as a buffalo trap, and went home. Next day, they found a lion cub in the hole. They thought, ' He is strong, like a lion ! ' They took the lion to his house, and they all had much beer again. They stayed three days at Mamo Badji's house, and then went down to Garo, which was then Warada (District Government Headquarters). There were many police and Government people there.

They told the Governor the story, and he thought Mamo Badji should be chief. The Bach'as gave the lion to the Governor, and he took it to Fellege Neway, and it went to Addis. People heard about this, and went to Wolde, and asked him if they could make Mamo Badji chief. They soon fetched him and took him to Wollo ".

Mangada's version was very different :-

" One year after I became chief, the Bach'as caught a lion cub, and took it down to Waka's house (the leading Amhara in Dimam, who owns extensive land here and elsewhere) because he was the Wana Balabat (Principal Chief). By chance, I was there. I saw the Bach'as carrying it in a bee hive, and asked them what they were carrying, and they told me. I said, ' Well, as long as I am chief you are supposed to bring it to my house first, and then to Waka. But you brought it here because you don't think I am chief '. The Bach'as did not pay any attention to me but listened to Waka, and took the lion to Ato Asefer, the Governor of Garo. He told me to order three people from my chiefdom to carry the lion to Fellege Neway.

The next day, I took three people, but the Governor had written Waka's name in his book, saying the lion came to him with Waka's help not mine. So I said to Waka, ' If the Governor gives you more respect than me, I won't order the people to carry the lion '. So Waka and I argued. I told him and the Governor that my Balth'u helped the Bach'as catch the lion. Waka became angry with me, and told people to throw me out, and put in Mamo Badji instead ".

Mamo Badji's comment on the affair was brief :-

" Mangada's reign had starvation, sickness, cattle disease and drought. So the people came together and talked about it, then came to my house and sat down. I didn't know what was happening, and asked why they came. They said, ' It's for a good reason '. Someone from Marnits grabbed me by the wrist, and the others picked me up, and began to carry me to Wollo. They stayed two nights on the way, ... and the third day we reached Wollo ".

The encounter between Mangada and Mamo Badji shows the way in which differing accounts of one incident manage to credit opposing parties with adherence to the competition rules.

Mangada emphasized the quality of his Balth'u, which his subjects did not duly honour. Instead they brought into the affair an Amhara, who preferred a rival candidate, whose Balth'u was not so powerful, and did not therefore present him with a rival for the hearts of the local Dime. The Amhara ordered his tenants to rebel against their chief, and Mamo Badji co-operated in this episode, which clearly broke the competition rules.

Mamo Badji emphasized that Mangada's Balth'u was poor, and that he therefore did not have the essential quality of a chief. According to the rules, the people of the chiefdom came together and chose a new chief by consensus.

The independent account stressed the incorrect behaviour of Mangada, who ignored his fellow ritual expert, and therefore failed to consider the interests of his subjects. A period of misfortune followed, which indicated to the people that their leader's Balth'u was not working. At the same time, Mamo Badji gave two clear indications of his fitness to rule : he exhibit ed the generosity of the old time chiefs by holding a beer drink, and the power of his Balth'u by spitting ginger on the hunters' hands (to make their hunting 'hot'), which brought immediate results. It was clear that the suprahuman forces were blessing Mamo Badji, and that the people ought therefore to enthrone him, which they did.

It is clear from all three accounts of this deposition that

the Bakob, Wolde Buth'i, was not involved in it. In fact he was, and still is, a supporter of Mangada. When he heard that the latter had been deposed, he refused to take part in any rituals with the new chief, because he "couldn't see anything wrong with Mangada ". For one year, Mamo Badji tried to sacrifice with just Shalem's help, but the people decided that this was not working, and persuaded Wolde to begin attending sacrifices again.

But even six years later, Wolde continued to support Mangada. Three items of official paraphernalia should pass from one chief to the next in Uth'a: beads, a bracelet and a spear. In the event of a deposition, it often proves difficult for the new chief to acquire these items, which are necessary if his sacrifices are to be accepted by the receiving forces. Bakob must act as an intermediary between the chiefs, and ensure that the items are passed on. In this case, Mamo Badji had received the bracelets and beads from Shalem, who had them at the time of succession. But the spear had been with Wolde, who disclaimed all knowledge of it.

Mamo Badji maintained that the poor state of his chiefdom, compared with others, especially regarding honey, was ultimately due to the fact that he lacked the chief's spear. He eventually refused to sacrifice, on the grounds that the spirits would not accept his offerings if he did not have the necessary regalia. Because he did not sacrifice, the bees did not produce honey in Uth'a, whereas in Shinga, a village chiefdom within it, they did. By retaining the spear, Mangada was claiming that he should still be chief, and the Bakob was supporting him in this.

The problem had even been brought to the Chikashum, but since he was in the same clan, the Bakob mysteriously managed to disappear, before the accuser, witnesses, and 'adults' arrived at his house. For the time being, the spear remained under Mangada's control.

Wolde was not carrying out the Bakob's role according to the rules. He is defined as an intermediary between the people and their chief, and one chief and another, but he acted as a follower of one party. This alliance between the Bakob's clansmen and Mangada's clan was a strong feature in Uth'a politics. The two clans live close to one another, often in the same village, while members of the smaller clan of Mamo Badji live mainly in a village which is several hours' walk away. The alliance made it virtually impossible for Mamo Badji to obtain the ritual objects he required in order to sacrifice successfully. The resulting situation was amenable to varying interpretations. While Lassnits people emphasized the illegitimate nature of the alliance, which was harming the chiefdom, Gedaf and Cobnits complained of the chief's poor Balth'u, and the resultant poor state of the territory. They were seeking to set in motion a popular movement for another deposition, and the return of the chiefship to Cobnits.

b) The Chief and Sagod in Uth'a 1970-74

If Mamo Badji's relations with his rivals were difficult, those with his ally, Sagod, were scarcely better. In the early 70's, the country was enduring a generally disastrous period. The western neighbours, the Bodi, were killing large numbers of Dime, and stealing their cows. Those cows which remained were dying from a variety

of diseases. Many people left the country, and settled in Siddo, Ch'ara, Basketto and other places where they had relatives. The rainfall was low and erratic. Mamo Badji decided to sacrifice at Wollo in order to gain the bounty of the chiefly ancestors, and asked Sagod to come with him, and make a special offering to bring rain - a desperate and unusual measure. Mamo Badji describes what happened :-

> " Sagod came, but refused to sacrifice. We didn't give him meat and beer (to persuade him to offer), but I took 11 young men to his house, beat him, and then took him to the police station for the night to frighten him. Then we gave him $ Eth. 13, collected from the people in Sezu, Garo and Balo (he was hoping to collect from other villages later). I first asked people to give grain and beer, but they refused, because Sagod hadn't brought rain. So I got money instead ".

At this time, Sagod was making considerable use of the small and irregular nature of the rainfall to collect gifts from the people. When they were ready to plant t'eff, the people of Gaiz, Gongila, Balch'a, Woch'o and Shira promised Sagod that each person in the village would give him one load of t'eff when it was ready. " Otherwise Sagod won't make rain again ".

He also managed to persuade the leading Amharas to pay him some money for the rain.

> " Waka and Abara collected $ Eth. 60, and gave it to Sagod, because he threatened them by saying ' The Dime pay me cows, crops and money for the rain, but you don't. The rain is for you too. What will you give me ? I am not less than Haile Sellassie, since I bring the rain '. "

As well as being responsible for the general distribution of rain throughout the year, Sagod is also able to undertake contract work, to advance or delay rain on particular days. When Mamo Dolinde was preparing for the funeral of his mother, which was to be on a Sunday, he sent Wolde, the Bakob, to give Sagod some money to pre-

vent rain on that important day. Mamo wanted to give Sagod an advance of $ 1.50 and 5 head-loads of corn, to keep away the rain, with more money later. But when he looked at his corn-reserves, he found he did not have enough. Sagod demanded $ 4.50, but Mamo would not advance from his previous offer, and promised to pay the corn later.

Suspecting that Sagod might resent this, Mamo tried to bring pressure to bear on a Gis of the Gedaf clan, a man named Koimub, to pay a debt he owed Sagod from the previous year. He had promised to pay Sagod 5 head-loads of corn if he brought rain after Koimub had planted his corn, and again later, after he had planted his t'eff. Sagod obliged, but the ungrateful Koimub didn't pay. Mamo thought that if he could force his ritual servant to pay the debt, Sagod would be pleased with him, and help him in the matter of ensuring good weather for the funeral. Unfortunately Koimub could not muster the corn anyway, so this plan failed.

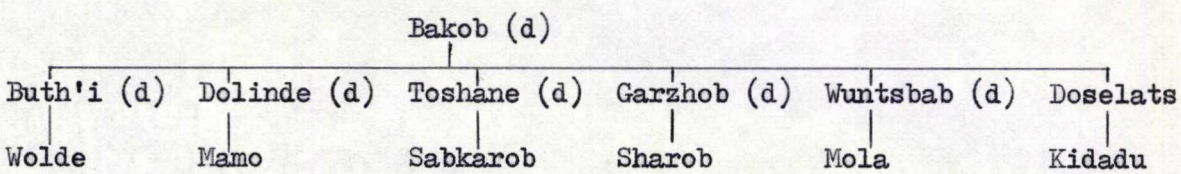
All did not go well with the funeral. During the ritual shield-stabbing by the people of Dinge, (including Sagod), Dando, an important shaman from Woch'o village, leapt out and stabbed the shield before Sagod, thus asserting his superiority over the rainmaker. Sagod took umbrage and went away from the funeral, sitting in a nearby house without talking to anyone. The heavens opened and the rain descended. Things looked very bad. People came to Mamo and told him that Sagod was angry. Mamo went and kissed Sagod's feet, and Sagod assured him that he was not angry with him, only with Dando and some other people who had tried to make themselves more important than him. Then he came out of the house and sat on a large rock below the funeral site. The rain ceased and the sun appeared.

Mamo brought the rainmaker food and drink, but the latter rebuked him : " It isn't our custom to give Sagod just a little food and drink. I need a pot of beer (about 12 pints) and a back leg for myself ". In the evening they gave him this, and Mamo asked him to stop the rain until the funeral finished (a further 6 days). Sagod replied " You only gave me four shillings (2 $ Eth.). I stopped the rain yesterday for that money. I won't do it any more ".

Sagod is clearly able to use his position to great economic advantage whenever the weather is thought to be abnormally bad, and on specific occasions when the presence or absence of rain is important. In 1973, the t'eff was ready for harvesting, and there were light showers. These were identified as being abnormal, certain to ruin the crops, and the work of Sagod's anger. In fact, they made no difference to the harvesting of what transpired to be a very satisfactory crop. This led me to believe that interpretations of climactic conditions depend more on the current standing of Sagod than on any established norms of what ought to be happening at any particular time. If people are expecting Sagod to cause problems, the slightest change in the weather can be interpreted as his work.

c) The Bakob of Uth'a 1973

In 1973 the possible candidates for the office of Bakob of Uth'a were as shown below :-



Doselats had the best claim, since he was the only surviving member of the first ascendant generation. There was some doubt as

to who was next in line. Should it be Wolde, Mamo, or Sharob ? Mamo Dolinde, who was the Government Chikashum, had frequent contacts with Amharas during his work, and could not therefore keep the Bakob's food taboos since Amharas eat many of the forbidden items. He himself emphasized this factor to avoid being Bakob, and to provide a publicly acceptable explanation for his disinterest in holding the office, which was essentially because the positon of Chikashum gave him far greater opportunities for power, influence, and economic gain than did the traditional office.

This left as Doselats' potential rivals Wolde, the Baira of the third generation, and Sharob, who was, excluding Doselats, the eldest in years. Sharob had two factors against him. Firstly, he suffered a nervous condition, which caused him to shake frequently. This presented both normative and practical difficulties for his claim to hold office. It made it difficult for him to walk long distances easily, although he did so when it was necessary; and more importantly, a sick office holder is unsuitable, since his condition is almost certainly the result of a spiritual problem, which will later harm the territory he represents.

Furthermore, Sharob did not have such a large group of close kinsmen and wives as had Wolde, and he had no young daughter who could prepare the offerings of food which Bakob must make in his capacity as ritual head of the Gedaf clan. Since the members of Gedaf choose the Bakob by their assent to his claims, it follows that important consideration will be given to their own ritual welfare. It is not possible to have one man as ritual head of the clan and another as the chief's ritual helper. A man who does not have the familial resources to carry out rites for the clan, is

hardly suitable to officiate in rites for the chiefdom, nor is he a good advertisement for his clan. So the clan is most likely to back a candidate who has several wives, children, and close kin, who is in good health, not too old to walk long distances to the mountain-top shrines, and who will bring as much prestige to it as possible.

So Sharob had no supporters, and by this time did not even try to push his claims. With Mamo and Sharob out of the running, the competition was between Doselats, who had the better claim in terms of geneological and chronological seniority, and Wolde, who had the larger household.

Doselats had no wife, and his daughter Turunesh, who did all of his housework, was of marriageable age, and about to leave him for a husband. He had no pre-pubescent daughter who could prepare the gubzi and t'eff dough which Bakob must sacrifice to the Gedaf ancestors, and owned no animals which he could sacrifice for the well-being of the clan, or give to the chief to sacrifice for the territory. Nor did he have any money with which to buy animals if they were needed. It was therefore obvious that he would not satisfactorily fulfil the obligations of the Bakob to clan or chiefdom. This incapacity would bring ritual danger and the scorn of other important clans, who could point out that, if this was the ritual head of Gedaf clan, that clan must be in a very poor way.

In contrast, Wolde's three wives, two pre-pubescent daughters and two married brothers provided the necessary familial resources for donating and preparing offerings. He also had a little money and some cows.

In February 1973 there was a sacrifice in Woch'o, at which Dando Gush, an important member of the village, gave a cow to his dead step-father, who was angry at him and the people of the village. At this gathering of members of Woch'o village, which includes most of the leading Gedaf men, the confrontation between Wolde and Doselats was concluded.

An argument between the two men began over the place at which meat ought to be offered. It then broadened into a general assesment of the suitability of the candidates to make offerings anywhere.

> Wolde : " Since Doselats is getting old, I wanted to take care of the spirits, but last year he did it, so why not now ? ... Last year, when you (Doselats) gave blood and meat, it wasn't good. After the Bakob forgets to keep the rule, eating these things, the country became bad (Mamo and Doselats do not keep the dietary restrictions of Bakob). Monkeys raided the crops, cows died, people went away, there isn't much honey, But my fathers were Bakob from the beginning. They never ate sheep, chicken, or goat. Even now, when many Dime became (like) Amhara, I do not eat these things, only cow. From my father's time, I was Bakob and sacrificed at the holy places - Jimsha, and where the father of the owner of the land lived. When I gave blood and meat to the spirits the country was good ..... Now people like Mamo and Doselats don't keep themselves away from eating these things, and yet they are still (behaving as) Bakob, and give blood and meat to the spirits. The spirit doesn't accept these. Since you people are eating these things, and praying and sacrificing, and he (the spirit) doesn't accept it, why do you give blood and meat ? Why not just forget it, since you started eating these things? "
>
> Doselats : (Beginning to get himself into a position whence he can back down without too much loss of face)
>
> " Even if I did keep the rule of being Bakob, why should I give blood and meat to the spirit ? What did I get from it ? I am an old man from now on. Even before, when I gave blood and meat to fill up the rule of my fathers, what kind of thing did I get ? I just put the things on stones. I didn't get money or clothes - no payment ".

Wolde : " The rule of being Bakob, according to our fathers' custom is, when a Bakob prays, such as in the farmland, and the people get many crops, cows and honey, they give the Bakob a gift; a gourd of beer, or a pile of sorghum or t'eff, or money .... just because we are arguing here, the spirit may get angry at one of us. He might kill me, or he might kill you. It is better if we just stop arguing, and I give this sacrifice.".

Mamo : " You must come to a decision before you sacrifice the meat. It is useless to sacrifice while you are arguing. This is given to the spirit from the bottom of our hearts. It is not a joke. We must all be agreed about it, or the spirit won't accept it.".

Dando : " The last time I tried to take blood from a cow to give to the spirit, blood wouldn't come out. There must be something wrong. The wrong is that you Bakobs are arguing. Stop arguing, it is not good for us. The spirit is angry.".

Mamo : " You are arguing. This is not something light, like a work party, or something where you work for each other in turns. Only one person can do it. If one person does it today, it can't be someone else tomorrow. There is no gain in arguing, only harm. It is better to forget your arguing, and do your job. If a Gome comes to our people because you are arguing, it can only hurt us, not any other people. If you want to argue, you are supposed to talk about it when there is no sacrifice. You are arguing right at the time when you should be praying. ..... Stop for now. Let Wolde do his job, we will talk it over later. You two should discuss who will give where and when. You are arguing just to keep your power. We are not sacrificing for superiority, but for our peace and life. We have all decided Wolde must do it. Go and do your job, we have to cut up the meat. You must go, the sun is going down ".

Clearly, Mamo and Dando, as important men of the village, acted as spokesmen for 'the people'. Both of them pointed out that arguments between candidates for a ritual office put the chiefdom in spiritual danger, which in turn physically harms it. Throughout the argument, Wolde emphasized the lack of 'purity' of Doselats, (and of Mamo) which meant that only he was a suitable person to make contact with the spirits. Even though very few people actually took part in the discussion, Mamo was summarising the general opinion when he announced that Wolde should make the offering.

So Wolde made the offerings, and prayers, and Doselats became an 'old man', without losing too much face in the process.

d) The Chief of Dinge 1973-4

Dinge chiefdom lies to the north of Uth'a, and was for many years controlled by a chief named Costabab Fundo. In 1973, he was suddenly deposed. As I was not resident in that chiefdom, I had not been aware of any general discontent with him. The accounts which I was given probably omitted many of the relevant details, but those that I did hear fit in well with what I have shown thus far. I begin again with an account by Argenu :

> " A brother's son of Costabab got drunk, and argued with the chief one day, then took some fire and set light to one of the chief's houses in Gach'a, and the granary beside it. There was only Costabab's wife in the house, and she ran out and shouted, and people came, and took some of the things from the house. The granary burnt down with crops inside.
>
> Costabab asked people to build him a new house and granary, and to bring him t'eff to replace that which he lost. People said ' Well it was your brother's son who got drunk, and burnt down your house and granary, so it's not our job to replace it all '..... Costabab said, ' I am the chief, and if I am hungry and can't sacrifice, you won't get enough crops in future ..... '.
>
> In the past, when Costabab's father, Fundo, was chief of Dinge and died, Costabab wanted to be chief, but the people didn't want him. He took two cows to Sagod and said, 'Unless the people choose me as chief, don't bring rain'. It became dry for some time. People asked Sagod why it was dry, and he said it was because Costabab should be chief. So they chose him, and he became chief.
>
> So when he asked people to rebuild his house and so on they refused. He went to Sagod again, and said 'Let there be no rain '. That's why it was so dry this year ..... People were angry at Sagod and Costabab and made a new chief, Costabab's brother's son (not the arsonist). They talked only to Bakob. People came together and discussed whom they should choose. At Dinge they have a place like Wollo, where

> they install a new chief. The new chief didn't know what was going on - they decided everything before coming to him. All the people of Gach'a (village chiefdom) and Ganchire came together on market day. They told people, ' There should be rain by now, but Sagod and the chief don't make it. Everything is going wrong, so we must choose a new chief '. Tilahun, (village chief of Gach'a) said, 'His Balth'u is no longer good. We don't want him '.
>
> The next day they gathered together at the place where they make the chief. Costabab came there, and they took off his leopard's claws ... and his red beads .... and cow skin hat. Then they threw stones at him, beat him, and chased him away. They put these things on the new chief, killed a cow, and put its fresh skin on him. Costabab heard that they were going to get rid of him - that's why he went there - to try to talk them out of it. But they wouldn't listen and threw him out ".

When I saw Costabab some time later, he claimed that the Amharas in Dinge had united and persuaded their tenants to depose him. He intended to do all he could to make the people restore him to his rightful position, but in the meantime he lived with one of his wives in Garo.

Costabab's stated reason for requiring his subjects to donate food to replace that which had been lost was in terms of the symbolism of chiefship - a hungry chief means a hungry people.

Sagod was a supporter of Costabab, as he had been of his father, and the people believed he had stopped the rain in order to force them to choose his ally. But there was a rival faction, which seems to have been led by Tilahun, the village chief of Gach'a, which is within the chiefdom of Dinge. A decision was reached by consensus, on market day, the only regular occasion when the people gather in large numbers. The next day, Costabab greatly miscalculated his influence, and had the symbols of chiefship forcibly removed. He himself explained his removal in terms of the illegitimate manoeuvrings of the powerful local Amhara landowners.

SECTION FOUR - Competition Rules: normative and pragmatic

The four confrontations show clearly the importance of normative rules for actions and their justification. Three resulted in a decision as to the rightful incumbent of an office, and the fourth, between Sagod and Mamo Badji, concerned the relative standing of two leaders in different spheres.

In the struggle for the chiefship of Uth'a, the Balth'u of the candidates was, in everyone's view, a key issue. Mangada saw his good Balth'u as being ignored; Mamo Badji regarded his predecessor's Balth'u as poor, which necessitated his removal; and Argenu supported the latter view and attributed the poor Balth'u to the disagreement of two ritual officers who should co-operate.

According to Argenu, Mamo Badji displayed chiefly generosity and Balth'u, so that the people chose him by consensus according to the rules. Mangada regarded the 'generosity' as bribery, and also referred to the illegitimate use of Amhara backing. Mangada offered Sagod an expensive coat, and Mamo Badji gave him and the hunters much to drink. Were these acts of old time generosity, or like the bribes given to policemen and court officials?

The issue of the ritual paraphernalia continued the rivalry. Wolde ignored the rule that he should be assistant to the chief, whoever this may be, and an unbiassed intermediary, and took the side of Mangada. He refused to help the new chief to sacrifice, and would not hand over the vital spear : both of which measures ensured that Mamo's offerings on behalf of his subjects were unacceptable. He took a series of pragmatic measures designed to

harm his opponent by making his Balth'u seem poor, which would be a normative reason for deposing him.

In the case of the chief of Dinge, Costabab reminded his subjects of the cosmological principal that a hungry chief means a hungry populace. In case this did not prove conclusive, he also renewed his alliance with Sagod. However, a rival candidate emerged, allied with a powerful village chief, who denied the incumbent's Balth'u, and fitness to rule. Costabab obviously denied this deficiency, and pointed to a flagrant breach of the rules; using the power of an Amhara to support one's claim.

Wolde Buth'i secured his position by emphasizing the failure of his rivals to obey the rules of the office, but was greatly aided by his far superior familial resources.

Finally, the office of Sagod is one to which few normative rules apply. Although he does not make offerings to the major spirits or God, he is vital for the well-being of those chiefdoms which accept his powers. The main rules concerning him are pragmatic - he only works if rewarded. His mercenary nature is even recognised in the myth which recounts how his clan gained its peculiar power. The office is a prize in terms of finance rather than honour, and is therefore the reverse of the other two discussed here. The position seems to have reached such importance largely because of the undoubted talent of its current holder. It must be remembered that other chiefdoms stagger through without a rainmaker at all, and entrust this task to their chief.

In Dimam, rivals for office are always anxious to show the normative correctness of their own measures, whilst exposing the

deviance of their opponents. Clearly the difference between a normative and pragmatic action depends on where one stands. Without such ambiguity, offices would possibly only change hands on the death of the incumbent. The encapsulation of the traditional political structure has provided new possibilities for the office holders, as well as for others with political ambitions, and the power of land-holders as allies has emerged in this brief discussion of confrontations. The political structure is no longer independent, but faces problems and resources from the wider system, and it is to this that I now turn.

CHAPTER FOUR

ENCAPSULATION AND CHANGE

It is characteristic of contemporary small-scale societies that they exist, almost without exception, " within larger encapsulating political structures " (Bailey, 1969, P. 146). These larger structures are, of course, much more specialized and command much greater political resources than the structures which they enclose. It will be convenient if I refer consistently to the smaller enclosed structure as 'Structure A' and the larger encapsulating structure as 'Structure B' (Bailey, P. 146).

Clearly, " those in command of structure B have a choice to make in the degree to which they concern themselves with what goes on inside structure A. At one extreme is the situation in which the encapsulation is merely nominal, merely, one might say, a matter of geography. The leaders of Structure B either cannot, or choose not to interfere with Structure A " (op. cit. P. 149).

" The second possible posture for the leaders of Structure B is the predatory one: they do not concern themselves with what goes on inside structure A as long as the people who live under it pay the revenue " (P. 150).

" A less disreputable version of this relationship is achieved when the ruling power adopts what is called 'indirect rule'. Here the policy is founded on an agreement to leave intact the broad structure of A, providing this does not do violence to certain fundamental principles .... which are embodied in Structure B " (P. 151).

" The final posture is that in which the ruling power has taken the decision that Structure A must be integrated: which in practice, means radical change, if not abolition " (P. 151).

" The ambitions and intentions of the rulers of Structure B are one thing: their performance can be quite another and will depend on a number of variables. One of these is the resistance which the people of Structure A wish to offer, and this will depend upon the degree to which they esteem their own political institutions and on the extent to which the values of these institutions differ from the values of Structure B " (P. 151).

" Secondly, the performance will also vary according to the resources of which the people of Structure A dispose. These resources may take many forms: a deeply-valued ideology, perhaps in a religious or ethnic form: an inaccessible terrain, ... and so forth " (P. 152).

The encapsulation of Dimam has gone through several phases, each of a different nature. In the first stage, the ambitions of King Menelik II led to an attempt to "integrate" the southern territories into his expanding Empire. This tactic, as Bailey points out, means "radical change, if not abolition of" Structure A. Extremely large numbers of Dime were sold into slavery, and disappeared to the northern provinces, and possibly even out of the country. (For a vivid account of the similar slave-dealing activities in Maji, to the west of the Omo River, see Major. H. Darley's work, "Slaves and Ivory"). The remainder became domestic and agricultural slaves of the Amhara settlers. Dime political activities ceased, and the structure never returned in quite the same form.

This situation was ended by the Italian invasion, during which the Dime became free-men once more, but still without political independence. This interlude was brief but significant, since the Amhara settlers never regained the total domination which they had in pre-war years. Once the Italians had been removed, many of the Amharas returned, and tried to restore the old order, but its time had passed. Haile Sellassie I took measures which began to curtail slavery in practice, and not merely in theory as had previous decrees.

By the 1950's, the Ethiopian Government began to reach the area, and a police post was set up in Gerfa. The new agents of encapsulation adopted two postures simultaneously. On the one hand, a form of 'indirect rule' arose - the Dime chiefs became occasional consultants of the District Government, while the main Amhara landlords became tax-collectors, and informal jural authorities in areas away from the police post. A 'Chikashum' was appointed, with legal authority for all but the most important cases, and represented the Dime to the Government and vice versa. But at the same time, Government expenditure was minimal, and no schools, clinics, or roads found their way to the territory. In this sense the main interest was predatory: to extract as much tax as possible with little expenditure.

Although the new situation represents a considerable advance from slavery, it leaves the Dime at a considerable disadvantage when compared with their Amhara 'superiors'. The inter-relationship of the Dime, the resident Amharas, and the regional Government is a complex one, which can be examined from several viewpoints.

The most fundamental point of contact between the groups with an interest in encapsulated Dimam is the land itself.

a) Land Ownership

Between the conquest and the arrival of the Italians, many Dime were removed from their homeland for ever, and those remaining became slaves of the resident Amharas. The country was parcelled out among the resident and absentee Amhara land-lords, and its previous owners were completely dispossessed. That this system never returned after the Italian war was the result of several factors. Firstly, many of the former Amhara residents were killed during the war, and there was no influx to replace them. Secondly, the area was soon hit by a series of epidemics and famines, which killed or frightened off many others. Thirdly, and most significantly, the Ethiopian Government began to function in the region in a slightly organized manner. This meant that the abolition of slavery and slave-trading was enforced and a major source of income and free labour removed. At the same time the Government became interested in land ownership and tax collecting, which meant that the free hand of the Amhara residents was restricted.

It is far from clear exactly how the District Government in Basketto set about parcelling out the land, but it seems that any area for which no written claim of private ownership was received became the Government's. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church managed to establish a sizable claim, and those Amharas who decided to stay managed to retain ownership of large areas, which they still hold to this day. (For convenience, I use the 'ethnographic present'. I have no information as to post-revolution land-holding).

Both church and state hire out their land to tenants, in return for cash and crops. Large tenants sub-let much of their land

at high profits. Some Dime were sufficiently hardy to establish their right to areas of land which had been occupied by their kin for generations, but I would say, with little fear of error, that only 5% of the country at the very most, is 'owned' by the Dime.

Whatever else, a man with a house and land must pay tax on his holding to the District Government. The amount is officially variable according to the size of the area, and the number of houses on it, but the remoteness of Dimam enables landlords to under-estimate both and make great profits. It should be emphasized that the land is unmapped, and that within it both the cultivated areas and the people move frequently. Thus the District Government has no clear idea of the amount of a landlord's territory in use for agricultural purposes (as against that covered by bush and forest), or of the population on it. The landlord under-estimates both, and reduces the tax for which he is liable. He then collects inflated taxes from his tenants, and goes to the Governor with the story that this year the Dime's crops failed, their animals died, so that he could not bear to collect any tax at all from them.

Thus the resourceful landlord can make considerable profit even before he begins to collect tithes, which are not less than one tenth of the produce. Each tenant should also occasionally make a gift of honey, or liquor, to his landlord. Many tenants sub-divide their land and have their own tenants for love or money. This may be a simple contractual agreement with an unrelated person, but more characteristically, a man allows his younger brothers and sons to use it tax-free. In other cases, a landlord or tenant will give a poor person the use of a portion of his land without requiring any tax payment, and on occasions without a tithe. The inferior can properly be called a 'client', and the patronage relationship

thus established takes on a diffuse, quasi kinship nature. The client has no specified contractual obligations, but sometimes works on his patron's land without reward, carries loads for him when he travels, conveys messages for him, and so forth. In many ways, he becomes 'one of the family', and can often be found in his patron's house doing odd-jobs and eating meals there. The institution of clientship occurs not only between Amharas and Dime, but within both ethnic groups.

Whenever someone moves onto a piece of land which is at that time bush or forest, he becomes liable to pay tax to the Government and a tithe to the owner. Since there are no maps of landholdings, the appropriate recipient of the tithe is in question, as is the route by which the tax reaches, or fails to reach, the Government. Unless there is evidence to the contrary, all vacant land belongs to the Government. As long as the land remains vacant, this is uncontested. But the appearance of an occupant invariably heralds the arrival of an owner. Since the Government, and the administrative arm of the church are both ensconced in Basketo, they are safely out of the running. This leaves three possibilities:- firstly, the farmer can claim that the land belongs to his ancestors. Secondly, another Dime remembers quite clearly that the land belongs to his forefathers, who are, by way of proof, buried in it. Thirdly, an Amhara asserts that his father or grandfather was awarded it in return for his heroic service at the time of the conquest, or bought it at a later date from someone who has conveniently left the area, or died.

If there are two or more conflicting claims the dispute must go to the District Court in Basketo, either directly, or through the services of Mamo Dolinde, the Chikashum of Dimam, or Waka Jamani,

the 'Wana Balabbat' (Main Chief?). The parties involved must each produce old men who can support their story, and the opinion of the mediator is also considered. Since the dispute recalls a period when there were no written records, the evidence from the two camps can be relied upon to be contradictory. This means that the officials need considerable time to deliberate, and that their continued attention to the case can only be ensured by certain tokens of esteem. In the end, the wealthier party wins and sets about recouping his losses from the tenant.

It is even more difficult for a man to leave a landlord on whose land he has lived for some time. An example will serve to illustrate the hazards of such a move. A relatively wealthy Dime named Agafaru, who owned two cows and a gun, left the land of Makonnen Gabreis, the largest landowner in Dingé (Ganchire). He went to live with friends in the village of Ogé, and took his property there. Makonnen did not want to lose such a source of income, and therefore told his son-in-law, Kassa, who lived near the police station in Garo, that Agafaru owed him 60 $ Eth., being four year's tax. Kassa obtained a letter from the police, and he and Mamo Dolinde went to Ogé to fetch the wanted man. Since Agafaru was not there when the posse arrived, Kassa seized the two nearest cows, which he claimed were Agafaru's, and took them back to the police station in Garo, until the accused should appear. The unfortunate owner of the cows later arrived and asked for their return, but they were instead sent back up the mountain to Mamo Dolinde, so that he could hold them in custody there, rather than in the lowland, where they might die of disease. Makonnen's action shows his reluctance to lose a wealthy tenant, particularly one with a gun. He therefore ensured that the runaway either returned to the fold,

or payed him 'compensation', even though according to the majority opinion Agafaru had already payed the taxes in question.

A landlord does not only gain financially. Such a man, particularly if he has many tenants, becomes the judge of all disputes which occur on his land. His decisions do not have any binding validity, nor is there any 'legal' manner in which they can be enforced, but if the landlord is an important one, he will have both economic and physical sanctions at his disposal. If a man becomes involved in a dispute, he usually asks his landlord to represent him in the legal proceedings. This ensures that he cannot be greatly harrassed by the police, and that his case will be heard more sympathetically than if he presented it himself. If both parties to a dispute manage to muster Amharas as advocates, the matter will probably be settled between the landlords, and only then will their decision, and a share of the fines levied, be conveyed to the police. Generally speaking, the police do not try to intervene in such affairs, since they realise that the Amharas are a powerful community, whose friendship is important to them as short term visitors to the region.

The largest landlord of all, Ato Waka Jamani, has gained Government recognition, and is Wana Balabat of the land, a position which implies an unclear amount of legal power. It is said that his fame has reached even the Provincial Government in Arba Minch'. Since he lives in Garo, he is in close contact with the police, with whom he has an ambiguous relationship. In many ways, their presence limits his authority, especially since some of them are able to write fluently, while he is only a slow reader of Amharic. This means that those cases which need to go to Basketo must go through

the police, since written records are required, and it is therefore clear to all that he is in many ways less important in the eyes of the Basketo officials than are the policemen.

But on many occasions he needs to use the police to intimidate his enemies, and such co-operative exercises benefit all except the victim. This evidence of his closeness to the police, and their willingness to help him fearlessly pursue the course of justice, increases his influence, and the probability that his will will be done. In this sense the police are useful to him.

Waka is very hostile to the two Dime shamans who live close to his home, because they are wealthy and have large numbers of of spiritual followers, including some of his own tenants. Dando Gush, one of the shamans, lives only two hours from him, and was one of his tenants only five years previously. In those days, Dando had no spirit, no gun, and no followers - now he is an important man with all three of the above. Waka was therefore only too happy to become the advocate of two Dime who wished to bring rather dubious cases against the shaman.

The first accuser, a man named Mamo Kassi, said that Dando had stolen his wife, although it emerged that this was not exactly the case. Some years previously both men wanted to marry a belle named Genne who lived in Garo. Dando offered her a betrothal gift of a bracelet, which she accepted, implying that she would marry him at some unspecified time. Later, Mamo also asked her to marry him, and she refused since she was already 'engaged'. So Mamo took her to his house by 'force', and they lived together for some time. They were not happy: sometimes he was sick, sometimes angry. He asked her why their marriage was so disastrous, and she told him

it was because he had taken her by force when she was already betrothed. Perhaps Dando's spirit had cursed them both. How could their life together be good when the spirit might even kill them ? So Mamo went to Waka and told him a modified version of the story ; that Dando gave a bracelet to his wife and stole her from him. The police who came to arrest Dando were caught somewhat unawares when asked the whereabouts of the lady in question, since they did not know. It emerged that she was still at Mamo's house.

The second case concerned one Giddo, whom Dando had accused of living on his land for two years without paying tax. He and Dando met at a wedding, and Dando asked him why he did not pay. Giddo replied, " Even if I take the soil itself, how will you make me pay tax ? " (since he is under Waka's protection). They insulted each other, and Giddo chased Dando home with the aid of some rocks. Dando aimed his gun at him, so Giddo told Waka that Dando threatened to kill him.

Waka went to the police and told them of the hostility of Dando to his tenants, and that, furthermore, he takes money, cows, and other gifts from people for no reason on his possession nights. Two policemen came to take Dando to the police station, but he was too ill to travel, (and as I was present at the time, the police felt unable to force him to go). They contented themselves with a small gift in return for the trouble of walking to his house, and returned to base.

Regardless of the merits of the cases, it is clear that Waka, as a large land-owner, 'wana balabbat', and friend of the police, is able to bring considerable force to bear on his enemies. Undoubtably, he is more powerful than most of the resident Amharas,

but many of them operate in the same manner, on a slightly smaller scale. Thus the landlord gains importance as a referee between his tenants, and as their legal representative, in addition to tithes and taxes. Those Dime who own land, or who are large-scale tenants with many sub-tenants, are likewise able to derive considerable influence from their good fortune. In every village where no Amhara is in control, there is someone recognised as a mediator. He is unlikely to play advocate for village members involved in external cases, since he is no more important than any other Dime in the eyes of the police. The role of mediator is not an independent one to which people strive, but comes with influence achieved in other ways; mainly control of land, incumbency of an office, or possession of a spirit. Someone with standing in the community attained by one of these means may well increase it by making successful settlements, but this is a sign of influence, rather than a means to it.

We have seen that land-ownership brings considerable advantages to a limited number of Amharas. They exploit this to make gains in financial and political terms. Those Dime who have tenants follow the pattern, on a considerably smaller scale. For the Amharas, land can be used directly as a channel to political power. But amongst the Dime themselves, it is a secondary consideration, and influence gained in other spheres is the essential prerequisite of political progress.

The land-holding Amharas are a remnant of the first phase of the encapsulation process, which sought to 'integrate' the Dime into the Empire by making them slaves of its colonising agents.

The Ethiopian Government which finally abolished slavery, has adopted a different policy, which consists of a predatory version of indirect rule.

b) The Ethiopian Government

i - The Police Force

In order to ensure a certain minimum of conformity with wider Ethiopian society, the Government has established a police force in Dimam. There are two posts, one in Gerfa in the south, the other in Garo in the north. The personnel in the stations changes rapidly, as men are frequently transferred or suspended from duties. To be sent to Dimam is considered something of a punishment by the policemen, and the only worse posting is to Kalaam, in Daasanech' country in the Omo valley, which is the next destination of many of the Dime force who misbehave. Since the police are rarely in one place long enough to plant and harvest a crop, and in any case they are not expected to devote their time to farming, they have to buy much of their food. Unfortunately, the area has very little surplus, and towards the end of the dry deason almost nothing is sold, and prices are very high.

The lack of an assured food supply is one uncertainty in the policeman's life. Ill health and the lack of medical supplies is another. During most of my own stay in the area, there was no medical centre at all in Dimam, and the Government clinic thirty miles away in Basketto enjoyed an extremely poor reputation, and usually lacked supplies of most necessary items. Thus the nearest reliable medical aid was at Bulki, which is a 70 mile walk to the east, and therefore somewhat inaccessible to a sick man. Most of the police lack protection against malaria, and venereal disease is also prevalent.

Further, most of them come into Dimam without a wife, or with one newly-acquired in Basketo. Their personal lives are therefore similarly uncertain, and to complete the process, they arrive in an alien region, with an unknown people, culture and language.

For these and many other reasons, including the minimal salary they receive, the policemen in Dimam are an unhappy assortment, characterized by drunkenness, malevolence, and corruption, which earn them the hatred of the local populace. They become the allies of the Amhara landlords, with whom they share many values, as well as language. The role of the force therefore has little to do with the administration of an impartial bureaucratic system. Rather, they are partners in exploitation with the Amharas. I cite just one of the numerous cases which came to my notice.

During my stay, there was a murder in Ishema, to the east of Woch'o. Two policemen, the Chikashum, and a local Amhara who had lent the dead man some money, went to the village to investigate. The murderer had run away into hiding, and so the investigators contented themselves with bringing back witnesses, and booty. They stayed for a time in Woch'o, and the witnesses brought with them a chicken and some honey. My arrival in the Chikashum's house caused some consternation. One policeman left, followed by the house-owner. Shortly afterwards the second officer staggered out with a large towel full of centimes, garnered in the course of enquiries.

During the fifteen months of my stay in Dimam nearly every policeman was accused of at least one misdemeanour - mostly of accepting bribes, beating suspects, and firing bullets without reason. The chief of police in Gerfa was temporarily removed to Basketo after a drunken brawl with his fellow officers, and a former chief

of police in Garo spent the year in Basketo for stealing goats, chickens and money.

Obviously, the Dime do not feel excessively confident in their hopes of settling a dispute by recourse to the police, and they will normally try every other possibility before this step. Indeed the threat of recourse to the police has become a powerful weapon in dispute tactics. It is recognized as being an extremely harsh thing for one Dime to do to another, to accuse him before the police. A defendant at a village moot often pleads the inability to pay a fine, and tells the plaintiff to take him to the police station. This places the onus on the adults to lower their initial fine, and on the plaintiff to be generous in accepting a reduced settlement. In other cases, the plaintiff himself may use the threat of the police to force the defendant to accept responsibility for the crime. Or, yet again, the adults may threaten either or both parties with this fate if they do not make a reconciliation. The most skilled user of this tactic is undoubtably the Chikashum, Mamo Dolinde, whose close contacts with the police ensure that his threats rarely go unheeded.

Thus from the Dime viewpoint, the police appear as a punitive force, invested with an unknown degree of authority by the national Government, which itself has unlimited authority, derived from the charismatic figure of Haile Sellassie (at this time). They are to be avoided at all costs, but if this proves impossible, offered whatever is available, in order to avoid injury or imprisonment. It is inconceivable that they might make a disinterested settlement of a problem, and the only hope of gaining a satisfactory verdict from them is to enlist the help of an Amhara, which is probably slightly less expensive than tackling them alone.

The police are one face of predatory local government in the region. Cases taken to them leave the hands of the Dime themselves, and their solution becomes an unpredictable matter, dependent on the whim of the police, and certain to be costly to all the parties involved. A far more satisfactory method of dispute settlement is the traditional village moot, an institution which is recognized by the District Government as being capable of solving minor problems.

ii - The Village Moot

Those qualified to take on the role of 'adult' at a moot are married men, who are not blacksmiths or tanners. In return for their services, they receive a joint payment, which is spent on alcohol for both the adults and the parties to the dispute.

Each disputant recruits his own adults, who listen to the case, raise those aspects which reflect well on him, and put his point of view during the discussion. The prime aim of the adults is to reach a reconciliation, both because they wish members of the village to help one another rather than argue, and because the problem may well go to a higher authority if they cannot solve it, which will be disastrous for both parties.

Such a moot has no way of enforcing its decision, and no standing members, but if both parties agree to the verdict, they should act according to it. If one of them goes back on the settlement, and the case then comes before a higher authority, he may thereby earn the disfavour of the court. The moot has no sanctions at its disposal other than the disapproval which a recalcitrant disputant may expect to receive through public opinion. Correspondingly, cases which come before such a gathering are not usually serious, but involve such minor matters as petty theft, fighting, wife-beating, insults and cursing. Serious violence, murder and tax

evasion are the province of higher, officially constituted, bodies, which have sanctions at their disposal.

iii - The Chikashum

Between the unofficial village moot and the police and Government courts, stands the Chikashum (literally 'mud chief') of the Dime, Mamo Dolinde. He is the only Dime to hold an official Government office, which had been his for ten years when I arrived in 1972.

> " I started being Chikashum in Shira (about 10 years previously). The Governor of Basketo came here once and found that there was no Chikashum. He asked people why, and they said that they didn't know how to choose one. The people and Futdub (chief of Uth'a) told the Governor that I should do the job. I didn't want to do it, because the travelling to Basketo is hard, and I didn't want the responsibility of Government work. The Government said they would pay me 30 $ Eth. a year, but they haven't done so for the last two years. The Basketo Chikashum gets 60 $ Eth. a year, but now I don't even get the 30 $ Eth. I am allowed ".

The office entails a wide range of duties: settling disputes which have defeated the 'adults'; offering hospitality to any passing officials; collecting taxes from those areas where no landowner is designated for this task; levying labour for occasional Government projects; assessing newly cleared areas of land for taxability, visiting the Governor in Basketo to discuss the problems of the area, and so on. To carry out these varied tasks he is invested with a certain amount of Government authority. This includes the right to nominate temporary policemen (K'alath'e) to bring suspects to his home; to impose fines and to enforce their collection by seizure of property (or at least he is believed to have this right); to receive a payment for hearing a dispute (danyaneth'); and to assess a man's taxable property and collect the appropriate amount.

Neither his rights nor his duties are clearly defined, and

both tend to expand to include any new situation which arises. He receives a great deal of respect from other Dime, and even the Amhara landowners cannot afford to completely ignore him. There is much rivalry between him and the major Amhara landowner, Waka Jamani, who is also a recognized, although unpaid, Government official, the Wana Balabbat, and engaged in a similar range of activities. It is not at all clear which of the two enjoys the higher official position in the Governmental system, although Waka is obviously the more respected within it, since he is both an Amhara and a large-scale land-owner. The rivalry between the two often emerges in attempts by Waka to discredit Mamo in the eyes of the Basketo officials.

In may 1973 Mamo collected taxes from most of the villages of southern and central Dimam and went to Garo with the money, intending to accompany it to Basketo the next day. He stopped at a policeman's house to drink t'ej, and Waka, who was also there, instructed the police to arrest him. They eventually allowed him to spend the night with an Amhara affine, but he could neither continue on the way to Basketo or return home to Woch'o. Waka took the tax receipts from him, and tried to persuade him to hand over the money, which he refused to do. It emerged that Waka had been particularly annoyed that the letters which I had brought with me from the Governor in Basketo had been addressed to Mamo as Chikashum and not to him. I had added insult to injury by going to live in Mamo's village, which consisted almost entirely of Dime, and not in Garo, the home of Waka and many Amharas. Mamo replied that perhaps the Government knew him, the Chikashum, and not Waka, which further enraged the land-owner. The next day, Mamo returned

to his home in Woch'o, together with the tax money.

> His comment on the affair was,
> " I haven't had any letter from the Government to say Waka is above me. I just respect him as an Amhara. Really, I am above him and can give him orders, but I am afraid because I am a servant and he is an Amhara according to the present order of things ".

The incident shows clearly the resentment of the Amharas, particularly those with many Dime tenants, of the importance of the Chikashum, whom they regard as a 'slave'. His personal authority and following are unique amongst the Dime, but suggest clearly that the current domination and exploitation of the 'pagans' cannot last indefinitely. Unfortunately, he is now over 50, and wants to retire from the office, which involves frequent walking to and from Basketo, and around Dimam to collect taxes. Also, he receives very little support from the Dime, and is tired of running the country single-handed. He asked the Governor in Basketo if he could retire, but was told he could not, since there is no-one to replace him.

In the field of dispute-settlement, he holds a unique position. He has Government authority, which ensures that his decisions are more likely to be accepted than those of a moot. This authority includes the possibility of recruiting informal Dime police-men to force witnesses to attend, and to seize property in a case of taxes not paid to a landlord. The fees he collects as 'danyaneth'' are considerably less than the police extract and he sometimes waives this right altogether if he feels that the accused cannot afford to pay the tax. His great experience in legal matters ensures that he usually reaches an appropriate decision, and his undisputed authority enables him to pressurize the parties into accepting it, even after a moot has failed in this respect.

The procedure at a hearing conducted by Mamo is a cross between that of a moot and that of a court. He has introduced swearing on Haile Sellassie to ensure that parties in adjourned cases will return with witnesses, and that guilty parties will actually pay the fine to which they have agreed. But he also permits more traditional oaths, calling on the ancestors and the earth. The key to his success is undoubtably the stated or implied threat that if agreement is not reached, he will take both parties to the police or to the Basketo Court, and subject them to the tender mercies of these institutions. This ploy almost always succeeds. In turn, his success rate contributes to the steady flow of cases which come before him. The 'guilty' party is always reluctant to accept the fine imposed, but usually prefers this to either the continuing disruption of his social life caused by a dispute, or the expense of an excursion into the Ethiopian system proper.

iv - The District Government in Basketo

The District Government is the power behind the police force, and the Chikashum, and has the responsibility of maintaining law and order in, and collecting taxes from, Dimam. The District Governor controls its legislative arm, passes on messages from higher authorities, and occasionally initiates action of his own. The main business of the Government, as far as the Dime are concerned, is carried out in the court room, and in the police station there. Cases which reach this stage usually concern either land, or the taking of life. Occasionally, matters of less import reach the court, simply because the parties involved have failed to agree at any

lower level, and feel the issue to be sufficiently important to risk the expense of an appearance in court. Any case which reaches the court in Basketo is certain to prove very expensive to all the parties involved. The winner may well recoup his losses, and, if land has been gained, go on to make a profit. But the loser usually finds himself in dire circumstances, and may fall irretrievably into debt.

If a Dime is in dispute with an Amhara, he will try to take his problem to Mamo Dolinde, before the Amhara can take it to the police station. Even before Mamo, there is almost no hope that the Dime can win against the Amhara, since the latter will not accept this verdict, but will take the matter to his own allies, the police or Waka. However, Mamo Dolinde does seek to reduce the claims of the Amhara to a level which the Dime can afford to pay. Often the Amhara will agree to this, particularly if he is heavily dependent on the voluntary labour of Dime at work parties to cultivate his land. If, on the other hand, he has a large number of dependent tenants, he can afford to by-pass Mamo altogether, and maximize his economic gain from the affair, and at the same time impress upon other Dime the limitless nature of his power. This ensures that they work for him regularly, make gifts to him, and generally acquit themselves towards him in an appropriate manner.

The courts in Basketo provide the ultimate threat available to the police and landowners in Dimam, in order to persuade their charges to accept their rulings, no matter how unjust. If a Dime does not raise the money and gifts necessary to placate the local powers-that-be, how much more unlikely that he can meet

the demands of the District Court ? It is in this deterrent sense that the Basketo court has its most significant effect on the Dime.

As for the legislative and administrative arm of government, the Governor sometimes calls for a visit from the 'balabbats' of Dime, ostensibly to discuss the problems of the region. These basically comprise anyone who can be forced by Waka, the police, and Mamo to go. Often the chief and former chief of Uth'a go, since they are within easy range of all three organisers. Others likely to be press-ganged into attendance are relatively wealthy men within a day's walk of Garo, who do not get sufficient advance warning of the messengers to run off somewhere. Everyone is reluctant to go, since the trip takes at least four days, and involves considerable expenditure and anxiety. However those who do take part in such an expedition gain a certain amount of reputation as 'men who know' about the Government and its activities. Such repute is not particularly useful, but may occasionally bring advantage at a moot, when the speaker can hint at his esoteric knowledge of legal procedure, without revealing wherein this lies.

During my stay, one District Governor died, and another arrived, and shortly sent for the Dime balabbats. About six people went, one of whom recounted the events of the visit.

> " We arrived at Basketo. The Governor said ' What did you come here for ? ' We said, ' We came because we were ordered '. He said ' The Chikashum did not come, and the letter was written to him, not you. We will put you in prison '.
>
> Mamo Badji and two of the balabbats went to the court room to ask why they had been called to Basketo for no reason. I asked him ' Did you go up there ? '
> ' Yes '.
> ' What did he say ? '
> ' They said we must write an application '.

I was afraid. 'What is this application for ? I think they are going to cause us some trouble .... '.

We wrote (that is, had written) an application, and took it to the court and showed them. They said, ' What a stupid application. Who wrote this ? Bring the person who wrote this '.

We brought the boy who wrote it, Asefer Mamache's son. They asked him ' What is this application you wrote ? ' He said, ' They came to me and asked me to write an application. They said ' We were ordered to come here. After we came here, we found nothing; so the application is asking you why they had to come here '.

' The letter I wrote was about the tax ', the Governor said, ' and it was to Ato Waka Jamani. Did he come here ? ' 'No' we said.
' Go back then and hear the result from Waka '.

He told us all to go and we went out .... "

After hearing this sorry tale Mamo Dolinde gave his opinion of the situation.

Mamo " You went there and just showed yourselves to the Governors without putting something in their mouth. It is just like a husband beating his wife if she doesn't make coffee. The Governors didn't want to tell you anything, because you didn't give them something. You should have discussed it before you got there and collected some money together, and given it Mamo Badji (the Uth'a chief). He should have taken it to the Governors. Send him ahead and you stay behind. He gives the money and says, ' Here is something to drink water with'. Then they will tell you why you went there ".

Mangada " We thought about this on the road, but we couldn't agree about it .... ' The Lieutenant is a newcomer. The judge and Governor are also new. For three people how much should we give ' I said ".

Mamo " Since they are newcomers, if you just gave them 3$ each, and said, 'Drink some water with this', it would have been good. One day, I went to Basketo. They asked me, ' Are you someone from the lowland ?'

Then I thought to myself, ' I must give them something ', and gave them some money. If you had done the same thing, they would have liked it. Since you haven't met these people before, they don't know you and you don't know them. In their minds, they know they ordered you to come. Purposely they said, ' We didn't order you to come up here ', because they need something from your hand .... "

This account suggests three basic propositions. First, that most Dime, including the balabbats, are extremely confused as to the aims of the Basketo officials. Secondly, that the officials take advantage of this, and frighten the Dime into making 'donations' for no reason; and thirdly that Mamo Dolinde has been Chikashum for long enough to realise the appropriate pattern of behaviour in order to secure less harrowing visits to the officials. His knowledge of the Government system has earned him a certain amount of respect in Basketo, and among the Amhara landowners in Dimam. However, the latter feel, justifiably, that his acceptance in Basketo imposes certain limits on their own predatory activities amongst the Dime. For this reason, as mentioned earlier, there is constant tension between him and the leading landowners, particularly Waka.

There are two further infrequent contacts between the inhabitants of Dimam and the larger political system, which reaches them via Basketo. These are elections for the national Parliament, and occasional collections for intended Government projects. An example of each occurred during my stay, and I was able to view the processes involved.

v - A Parliamentary Election

Some months before the election, the Secretary of the Basketo Government spent two months in Garo, giving out voting cards to people brought to him by the police, mostly on market days. The card had on it the recipient's name, age, and a number, although, of course, none of them could read these. " He told us to keep the card carefully, and come to vote on the day. If we lost the card, we would go to jail ".

Shortly before voting-day, Mamo Dolinde recruited 'volunteers' to go to Garo and build a special hut in which the voting could be carried out. Posters were placed on trees in the market place, and in many Amhara houses, telling of the virtues of the candidates, but, since there is no Dime who can read and few resident Amharas either, they conveyed little information. The candidates adopted the following symbols: a horse, a leopard, a buffalo and a red rectangle. Everyone had the right to vote, "even women and blacksmiths".

A few remarks from voters will give some indication of the relevance of the election as far as both Dime and Amharas in the area were concerned.

> " We saw some boxes in a row, and we didn't know which was which, but we threw a card in somewhere ".

> " I don't know whose it was, but my box had a horse on it. We don't know why we had to do it, but we just went there ..... we just obeyed because the Government told us to come at that time and vote, by putting a card in a box. No-one said what it was when we got there. The police went round and told the balabats to tell people to go to Garo at a certain time ".

> " The man with the Horse had most cards, so he won, because he gave some money to Ato Abara Tabaji's sons (the major landowner in southern Dimam). They told people to vote for the box with the horse on it ".

> " The leopard man, Admassou, was a Basketo. He sent posters round to gain support. He sent a letter to Tariku (an Amhara with a few tenants in Worgu, near Woch'o) with his pictures, and told him to show them to people, and gave him 30 $ Eth. to buy drinks while he went round ".

Many Dime remember only too well the political career of one of the previous candidates for election, a man named Garamu.

> " While he was running for election, his brother Kasa killed an old man in Garo, and fled into the bush. Garamu failed to get elected. He went to Fellege Neway, (the sub-Provincial centre) and then came back and told the Dime and Bodi that he was elected. He told the Dime, ' I will try to

> help you by getting the Government to build roads, a clinic and a school in the area. The Dime collected 300 $ Eth. for this. Then he went to the Bodis and they brought him 16 bulls. He told them he needed the money to bribe the Government officials (to authorize the projects). He sold the bulls and took all the money to Fellege Neway to bribe the judge to pardon his brother, who was still in the bush. Then he went to Addis for a holiday ..... ".

It is clear that there is neither knowledge of, nor interest in, the Parliamentary Elections, and that as far as the Dime are concerned, those parts of the Governmental system which they have seen function entirely on the basis of bribes, and they have no reason to suppose that the elections are in any way different. They do not expect to derive any benefit from their elected representative, and only vote because of the fear of retribution if they do not.

vi - An Occasional Collection

In mid December 1974, Mamo Dolinde received a letter from the Governor of Basketo, saying that he had to collect 3$ Eth. from every house owner in Dimam, which would be put towards buying, or hiring, a bulldozer for use in three areas of the Sub-Province, on the construction of roads. He was to be helped in the project by Garamu, the same man mentioned previously, whose fund raising expertise was obviously known to the Government. A few days later, an assortment of five armed Amharas gathered at the house of Mamo Dolinde, and gratefully accepted the gifts of arake which local Dime leaders brought for them to drink. A few days later, I passed the band on the path, followed by several porters, laden with sacks of money, gourds of honey, and chickens. Not surprisingly, I could not obtain any estimate of how much money they had received.

The collection emphasizes the possibilities open to Mamo Dolinde as Chikashum, and to those Amharas who have friends among the

Basketto officials. The exercise provided them all with the opportunity of an approved demonstration of their authority (including their appearance as an armed band), and of their closeness to the affairs of government (especially their right to demand money); as well as the extras which they received in the form of animals killed in their honour, and chickens and honey to take home. They were also able to show the value of their patronage, since dependents, close relatives, and clients of the party were not pressed to pay the levy.

vii - Summary of the Effects of the Ethiopian Governmental System

At the District level, at least as far as Basketo is concerned, the Ethiopian Gevernment is far from the bureaucratic type which its outer form suggests. It is essentially a system of patronage, which ensures that the advantages enjoyed by a handful of powerful landowners are not disturbed by legislative and judicial decisions. It is not simply a matter of Amharas versus the rest, since the Government officials are from various ethnic groups, and some personally dislike many of the landowners. Rather, it is a matter of social and racial stereotypes - the 'highland' people, literate, Christian, well-dressed according to their own canons, light-skinned, and the minority in the region, versus the 'lowland' people, who are illiterate, pagan, poorly-dressed, and 'black'. No matter how well a Dime speaks Amharic, dresses, and so forth, he cannot fully join the ruling stratum.

Of course, it is not only the Dime who have to bribe the Government Officials, but the landowners are moving within a system which they to some extent understand, and which uses their own

language. Very few Dime speak Amharic sufficiently fluently to hold their own in a swift exchange, particularly when there is much at stake. For the rest, who understand varying amounts, an encounter with the Government in Basketo, or even the police in Dimam, is a confusing and frightening experience, from which their only chance of emerging is to pay as much as they can afford, and often more. Many of them borrow heavily from Amharas in order to pay their fines, and with the extremely high rates of interest a debt tends to increase rather than decrease, thus setting the stage for yet worse oppression.

The Chikashum is usually the highest authority to which cases between Dime are taken, but many cases between Dime and Amharas go to the police, and even higher. It is partly the nightmarish nature of the Governmental system which makes the landowners appear to the Dime as near friends. It is far better to pay whatever the landowner demands in taxes, tithes, and fines for (often imaginary) offences, than to risk the unknown problems which will follow if they are not paid. If the dispute is with an Amhara on whose land the Dime does not live, then he can attempt to reduce his losses by going to another Amhara, and asking him to intercede on his behalf. Or else, as is often the case, he may go directly to the Chikashum, and attempt to settle the case by his judgement, which has a certain amount of authority in the Ethiopian system.

For the above reasons, the progress of "Ethiopianization" has so far been only a slight improvement on slavery. The organs of local government deprive the Dime of most of the small income they are able to attain by selling coffee and crops. Further, they frequently suffer physical assault at the hands of the police, with

little possibility of restitution. It is true that policemen are often accused of various offences by their superiors, but this usually results in fines and a reshuffling of personnel between the various undesirable outposts, rather than in any improvement in the overall standard. On the positive side, the Dime receive vague promises of a road, school, and Government clinic, which have yet to materialize, despite the money which has been collected for these purposes. Understandably, many do not believe that the District Governmnet really intends to carry out the advertised projects.

When there was an intensification of hostilities by the heavily armed Bodi pastoralists, and large numbers of Dime were killed, and their cattle stolen, the police proved to be no protection at all. Indeed, the Bodis were so confident of their power that they even raided the outskirts of Basketo itself. Several Amharas in Dimam and Basketo own land in Bodi territory, and enjoy good relations with these tenants. They wish to retain these contacts, so that they can continue trading guns and bullets to the Bodis, in return for cows, leopard skins, and, less often, ivory. There are therefore strong vested interests against calling for reinforcements against the Bodi. Finally the events in Dimam were relayed to higher quarters by a visitor to the region, and troops were sent into Bodi country to quell the hostility, and return some cattle to the Dime. If it had been left to the police force and District Government, it seems unlikely that any such measures would have been taken, or at least not for some time.

It is scarcely surprising that the Dime prefer to pursue internal leadership possibilities which bring small returns, at little risk, rather than attempting to dabble in wider politics. Although

there are a great number of internal leaders of one sort or another, Mamo Dolinde is the only Dime with a place in the Government system.

Before drawing any conclusions concerning the nature and effects of 'encapsulation' on the Dime I must discuss briefly the influence of Christianity in the region. It is present in two radically different varieties; the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, to which all Amharas nominally adhere, and the Sudan Interior Mission (although this name may be altered in the Ethiopian context) outpost, which has as yet only a small body of devotees.

c) Christianity in Dimam

i - The Ethiopian Orthodox Church

The Amhara landowners in Dimam are all members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and follow its regulations with varying degrees of rigour. The great majority of them have little idea of the content of the religion, and know only the names of various saints, the periods of fasting and the holidays. Circumcision and fasting make them infinitely superior to the 'pagans', as does their devotion to monogamy, although the more successful of them have several female servants, who produce legitimate Amhara offspring for them. Some Dime are nominally Orthodox, but they neither wish to, nor are able to, pursue this further.

The most tangible contact between the Dime and Orthodox Christianity is the considerable number of Dime with Amhara God Parents. An example of the progress of such relationships was provided by Argenu.

> " Besune asked me if I would be his Godson; 'I will help you sometimes, and you can help me '. So I carried for him

> and worked for him sometimes. I accepted so that I could be with Amharas and learn Amharic. I lived near Besune in Shira and helped him whenever he asked me to. The Dime Godson of an Amhara takes a large pot of t'ej, a rooster, and 10 or 15 njeras (flat bread) on each holiday, especially New Year and the end of the Fast. The Godfather gives him a shirt or jacket, or 5Ƀ Eth. I gave him t'ej many times, but he didn't give me anything .... People wept, saying ' He will give you something next year ', but I got tired of it in the end, so now I don't take him anything. If there is a wedding, I help and give some money. So, even if I am a Christian, I don't follow the Orthodox system at all. I just give a feast at the end of the Fast ".

In sum, God-parentship is a device whereby an Amhara can tie non-tenants to himself in order to receive gifts and free labour. As far as the Dime is concerned, he expects a reciprocal gift, and if this does not materialize over a long period, he eventually abandons the relationship. While it lasts, the Dime may be able to gain some benefits from it in terms of help with legal problems, but this by no means always happens.

The theology of Orthodoxy has had little effect on the Amharas of the region, and their religion demands mainly the observance of fasting. It has therefore not radically altered the Dime. In fact, in the realm of belief, the transmission has been mainly in the reverse direction. Politically, orthodoxy has been used to support the landowners' claims to be justified in their exploitation of the 'pagans'.

ii - The 'Believers'

Shortly after my arrival in the field, an evangelist of the S.I.M. came to Dimam to found a church. His name was Gezahine, and he was from Malo, two days to the north-east of Dimam. He spoke the Malo and Gofa languages, but no Dimaf. After studying the Bible for three years at the Mission school in Bulki, he spent another

year as Evangelist in Dola, a region between Dime and Basketo.

The year before his arrival a 'Farinje' (white man) member of the Mission had managed to prepare an airstrip in Dimam, and flew in briefly. Gezahine continues the story;

> " Mr. Aneru came here and converted two people, ... who were both in Garo. He talked to the people and gave them medicine. When I arrived, I asked these people how they felt about being Christian, and told them to bring people on Sundays to listen to the Bible, which they did. Before I came, they talked to people, but since they were not trained, no-one was converted. Mr. Aneru had an Ethiopian preacher with him. He just told them what Christ would do for them; the good life they could lead; and if they didn't smoke and drink they would have more money. He didn't tell them much about the religion.
>
> When I arrived, I went to Waka (the landowner), who gave me an empty house to live in. At first I talked just to the two believers and a few others, but as the numbers increased, my house was not big enough, and I asked them to help build a church, which they did.
>
> Sunday is the big day, when all the people gather. On other days we go from house to house, talking to people. We have no trouble talking to people; some believe, others don't. People listen but don't understand. Later on they might come to understand. We talk at each house once, then go to the next. After that, we don't go again. God will bring people to the church if they want to be Christians ".

By this time, (April 1973) he had been in Dimam for about four months. The 'staff' of the church was six strong:- Gezahine and his wife; Haphtamu and Worku (2 mission-trained believers from outside of Dimam) and a man named Danno and his wife. Gezahine said of Danno:-

> " He used to be a Ts'osi Bab (shaman) and was living in Dola when I converted him. His spirit drove him out of Dimam, and he wandered in the bush for 7 years. He had no plan of life, and just moved around. He let his hair grow long (a common feature of shamans in Dimam). Finally, he came to me, and told me his story. I kept him there, and told him about Christ. I cut his hair, and he later became a Christian ..... ".

Six more Dime were converts, and three others were believed to have been converted but returned to their old ways. Gezahine

thought that they might come back to the church, and was still visiting them.

> " The first thing (I tell people) is, 'Believe in Jesus and you will be cured of sin'. This is the big thing; to be safe from sin. Safe from the Devil. People who sacrifice to the mountains and trees, and get possessed are giving to the Devil. You must not burn incense and believe in spirits, or read intestines and make up what will happen to people, or look at the cups (to read the coffee dregs), or throw stones (the main Dime method of divination). Some Dime look at the intestines, some sacrifice to the ancestors, some to the clan ancestors, and some to spirits. Some don't eat chicken, some sheep and so on. It is all the Devil's work .....
>
> We tell people that if, after they are converted, they drink beer, or do something wrong, they will get sick. God's power in them goes away when they get drunk, and the Devil will come in and say, 'He deserted me and became a Christian. I will make him sick'. Drinking beer causes illness. The beer eats the bottom of the pot, and it eats the stomach in the same way. According to the Bible, Jesus can make a person sick as a punishment, and later on he will be a Christian .....
>
> On Sundays, Amharas never come. They have their own church. We both talk about Jesus Christ. They fast, we don't. They drink, we don't. They get drunk and fight, which is a sin, and we don't do it. The Amharas (in Dimam) don't understand the Bible, and don't understand Jesus Christ ..... I tell the Dime they can only have one wife. It says so in the Bible. Also, in the beginning, God created one man and one woman.
>
> The Dime's hearts are like stone; we talk to them again and again, but we don't get through to them ".

There are a number of significant points about the 'Believers' in Dimam. (I am here only discussing the political aspects of the movement, and take no account of its beliefs. This is not an attempt to devalue its experiential aspect, and I treat the Dime religion in the same cavalier manner, since I am here only concerned with aspects of leadership).

Firstly, they mark the beginning of a completely new network of patronage and social relationships. The Mission station in Bulki, 70 miles away by foot for the believers, is in regular contact with

them, and is well-informed as to the problems they face. At approximately monthly intervals, some of the believers walk to Bulki, and there receive training in Biblical studies. For the rest of the month, they learn from the Evangelist, who also teaches illiterate converts to read and speak Amharic. This may well be important in the future. It is probable that the first Dime to read Amharic will be a Believer (with the possible exception of the 14 year old son of the Chikashum). This has political implications in a country which seems to be placing considerable emphasis on the spread of literacy. It may be that 'believing' will become a channel to political involvement in the Ethiopian system, because of its connection with literacy. The main bar to this is the distrust with which many local Government officials regard the Mission and its work.

Further, for both positive and negative reasons, the Believers are a co-operative community. On the positive side, they wish to live in close contact to provide moral support in the face of temptation, and help on various building and farming projects. Negatively, their refusal to offer beer as a reward means that non-believers will not work for them, and that there is little point in their joining the work parties of such people.

Their sobriety ensures that they do not fall foul of 'the law' through drunkenness, and their literacy and contact with 'farinjes' means that they cannot easily be fooled into paying fines or excessive taxes. Any money they make can therefore be saved and spent on such items as clothing, medicines, cooking utensils, and so on. The corresponding air of prosperity must sooner or later impress those Dime who lack such good fortune, and could win over converts from the poorer members of the society.

The obvious barriers to conversion are two-fold; the avoidance of alcohol, which is currently the basis of the work-party system of agriculture; and the requirement of monogamy, when having several wives is the sign of an influential man, and the path to further affluence. Any large-scale acceptance of the new faith would require a re-assessment of the whole economic system, and of the goals towards which Dime strive. If any number adopted these changes, a solidary community of potentially wealthy, literate, Dime, holding connections with important 'outsiders' could materialise. This would inevitably be seen by the Amhara landowners as a grave threat to their domination of the Dime. But given the widespread belief in the secret powers of white people and their supposed importance to the Ethiopian Government, it is difficult to see what actions the Amharas could take against them.

Just over one year after the arrival of Gezahine, the Mission sent a Wollamo dresser, who began a clinic in Garo, near to the church. It was difficult to judge the effect of this in the short time before I left. It was widely said that his medicines would be poor because he was an Ethiopian and not a white man. To a large extent this reflects a lack of confidence in all Ethiopian-run clinics, based on the disappointing performance of the Government clinic in Basketo, which is always grossly under-supplied. However, the clinic in Garo is well-stocked and competently and honestly run, and if all goes according to plan, it should be a successful venture. If this is so, it may have far-reaching consequences for Dime theories of disease, which are closely enmeshed in the ancestor cult and shamanism, which are important channels of influence in the society. Thus the new Christians could well have unintended political consequences in this area of life.

To summarize, the believers have not yet had much tangible effect on the Dime, but if they expand their membership and maintain the medical facilities, they could well become agents of political change, whilst pursuing their intended goal of saving souls.

d) Conclusions on Encapsulation and Change

The encapsulation of the traditional Dime political structure, which took place in stages, brought entirely new features to its environment, to which it had to react.

The first stage of encapsulation attempted to eliminate completely the independent Dime structure, and to absorb its members into the larger structure as slaves. Had this campaign been entirely successful, there would now be no small structure. But the intervention of the Italians, followed by an Ethiopian Government with a different policy, enabled the Dime structure to re-emerge, in a modified form.

I am mainly interested in the current stage of encapsulation, since no accurate account of the earlier phases exists. Bailey's model of encapsulation as a process whereby two structures interact is perhaps too simple for the Dime situation. There are certainly two distinct structures - of Dime chiefship and Ethiopian Government, but the Amhara landowners resident in Dimam constitute a third party, which cannot be identified absolutely with the interests of the Ethiopian Government. These settlers seek to effect a compromise between the first stage of encapsulation and the principles of the current one. They resent local government officials, who have taken many of the spoils which were once theirs, but realise

that they must co-operate with them, since the halcyon days of slavery will never return. If the landowners plunder the Dime, the Government plunders them both.

It is in the matter of landownership that the interstitial position of the settlers emerges most clearly. Although they have now lost the absolute control over the land and people which they once enjoyed, their new position is not entirely disadvantageous. In particular, they are able to make considerable gains by collecting inflated taxes, which they do not pass on to the Government.

From the Dime viewpoint, the landowners and Government are essentially the same. They share a common language, Orthodox Christianity, and a view of the Dime as primarily inferiors to be exploited. The first Amharas deprived them of their land, and the present Government charges them money to use it. They are, however, aware of a major improvement in their situation since the abolition of slavery, which has enabled some of them to become relatively wealthy.

The Government impinges on the Dime mainly through its legal and economic policies. Cases which cannot be settled by traditional village moots are handled by the Chikashum, Amhara landowners, the police, or the Court in Basketo. A settlement by the Chikashum is made within the bounds of Dime values, even though much of his authority derives from the Ethiopian system. In such a case, X wins, Y loses and pays a fine, and both pay a fee to Mamo, and some beer money to the old men who helped him. This is only a small procedural step from the moot, and quite comprehensible. If land-owners are called in to help, the parties involved have less say in the affair, and the sums of money paid out will be considerably larger.

But if the police or Court are involved, there is no telling what procedures might be adopted, and almost no limit to the demands which might be made.

The five possibilities of solving a dispute can therefore be placed on a continuum. At one end is the moot, which is cheap and fully understood, and at the other the Government Court, which is expensive and incomprehensible. As Bailey says, " there is a very strong feeling that to take disputes outside is to initiate that type of non-zero-sum game in which everyone is the loser " (op. cit. P 160).

Economically, as I have said, the policy of the local Government officials current in 1972-74 was predatory. Several factors prevent them from gaining the maximum spoils from the Dime. In the first place, the land-owners siphon off most of the available resources. Secondly, the area is so remote that Government officials have no idea of its actual economic situation. They prefer to accept what the land-owners tell them, rather than the Dime balabbats' version. Thirdly, the Chikashum has managed to earn a slight degree of respect from the police, who prefer not to act in a manner so extreme that he might complain to the Government. Finally, the few powerful shamans acquire some of the people's income.

The sum of demands from land-owners, inflated taxes, levies and dispute settlements places a very heavy burden on the Dime, who have little surplus to begin with. This burden is all the more resented since it brings almost no return. The police make little positive contribution, and the promised amenities from the Government are no nearer now than they were thirty years ago, or so it seems.

In many ways, the Chikashum, Mamo Dolinde, acts as middleman

between the Ethiopian system and the Dime. He collects taxes for the Government and explains to officials why some people cannot afford to pay; hears cases with authority given by Basketo, and collects a fee for doing so; gathers men to work on occasional projects, such as building a voting house; and conveys orders from the Governor. Many Dime regard him with suspicion as well as respect, because he appears at times to be an ally of the police and Government. From the other side, Government officials suspect him of putting the interests of the Dime above theirs. Despite suspicions, almost every Dime has contact with Mamo for one reason or another, and his demands are usually met. The Chikashum is necessary if not universally popular, and Bailey's description of the attitude of Indian peasants to their middlemen is equally true of the Dime. While they " still have a deeply felt normative sense of their own difference from the officials and other outsiders and of the malevolence of foreigners, and while this feeling still inhibits the growth of that trust which is necessary for a moral relationship, yet they have lived long enough with the outside world, and have been compelled to interact with it on sufficient occasions, for them to ask themselves what is the most effective way of managing this interaction " (op. cit. Ps. 173/4).

Undoubtably the most effective way for them to conduct business with the organs of government is through Mamo's services, and he has been able to use this indispensibility to build up his income and followers. He has on the land he rents a number of clients who provide tangible evidence of his wealth and importance, and increase his honour in the community.

The traditional political structure is obviously incapable of dealing with the present inputs from its environment. The chiefs are occasionally afforded the title of balabbat, but they have no important role with regard to the larger political structure. They are occasionally ordered to visit the Basketo Government, but have acquired little expertise in this field of relations. They generally prefer to continue with the competition which they understand, for which only their own clans are eligible, rather than risk the dangers of the Ethiopian structure. By making this choice, they have opted out of the arena where the prize is economically high, and remained where they can maximize traditional honour. The Chikashum has more standing in the new arena than the 7 chiefs and numerous past chiefs put together. But he is not their only rival. Within Dime society, a new type of politico-religious figure, the shaman, has overtaken the chiefs economically, and rivals them for honour.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE RISE OF SHAMANISM

The rise of shamanism is closely linked with the fall of chiefship, and the need for a method of dealing with a crisis situation. The nature of the crisis can be briefly summarized. Prior to the Amhara invasion, serious legal cases were brought before the chief, who had the authority to pass judgements, even in a case of murder, and the power to carry out his sentences, by the use of his own 'bodyguard' of members of the servant caste, Kaisaf. He was also the chiefdom's battle-leader, and central to its economic system. His subjects brought him personal gifts, and were invited at a later date to a feast of his providing. Other gifts which they brought to him were offered to the gods and spirits, to ensure the well-being of his subjects. Economics, politics, law and ritual were all part of the same coherent world-view.

After the Italian interlude, when the 'Ethiopian' system arrived, and the Dime were no longer slaves, they were still economically weak from the reduction of their numbers, and from the demands for tithes and gifts by the large-scale Amhara landlords, who divided up most of the country between them. They were therefore unable to economically support the chiefs in the same way as they had done before the Amharas came. But furthermore, they were unwilling to do so, since a major task of chiefs has always been to keep the country free, by ritual and military means of war, and by the former of famine and disease. Their total failure to fulfil these obligations for forty years resulted in a considerable loss of confidence

in their powers. Not only had they lost political and jural power to the Chikashum and the police force and Government court, but their ritual authority was also considerably reduced, because they had been unable to demonstrate sufficient favour with the suprahuman powers to protect their subjects, which suggested that the Balth'u of chiefs was at a low ebb.

In this situation, the previous coherent world-view, in which a chief's ritual authority ensured his political and jural competence, was no longer feasible. As if to rescue the Dime from their impotence, a new type of ritual leader entered the country from Basketo. The introduction of shamanism is remembered by many Dime. Argenu told me;

> " The first time a shaman came to Dimam and became possessed, people said, 'What is this? Did he go crazy?' because they didn't have such a man. He had an interpreter who told them what he said when he got possessed. The interpreter said, 'He helps people with problems, cures the sick, makes the poor rich, and helps barren women get babies'.
>
> People thought this was good, and started to come and give him things. Women who wanted children started going to him. He told them, 'You will have a baby. Then after its teeth have come, you must come and bring me beer'. They went there with gubzi and money. He put the first glass in the spirit corner, burnt incense, got possessed, and talked to the people. 'Look, didn't I tell you the truth when I said you would have a baby?' The next day he blessed the woman and baby, and from that time the woman sometimes came to the shaman's house with money and beer, and the child was the spirit's and the shaman like its father ".

Even now, shamans are not numerous, there being no more than 12 who would be generally recognized as such. Of these, there are three or 4 who are much more powerful than the others, whose verdicts are believed implicitly, and whose curses are certain death. We will see later how these shamans have built up reputations, and, by Dime standards, fortunes, but we must first examine how a spirit arrives in someone, the demands it makes, and how it is able to help

those who come to its agent for advice.

The spirit may select its agent when he (or she) is a child or an adult, and will make him sick, until it receives certain offerings, which it either names directly to its victim during possession, or through the mediation of an existing shaman. The agent of a spirit is termed its 'mule'. As I.M. Lewis has pointed out in his work 'Ecstatic Religion', the "language of the stables" is "widely employed in possession cults" throughout the world (Lewis. 1971. P. 58). But of course the Dime have their own etymology of the word. It is one of the names by which the Amharas used to refer to the Dime during, and even after, the days of slavery. It referred both to the physical work they carried out for their masters, and to the fact that traders often payed a mule in return for a Dime slave. The shaman is therefore the slave of the spirit, having no choice but to obey it.

A male shaman, who became the slave of a spirit as an adult, gave the following account of its arrival;

> " I was sick for a long time when the spirit came, then I got better. I shouted suddenly when I got better. The spirit said, 'I made you sick', and told me what I had to do for it; build a house, buy a special coffee pot, cups, and an incense burner. Then I would stay well ".

At the time of its entry, the spirit usually imposes certain regulations on its human agent. Characteristically, it requires certain special pieces of apparatus, as mentioned above, exclusively for its own use. Also, that the shaman refrain from certain foods, and from contact with people who have recently eaten them.

Dando Gush, perhaps the most respected shaman in the country, has a special corner of his main house, which contains numerous items reserved for the spirit.

Whatever is consumed in the house is first presented to Dando, who allocates the spirit's portion. The first cup or glass of any liquid is placed in the corner, and the first portion of larger food, such as sweet potatoes, or ensete, goes into the spirit's bowl. If there is just a snack of roasted corn or millet, Dando takes a handful and throws it in the corner.

More important than the spirit's corner, Dando has also built it a special house, in which he keeps many of the gifts people have brought it, and where he goes when there are many difficult problems to be solved by the spirit on his possession night.

He is not allowed to eat sheep, wild animals, chickens or eggs, and no-one who has eaten these within the last week may enter any of his houses, nor may any menstruating women, or people suffering from worms. If someone leaves Dando's house to visit the bush, and accidentally treads on some urine, he should not re-enter. If Dando goes from his house, he should not eat or drink with anyone, but take his own food, water and cup. He cannot buy beer on the road, or in the market, or his spirit will become angry and make him sick. Nor can he buy any crops to eat, although his wives and children may eat such crops.

The prohibitions fit in well with those 'pollution' concepts already discussed. Although they are thought to come not from the shaman himself, but from his spirit, I do not feel that it is coincidence that they are basically those which apply to a chief, but rather more numerous. Further, the leading shamans construct a ritual house (Mish Eh) above their own house, exclusively for use when contacting the spirit. The house itself, its name, and its position are the same as in the case of the house a chief builds for prayer

and offerings to his ancestors, and into which he retreats when in a ritually 'dangerous' state.

Here I must mention the striking similarity between the 'taboos' which apply to a Dime shaman, and those which apply amongst the far distant, and quite unrelated, Macha Galla of Central Ethiopia, as described by K. Knutsson in his book, 'Authority and Change'. Amongst the Macha, the 'Kallu' (shaman) adheres to a strict regime of prohibitions, particularly with regard to food. The taboo system is not new, or even confined to the shamans. " It represents rather an application, and on some points an intensification, of common rules for those who in one way or another act as intermediaries between the human and suprahuman spheres ..... The kallu's observance of the purity requirements and his dependence upon them for his existence as a kallu make him both a focus in and a transmitter of the traditional culture. This is despite the fact that in its present form his institution represents something relatively new and has played, and still plays, an important role in the transformation of Macha society " (op. cit. P. 79).

Furthermore, the Kallu also builds a house for the spirit, known by a name which is used in all Galla regions to refer to a ritual house. This theme of continuity in change applies equally in Dimam, and is one to which I shall return shortly. The building of a special house for the spirit, and observance of taboos relating to food and drink, are also required of shamans amongst the Kafa of South-West Ethiopia, as reported by A. Orent in his work, " Lineage Structure and the Supernatural: the Kafa of Southwest Ethiopia ".

A great number of Dime are occasionally possessed by spirits, but are not here included as shamans. They do not have regular possession nights, and do not advise other people on their problems by communicating with the spirit. In such cases, the spirit again makes itself known by making its agent ill. From then on, the agent makes offerings to it, and may even build it a house, in which its gifts are placed. I adopt the classification used by Lewis:-

" People who regularly experience possession by a particular spirit may be said to act as mediums for that divinity. Some, but not all such mediums are likely to graduate in time to become controllers of spirits, and once they 'master' these powers in a controlling fashion they are properly shamans " (op. cit. P. 56).

The major shamans have regular possession nights once or twice a week, provided that some people have come for consultation. If there are no 'customers' the shaman does not proceed with his preparations. An important shaman, with some difficult problems to solve, will go into the special ritual house to encourage the spirit to enter, but if the problems, or the shaman, are less important, possession may take place in his everyday house. Each shaman has his own particular technique for calling the spirit, and most use musical instruments, incense, alcohol, and coffee as aids to their prayers.

Unfortunately, none of the shamans would allow me to attend while they were possessed, so I was not able to form any conclusions as to the nature of this aspect of the shaman's art. The ban reflected the food prohibitions of the shaman, and the persecution they were suffering at the time of my stay. Orent encountered a

similar ban against attending the seances of Kafa shamans: " The Kafa believe that if a foreigner should enter the presence of an ek'k'o (spirit) it will kill the alamo (shaman). I could never observe a session " (op. cit. P.230).

I did witness Dando's preliminary procedures for possession, which took place on that evening in his normal house, since there were only 5 clients, with problems which he regarded as relatively minor.

I was told of Dando;

> " He doesn't usually get possessed in his own house, mostly in the ritual house. Whenever someone who is in serious trouble comes to ask his spirit about it, or if someone wants to kill someone and comes to him, and promises to give his spirit something if it kills the person, he gets possessed in his ritual house, because the ritual house up there is like a Provincial Court. This house is just like a District Court. Some people come to him because of a small problem, for example, someone gets drunk and insults his Baira, and then gets sick because the Baira curses him. For such a small thing he doesn't go to the Mish Eh, but gets possessed in his own house, as it is not like killing someone ".

The course of events at a possession night is fairly clear, from that part of it which I saw, and the accounts of numerous informants, who had recourse to shamans during my stay.

Each client takes a gift, or gifts, for the spirit, usually of incense, arake, coffee, or grain. When he (or she) enters the house, he kisses the ground three times at the spirit corner, leaves the gift, and sits down at the back of the house. The music starts, and the shaman's wives and daughters make coffee, which they give first to the spirit, then to the shaman. Then he burns incense on the spirit's incense stand, and watches the smoke. He is not yet possessed, and asks the visitors in turn why they came, and what

they want the spirit to do for them. Then, he sits quietly, and concentrates on the music and on the smoke. Some time later, which may vary between a few minutes, and several hours, the spirit enters him, if it wishes to. A specific instance of what people say happens next was provided by an old man named Tubu. His account was of a visit made a few weeks previously, and was not primarily directed at me, but at the Chikashum. It is an extract of a much longer description of the events which led up to his murder of his own brother's son.

> " The shaman asked me, 'What kind of stone is it in your house?' I said, 'There is a stone on which I sacrifice'.
>
> The shaman said, 'Kill an animal, and put blood on this stone, to remove the 'Gome' which is in your house now'. Again he asked me, 'You hung a hive on a tree, and wept when you climbed the tree to get your honey. Why is that?' I told him, 'I put a hive on the tree, and went back one day to get the honey, and found that someone had taken it, and so I was crying'.
>
> Shaman: 'Also in your house, there is a pot or gourd over which you cried because something happened to it. And you asked people to do something about it. Isn't this true?'
> 'Yes it is true'.
>
> Shaman: '..... Do you know who raided your hive?'
>
> Tubu: ' ..... When I lost my honey and went to my family, and asked my wife and children if they ate it, they all said, 'Why should we take honey from the hives you put up to help the problems we all have?' (Because the honey was to be sacrificed on behalf of the family). My family said, 'Why don't you go to a Ts'osi Bab and have him curse the person who took it?'
>
> The shaman told me, 'You will find out who took your honey because I will make him sick'. "

This dialogue well illustrates the way in which a shaman can discover the background to a man's problems, and suggest what is their cause, within a short time. It seems probable that by the answers he gives to the shaman's questions, the visitor can greatly

influence the final decision given by the spirit, although this is not admitted. Throughout the process, the shaman maintains an atmosphere of distance from the conversation, since it must be clear to his audience that the diagnosis comes from the spirit and not from himself.

Occasionally, the shaman may be told by the spirit to give a certain medecine to the sick person. In the case of a fever, this may be something wrapped in a leaf or a piece of cloth, which is tied round the neck, or simply something to drink. Such medecines are essentially different from those of another type of Dime healing expert, the herbalist, since in this case it is the power of the spirit which gives them their healing quality, and not any property believed to inhere in them. Without the spirit they would have no healing power.

More often, the advice given involves some form of offering to appease the cause of the illness, and thus remove its effects. Dando advised an Amhara woman that her general ill-health, and that of her child, was the result of her being eaten by evil-eye. To remove the effects of this, she should go home, make beer and bread, and invite her husband's grand-parents to consume them. They would come to eat and drink, and bless her, which would remove the evil-eye, even though it was not they who had put it on her. This seems to imply that the evil-eye was put on her by one of the kinsmen of her grand-parents, and their approval would cure it. At the same time, he gave her a medicine to cure the effects of the evil-eye, which she could put in coffee, or water, and drink, or with which she could wash her breast, upon which she had a boil.

On many occasions, the Ts'osi Bab will advise that a living or dead person is dissatisfied with the behaviour of his kinsman, and therefore made him, or one of his family, sick by cursing them. A familial curse will only work when called by a senior person on a junior, and not vice versa or between equals. In such cases as the latter, other methods of cursing are needed.

Mamo Dolinde's latest wife, Busha, went to another chiefdom to visit a sister, and while there, visited a shaman to find out why she was ill, and getting thin. He said that Mamo's other wives had cursed her by calling on the mountain spirits: (since the wives were of equal status they could not directly curse her). The shaman advised her to ask Mamo to get all of his wives together and ask them why they cursed her. If they denied it, she could forget about it, and carry on with her work, because the spirit would one day turn back on them and kill them, since their cursing was unjust.

In these instance, and many others about which I received information, the shaman was able to discover the person or force causing the symptoms, and suggest the appropriate measure. Where human or ancestral forces are the problem, the cause of the matter is usually within the patient's kin or affines. The exceptions are evil-eyes, who are motivated purely by jealousy. In other cases, non-social forces, such as spirits and lightning, choose a human agent, require offerings from him, and punish him if he ignores them.

There is one type of force which causes illnesses which even shamans cannot treat. This is the 'Gimze' or devil, which strikes people down with sudden, violent, extremely painful illnesses, such as fever, severe headache, and stabbing pains. Often

a Gimze will drive someone 'mad', and he will break or throw away things, and run in the bush. Sometimes he takes a spear or knife, and tries to stab someone. According to accounts of 'traditional' procedure, he could not be taken to court for this because he was defined as 'mad'. A person attacked by a Gimze no longer has control of his own actions, but is the puppet of the devil. The devil itself is an anti-social force, or perhaps a-social would be a better description, which strikes for no reason, and with no just cause.

Occasionally, relatives of the victim will try the only available indigenous remedy for this condition. They take a piece of njera, fried corn, or sorghum, and some garlic, and throw it into the water or stale beer where the Gimze lives. This usually fails. The only remedy which does have some success is found outside of Dimam. The relatives go to Bulki town, and find a Muslem, or an Ethiopian Orthodox priest. Such people read from a book, and put some of their hair, or a piece of paper with writing on it, into a piece of cloth, which they sew up into a ball, which the patient wears round his neck or arm.

It seems that the shaman is unable to cure such illnesses, because they are outside of the 'rational' and 'social' universe. In the case of humans, ancestors, spirits, and evil-eyes, there is something which provokes the force to cause the illness, and a remedy for it. But in the case of Gimzes, they have no motive other than to cause pain, and there is no offering which is certain to appease them. The cure must therefore also come from outside the Dime social universe.

Much of the business of a shaman involves cursing with his spirit; either at the request of a client who visits him, or by a man calling out the name of the spirit, without coming to see the shaman in advance. Knutsson reports on the importance of cursing on the name of a spirit amongst the Macha, where a special curse-lifting ceremony is necessary (op. cit. P 114).

If a person comes to visit a shaman, he may be concerned to let a curse discover who performed an unsolved crime. In the example previously discussed, in which Tubu had his honey stolen, and went to a shaman to discover the identity of the thief, the affair continued as follows, in Tubu's own words.

> " The Ts'osi Bab told me, 'You will find out who ate your honey, because I will make him sick'. I said ' All right, you find out. I don't know who did it'.
>
> After I went to the shaman, my brother's son, Th'afara, died. Then the shaman said, 'Well. You told me to find out who did it, so now I found out and killed the person'. I said, 'I didn't know it was someone in my own family'. The Ts'osi Bab said, 'Well. You told me to find out, and the person died because I cursed him. It doesn't matter who he was'.
>
> I said, 'Now the curse may stay in the family, and kill someone else. What can I do to remove the curse from my kin?' He said, 'Go home, and tell your family about it. Collect money. Bring it to me, and I will bless you and your family, and Th'afara's wife and child, to remove the curse'.
>
> I asked him when I should come for him to remove the curse, and he said his spirit would come on Thursday ".

While Tubu was collecting the gifts, to revisit the shaman, he was involved in argument with another of his brother's sons, and killed him.

Cursing may be a very profitable business for the shaman. If his spirit kills a man, all of the victim's movable property is

inheritable by the shaman, on behalf of the spirit, if the spirit so desires. In such a case, the shaman will go to the man's relatives, and tell them that his spirit killed the man; or they may come to him to ask if he was responsible, especially if the death was very sudden or very painful. The shaman will say, 'My spirit killed him because he harmed so and so', or, 'He took some cows', or, 'He didn't come to me to pray'. The man's relatives come together and each gives about 1$ T (1.50 $ Eth.) and the total is kept until the seventh day funeral ceremony.

They prepare beer and food, and invite the shaman, in case the curse is still in the family. He may stay the whole night, and there will be the normal funeral music and dancing, during which he gets possessed. The next morning he holds a cow bell, grass and coffee in a cup. He rings the bell, and blesses the relatives verbally, and then spits on them in blessing. Sometimes his spirit doesn't want all of the deceased's things and the shaman will leave them for the family.

Whether the curse is called by a shaman at someone's request, or by a person calling the spirit's name in public, the news of it soon reaches the intended victim. When I was cursed by Dando at about 4 o'clock one morning, I heard of it the same morning.

Since I did not witness an example of the transfer of property, I was rather doubtful as to whether it ever actually occurred, or whether it was merely reputed to. Several normally reliable people independently verified the practice, with examples. Further, during a blessing ceremony in my own village, which I taped, there was a discussion of the cause of the misfortunes which had befallen the

clan. This included talk of the visit of a shaman to the family of a dead man, to collect the movable property from them. Since the discussion was entirely amongst clansmen, concerning something which they regarded as a matter of life and death, the event is most unlikely to be fictitious.

Circumstantially, Dando's house has far and away the largest collection of spears, lyres, and bells which I saw in Dimam, and was said to contain far less items than were in the spirit's house. It is possible that some of these items were given to him voluntarily, as 'payment' for help given, by people in serious difficulty. But such items are rare, and are never sold, even when the owner is desperate for money. They are usually passed down in the family, and are not merely spears and so on, but have within them elements of their previous owners. They have a religious importance. It seems that the only way a shaman could build up a large collection of such items is if their owners feel they have no choice in the matter.

Another pertinent question is, " Why do the family of the dead man not produce an alternative explanation of the death, which would avoid the necessity of losing so much of their property? " The answer lies in the validation procedures of shamans. One who has in the past produced results can be confidently relied upon to do so again. With the death of a person, the result has already been achieved. If, during the illness, there was talk of the curse of a spirit, it becomes the most credible cause of death. Unless the kin of the deceased appease the spirit by transferring the property to it, the curse will still be active, and will strike down another member of the lineage. For this reason, the man's close kin may

well be under pressure from more distant kin to take the appropriate action, lest the curse strikes them down next. Ancestors cause long protracted illnesses, and an offering to them is usually delayed as long as possible. Spirits produce more drastic symptoms, which call for urgent action. Having lost one member owing to a mistake, the lineage will not wish to lose another in rapid succession.

The above are contributary factors, but the most crucial is that a shaman with a reputation for the power of his spirit is both believed and feared. If he claims that his spirit caused a death, this will be accepted, and the appropriate measures to appease the spirit taken.

This kind of power is attributed to very few shamans, who have established themselves over a period of time. There are others who claim to be shamans, but are not accepted as such by the majority of the population. People visit such shamans with their problems, but do so without the same degree of commitment which they take to a major one. Argenu told me:

> " If the shaman is wrong, and nothing happens, the person will go to another one, or a diviner. We don't usually pay a shaman in advance, only when we have got better. Spirits are not all the same. Some are bad; some are good. Some are mixed with the Devil. Perhaps the spirit wants to say the right things. Many people have a spirit. Even if it is bad, they try to convert people and make money. If it is just a good spirit speaking, it will tell the truth. You can't tell how a spirit will be until you see the result. You only know that a bad spirit was present if the matter doesn't work out. Then you won't go to that shaman again. "

From this account, it is clear that shamans have established a support mechanism for their practices. This means that those who usually give correct advice, can be excused the occa-

sional failure by the system of secondary elaboration. But, if a shaman is consistently wrong, the system will be of no help to him and he will be forced out of practice because of the lack of clients. This happens frequently, and I knew of two examples in my own village within a period of 3 years.

Another possibility, referred to previously, is that a shaman may give advice without really contacting the spirit, but by using his own knowledge of the circumstances of the case. The chief of Uth'a, Mamo Badji, periodically sends a servant or helper to a shaman to find out when and where he needs to sacrifice. He told me;

> " I send them when people come to my house and complain about disease or some other Gome. Mostly, I send them to far places; Irk'a, Gerfa, Sido or Basketo. If they go to a Ts'osi Bab who lives close to me, he knows what I am thinking about, and tells lies. But if I send them far away, he doesn't even know Mamo Badji and tells only what his spirit says. He tells everything about me, even what I look like; I am short, fat, and have a tall spear with a sharp blade ".

The chief takes the trouble to avoid the possibility of receiving false information, but most people go to a nearby shaman, who is perhaps quite cheap, and adopt the theory that if the advice works it comes from the spirit, if it doesn't it comes from elsewhere.

A true shaman, whose spirit performs great acts, will become increasingly renowned. Then, if a man thinks he is being possessed by a spirit, and doesn't know what to do, he will go to such a shaman, and ask him what he must do to accept the spirit. The shaman teaches him what sort of incense to give, what type of coffee pot, what music to play, and so on, and when he should hold his possession nights. If this pupil later dies, his spirit will go to the shaman who taught him, along with all the spirit's possessions,

and some of those of the deceased. No ordinary man may touch the corpse, but other shamans should come to arrange it for burial. An old shaman, who has had many pupils, may thus incorporate many spirits into his own, and bring their property to it, which will please it greatly, and make it even more responsive to his calls. In this manner, success breeds success.

Since none of the leading shamans have yet died, and the phenomenon had only existed for about 30 years, it is too early to say whether any hereditary element will appear later. Amongst the Kafa of south-west Ethiopia such an hereditary principle is clear. Every hamlet has one or more alama (described by Orent as 'medium', but by Lewis as 'shaman' since in time he is able to control the spirit). " These individuals, usually males, are in possession of an ek'k'o who came to them after the death of their father. If there is more than one brother, then usually the ek'k'o will wait some time until it chooses someone " (Orent. op. cit. P. 223).

From the time he is possessed, the alamo can no longer eat in the presence of other people. He must also observe food taboos, and can only drink water from an underground stream. He eats and drinks from special utensils and his food must be prepared by a special cook or one of his wives.

" The nucleus of a group of ek'k'o believers is generally composed of a minimal lineage of one particular clan. The alamo is often the elder of the minimal lineage " (op. cit. P. 227). If the lineage segments, it is probable that at a later date the elder of the new minor lineage will become a new alamo.

Amongst the Macha also, clan kallu-ship is inherited, although it is possible for other men to be possessed by a spirit, and later become shamans. Since shamanism in Dimam is so profitable, it seems quite possible that an hereditary tendency will develop at a later date.

As one would expect with what I.M.Lewis calls a "central possession religion", there is no major female shaman. Although women do occasionally claim to be shamans, their clientele is small and usually mainly consists of other women. Similarly, members of despised castes do not become shamans. If they did, no-one of higher caste could visit their seances, and their following would therefore be extremely limited. The great majority of successful shamans are members of the chiefly caste and have rejected the opportunity of office to obey the call of their spirit. Without doubt, shamanism is more lucrative, and as far as honour is concerned, there is little to choose between the two.

The leading shamans have suffered considerable physical and financial persecution at the hands of the police, and Amhara land-owners. One major land-owner, Waka, frequently caused trouble for two of the shamans of northern Dimam, as mentioned in Chapter Four. It was no surprise when his wife suffered a long and painful illness, which finally led to her death outside of the country, while seeking surgical treatment. Persecution thus enhanced the reputations of these shamans, who were seen to have the power to retaliate in one of the few viable ways.

Shamanism and Change in Ethiopia

Before attempting to explain the reasons for the rise of shamanism in Dimam, and its form and function, I must discuss the two Ethiopian cases to which I have previously alluded, of the Macha Galla and the Kafa.

a) The Macha Galla

The 'Kallu' institution of the Macha Galla has been fully described by Karl Knutsson in his book, and discussed by I.M. Lewis in his comparative work, 'Ecstatic Religion'. Prior to the beginnings of shamanism, the Macha were adherents of the pan-Galla cult of 'Waka', 'sky and/or god' (Knutsson Ps. 47-53). The earthly representatives of Waka were hereditary priests, who were also called 'Kallu', and who did not become possessed. These priestly Kallus were closely integrated with the traditional political organization, the 'gada' age-set system, which still operates amongst the Borana Galla, far south of the Macha. Until the latter part of the nineteenth century, Mach\a made pilgrimages to the great southern priestly Kallus, but these visits later declined in frequency along with the disintegration of the age-set system amongst the Macha. Correspondingly, the priestly kallus declined, and gave way to achieved leaders - notably merchants and warriors. The clans became increasingly important, taking over much of the integrating role of gada, and shamanism began to appear, associated with various levels of clan grouping. It is important to note that the beginning of shamanism was thus before Amhara colonisation:

" The incorporation of the region into the Ethiopian state has certainly played an important role in this development (of shamanism). Not that the kallu institution should be regarded as

part of a 'nativistic' or some related movement. It existed before the incorporation and probably also before Shoan military power was at all felt in Macha. But the incorporation certainly reduced or completely eliminated the importance of those leaders or 'offices' based solely on the political and military power of the various independent 'tribal' groups. The kallu on the contrary with his base in a ritual system of action continued to exist and even to extend his activities into those areas of the social life that were left vacant by the disappearing local leadership and were not taken over by the new officials " (Knutsson, P206/7).

The spirits of the shamans are refractions of Waka, and are not ranked, as are those of the Kafa. Shamans exist at all levels of social grouping from that of the extended patrilineal family to the clan. These offices are hereditary, but a shaman need not be limited to influencing only his own kin. Those who seek wider followings have especially violent possessions which enhance their reputation for contact with the spirits. Since there is no established hierarchy of shamans, the claims of rivals are ultimately decided by public opinion.

Each shaman builds at least one ritual house, where he holds seances, hears of wrongs committed, mediates disputes, divines the cause of sickness, and receives offerings for his spirit or spirits. Lewis, by his concentration on possession, under-rates the political and legal aspects of the new kallus:

" As I have already indicated, alongside the official legal and administrative system of the Ethiopian government, they also exercise a certain amount of informal political and legal power. And the judgements which they give in disputes brought to them are

backed by the sanction of their spirits. People who defiantly reject a shamans decision fear his curse " (Lewis, 1971. P.152).

This "certain amount of informal political and legal power" needs to be set in perspective by reference to an article by Herbert. S. Lewis, entitled "Kud'arfan: A Multi-Function among the Western Galla ". He writes, of the Shoa Galla:-

" The k'allus represent spirits (ayana) which may possess them and speak through them. These ayana are capable of strongly influencing the lives of men and women. While there are some men who are possessed only by minor spirits, more important k'allus represent several spirits (as many as twelve), have followings numbering as many as 50,000 people, and maintain several ritual centers ".

" The largest gatherings .... are held at each center once a year. People gather there in large numbers (up to 8,000 and 10,000 in the largest centers) to hear the k'allus and elders ask blessings on the country and its people ..... . The elders of the countryside attend, are seated near the k'allu, and honored with entertainment and food .. in the guest houses of the k'allus. These rites of intensification bring together the people of large areas and of major descent groups in ceremonies which symbolize the unity of the people and the prominence of the k'allu in society " (op. cit. Ps. 99/100).

It is not clear from Knutsson whether the Macha kallu have equally large followings, but they certainly have considerable legal authority. Generally, cases brought before a kallu have already defied settlement by local moot, or by one of the organs of the Ethiopian legal system. The kallu therefore appears to have been accepted by the Government, and to have been incorporated into

its own legal hierarchy - Knutsson even reports a case of murder which was settled by a kallu (P. 128).

Furthermore; " As a channel to the divine source of power and wisdom, he cannot only deliver good and effective decisions; he can also make rules for new situations about which the known 'law' has little or nothing to say " (P. 132). In short, he has a legislative role for those who accept his authority. Knutsson summarises the legal role of the kallu as follows:-

" Ritual praxis, customary rules of behaviour, and the Macha equivalents of law and justice all issue from the suprahuman part of reality. The kallu's character of intermediary between this sphere and the human sphere constitutes the ideological basis for his position as a final authority in these matters " (P. 134).

The kallu's role in the Ethiopian legal system is not one of simple subordination - in fact, cases which have defied settlement in this system may be successfully referred to a shaman. Kallus also receive much of the wealth of the Macha, and re-distribute some of it in the form of 'boundless' hospitality. It therefore seems that it is they who have enabled the Macha to gain from the Amharas a considerable degree of control over their internal affairs. For this reason, I feel that I.M. Lewis's conclusion on the institution under-estimates its political importance. He states,

"If this ecstatic religion voices the local cultural nationalism of the Macha, it does so to a degree and in a manner which at the same time admits of the gradual movement towards the assimilative culture and religion of the dominant Amhara "(P. 155).

It seems to me that the kallus are concerned with political nationalism, as well as cultural, and that, by placing the chris-

tian saints on the same level as other refractions of waka, they are in fact assimilating the Amhara culture and religion into their own, rather than the reverse.

The political importance of shamanism amongst the colonised peoples of Ethiopia will perhaps be clarified by considering the case of the Kafa.

b) The Kafa

Prior to the Amhara invasion of 1897, Kafa was ruled by a King, aided by 7 councillors and numerous court officials. The kingdom was divided into 18 'lands' under chiefs, who were very important political figures in their own territories. Each chief had a ritual assistant, who was visited by one or more ek'k'o (spirit). There were royal, low, craft and 'outcaste' clans within the kingdom, and most clans had their own 'alamo' who became possessed by the spirit of his father.

Mediums advised the king on both personal matters and the affairs of the state. The head medium, the Ibede Goda, was provided by a particular clan, and consecrated all lower mediums. In the period 1850-70, the King banished the Ibede Goda, who had become too powerful, and himself "reserved the right to be head of all the spirits of Kafa" (P. 178).

When the Amharas conquered the land they abolished kingship and imprisoned the former king. The Ibede Goda was therefore free to regain control of the spirits of Kafa. Christianity has been present in Kafa since the 16th Century, and is not regarded as contradicting indigenous religious beliefs and practices. It is thus no surprise to discover that the present Ibede Goda is a Christian and has built churches, " but the ek'k'o which he has belongs to his father, and he must continue with the customs of his ancestors " (informant's quote, Orent, P.192).

Orent does not try to estimate how many shamans there might be, but says:- " There are 72 Orthodox churches in Kafa and 5 Catholic ones. There is one mosque. There are literally thousands of ek'k'o houses " (P. 228). The Ibede Goda must consecrate every new alamo, and thereby sponsors a large-scale network of inspired lineage-based leaders. This aspect of his position brings him an immense amount of wealth:- One new alamo who came to Ibede Goda to be consecrated brought with him "12 bulls, 2 horses, and 10 mules loaded with sacrifices to Doche (the major spirit): all in all, about Eth. $ 2,000.00 worth of money and property " (Orent P. 240). He was accompanied by about 30 supporters, who brought their sacrifices to Doche.

Each alamo draws his followers from members of his own lineage, and from non-lineage members in the locality. When a man moves to another area, he generally changes allegiance, unless he has previously made a binding commitment to the spirit of a particular shaman. A successful shaman therefore has lineage, local and contract supporters from elsewhere, and must build a guest house for the visitors who come to his seances.

Clearly the current Ibede Goda is a great opportunist, with far-reaching political powers. He " extracts strict obedience. If people do not obey his commands he will forcefully take a bull. If they persist he can order them to leave their land. His position as spiritual leader of the people is greatly enhanced by the fact that he is also an 'appointed' ... official of the Ethiopian Government .. his duties include collecting taxes under the jurisdiction of the Warada Gezi (District Chief) " (P. 224).

" He is fabulously rich, completely out of proportion with anything else in south west Ethiopia. (He built himself a two storey mansion deep in the jungle out of concrete, iron, and glass. No countryside Amhara chief anywhere in the rest of Ethiopia could claim such a building. It cost about Eth. $ 100,000 to build). His wealth is a symbol of hope to the masses, especially since he shares it with them - at least that is what they believe " (P. 307).

Considering the richness of Orent's data, his conclusions are, to say the least, unimaginative. They are: " 1. The Kafa social system is indeed strongly patriarchal ", although he does not once mention any of the works in the debate begun by Gluckman's article of 1950, "Marriage Payments and Social Structure among the Lozi and Zulu", which question the validity of the notion of 'strong patriarchy'. " 2. The whole range of spirits in Kafa ... and the various Christian saints, are in fact reflections of the father role in Kafa family and lineage life. I believe that the Kafa mirror the ideal pattern of family relationships in their dealing with the supernatural " (Orent P. 289).

" The Ibede Goda is another manifestation of the father image in Kafa. The King of Kafa is no longer there to intercede between men and Doche, the chief spirit of Kafa. Doche is in fact the responsible father of all spirits. The ritualized behaviour of respect which is awarded to him is another form of the son-father respect .... The unremiting and unbending obeisance to the spirits represents the ideal of authority in father-son roles. In real life (??) these roles are in conflict with each other but with the death of one's father one can finally begin to act out the ideals in relation to

the spirits. It is then that one can expect some justice from the powers that be " (P. 309).

While some, or all, of the above may be true, it seems uncompromisingly static. Orent attempts to explain how the rise of the Ibed&Goda satisfies an alleged psychological need of the Kafa for a father figure, but pays little attention to its political importance. Surely the fact that a Kafa is possibly wealthier than any countryside Amhara chief in Ethiopia has greater significance than Orent supposes?

I.M. Lewis hints at this in his summary of Orent's work:-
" With the destruction of the traditional Kaffa political organization by the alien authorities, the old religion and its hierarchically ordered officiants have acquired new political significance. Today, certainly much more than prior to the Amhara conquest, the eqo cult serves as a vehicle for Kafa cultural nationalism ....." (Lewis. P.147).

Comparison of the Three Societies

Clearly the Dime, who are by far the smallest of the groups, have been the subjects of the most predatory type of colonisation. Here the shamans are physically and economically persecuted by the police and leading Amharas. On the other hand, amongst the numerous Macha such a predatory policy could not indefinitely be maintained. On the contrary, the co-operation of their ritual leaders was thought necessary to ensure order. So too with the Kafa.
The Ethiopian government regarded the King as a dangerous political

leader, but thought that the Ibede Goda, as a harmless ritual figure, might be used to help keep the peace. The step seems to have rather back-fired, since the Kafa prefer to donate gifts to the spirit than bribes to officials, and he siphons off much of the fat of the land before it can reach the government.

The position of shamans in Dimam is different from that of their Macha and Kafa counterparts. In the latter situations, shamans collaborate with the government, and play an interesting balancing game. They are recognised by the government, and even act as agents for it, but at the same time are symbols of the independence of the ruled. They work for temporal and spiritual authorities simultaneously. But amongst the Dime, the shamans are legitimate to the indigenous population, but illicit to government officials. This places limits on the way in which they can operate. They cannot, as in the other two areas, hold court hearings, but they fulfil the same role through the verdicts and punishments of their spirits.

Not surprisingly, in all three societies, dispute-settlement by recourse to shamans is both popular and effective, largely because a spirit's decision cannot be bought as can a government official's. People prefer to make a gift to the spirit and obtain a divinely ordained decision, than bribe a policeman or judge, and still be uncertain of the outcome. Ritual honour has proved a marketable quality.

In all three societies, the shamans filled gaps in the politico-legal system, created or exaggerated by colonisation. Dime shamans have not been able to maintain such a monopoly on morality as have those of the Macha and Kafa. As Lewis says:-

" We should expect that the extent to which such spirits exercise a more or less monopolistic control of morality will depend on the presence, or absence, of alternative legal and political mechanisms .. " (op. cit. P. 148). Amongst the Macha, the alternative age-set system had already declined prior to the invasion, making way for shamanism. Kingship did not revive in Kafa after its abolition. But Dime chiefs, whose authority was 'frozen' during the initial phase of colonisation, were able to re-emerge in a weakened form as ritual leaders, whilst a newly-created official, the Chikashum, emerged as the major indigenous political figure. Because control of morality is shared in Dimam, shamans have less authority than among the other two peoples.

Correspondingly, the Macha and Kafa shamans are much wealthier than those in Dimam. The £ Eth. 100,000 mansion of the Kafa Ibede Goda contrasts sharply with the collection of spears, lyres, and pith helmets of successful Dime shamans and reflects the great difference in available surplus of the peoples involved. The Dime are both fewer in number and poorer than the Kafa and Macha, and can therefore sustain a much less elaborate 'shamanocracy'. But structurally it has a similar importance. In all three societies, today as in pre-Amhara times, politics, economics, and law are inseparable according to the local cosmology, and shamans resist the non-legitimate external government which seeks to change this divinely proclaimed order. The fact that their own place in this order is either completely new, or considerably heightened, is hidden by the use of symbols which assert historical continuity. In these societies, the strait and narrow paths of purity and holiness lead to wealth, power and honour. And for the people, as well as 'solutions' to

their immediate problems, the shamans provide evidence that they can act effectively, and that they will not be powerless for ever.

CONCLUSION - Shamanism and Politics in Dimam

Prior to the Amhara conquest the physical environment, war and peace, and internal social, political, economic, legal and religious affairs were all controlled by the chiefs with the approval of the gods. The Amharas finished the rule of the chiefs in its full sense, and shattered confidence in them.

Into the confused situation of post-Italian Dime came the first shaman, an 'outsider' from Basketo. After initial scepticism, the Dime accepted his possession experience as genuine, and some of them became possessed by similar spirits. They adopted many of the symbols which had been exclusively associated with chiefship, and used them to emphasize that, although their experience was new to the Dime, it represented a continuation of the previous contact with suprahuman reality. Accredited by both possession and traditional symbols, they expanded their field of competence into such matters as unresolved disputes and unkept ritual obligations. They became interpretors and guardians of social morality as well as 'judges' of people who were 'tried' by the spirits, and punished if unrepentant.

As well as the Dime, many lesser Amharas began to rely on them for diagnosis of the causes of illness and misfortune. All those who required help brought gifts, so that in addition to their influence the shamans gained wealth. Their success was greatly resented by Amhara land-owners, who saw it as a threat to their own control of the Dime, and as reducing the number of gifts which could

be made to them. Large scale land-owners therefore began a campaign of persecution against the shamans, aided by their co-exploiters, the police force. This was possible because the Dime were not numerous enough to resist, and because they had no chance of gaining redress in the corrupt Government Courts.

Shamans have therefore taken over much of the power and authority previously held by chiefs. Their rise seems to support Lewis's verdict:-

" If social stability seems to favour an emphasis on ritual rather than on ecstatic expression, this again suggests that enthusiasm thrives on instability " (P. 175).

As well as solving the many problems which face people everyday, the shamans hold out the hope that in the future their spirits will control even the Amhara land-owners who currently persecute them, even more than other Dime. While the Chikashum begins to gain the Dime political rights through his frequent contact with the Government in Basketo, the shamans assure them of their favour with the gods and spirits, provided they are mindful of their obligations towards them. Thanks largely to this joint campaign, the Dime can face the future with a degree of optimism which would not have been possible thirty years ago, before the shamans came.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS

"Stratagems and Spoils"

My analysis of the changes which have taken place amongst the Dime has been aided by selective use of Bailey's work, "Stratagems and Spoils" (Bailey, 1969). The analogy drawn there between games and political activity fits the Dime situation well, although there are, of course, important differences between games and social interaction, (see for example Silverman, 1970, pp 210-212). Thus the normative rules of chiefship have remained constant, even though the 'prize' itself, and the pragmatic means used to attain it, have altered considerably.

Unfortunately, the somewhat anecdotal examples presented by Bailey are not examined in sufficient depth to test the coherence of his ideas concerning political systems, which seem tautologous. For example, he states, "A political structure and its environment together constitute a political system, and such systems are understood when the continuous process of adaptation and adjustment between structure and environment is understood" (Bailey, 1969, P10). We later discover, "In effect, the environment is defined as everything which is not part of that political structure" (P 191).

My analysis of Dime society suggests that the division of the universe into politics and not-politics (environment) does not have the explanatory value which Bailey appears to attribute to it.

I say "appears to attribute" because it is not clear whether the word "understood" refers to description or explanation, but I am assuming that it means the latter.

It will be recalled that, in Chapter 1, I talked of the "environment" of the Dime political structure, and subdivided this into "physical" and "social". I used these categories as descriptive devices to break down a large body of inter-related data into manageable units, and pointed out that what I label "environment" is, according to Dime cosmology, an integral part of chiefship. In Chapter 2 I showed how "caste" and "kinship" likewise merge into the "political structure".

The first weakness in Bailey's theory of political systems is then that the concepts of "political structure" and "environment" may run contrary to the indigenous "construction of reality". The second is that his contention that "a political system" is "understood" by understanding "the continuous process of adaptation and adjustment between structure and environment" personifies the political structure. The "process of adaptation" is carried out by individuals acting in accord with their own world view, and any explanation of the process must take account of this view. If the actors do not recognise the existence of an "environment", they cannot adapt to it. Amongst the Dime, chiefship collapsed when the cosmology upon which it rested was shown to be false. Invasion, colonisation, and slavery demonstrated that the chiefs could not ensure the security and well-being of their subjects by either ritual or physical means. Shamanism became popular because it introduced a means of re-establishing efficacious contact between the Dime and supra-human forces. However, it was also clear by this time that external forces, which can justifiably be labelled "environmental"

from the Dime viewpoint, now controlled many aspects of their life. In this context, the Dime themselves sought methods of "adaptation and adjustment", notably the use of land-owners and the Chikashum as "middle-men".

This suggests an amendment of Bailey's formulation. Where the observer's distinction between "political structure" and "environment" runs contrary to indigenous cosmology, it cannot be used to explain the "political system". Where the subjects themselves recognise forces outside of the "political structure", and seek to compromise with them, or defeat them, the concepts have explanatory potential.

Far more valuable than Bailey's general theory are his specific insights into political 'rules' and processes. I found his "rules of the game" for political communities, and his 'types' of encapsulation and reactions to them particularly useful for my analysis of political change in Dimam.

The Traditional and Contemporary Orders

In the preceding chapters I have provided a picture of the changing nature of leadership in Dimam. I summarize the "traditional" and contemporary orders in Figures 5 and 6.

The Traditional Order (See Figure 5, P230).

In this, the Dime suffered only temporary hardships. Poor crops, disease and other misfortunes were remedied by the appropriate, usually ritual, action. Each chief dispensed justice with divine approval, and led his people against their enemies. The Dime controlled their own affairs, through leaders who had authority and power.

The Controllable World

Figure Five. The Traditional Order.

The Controllable (?) World.

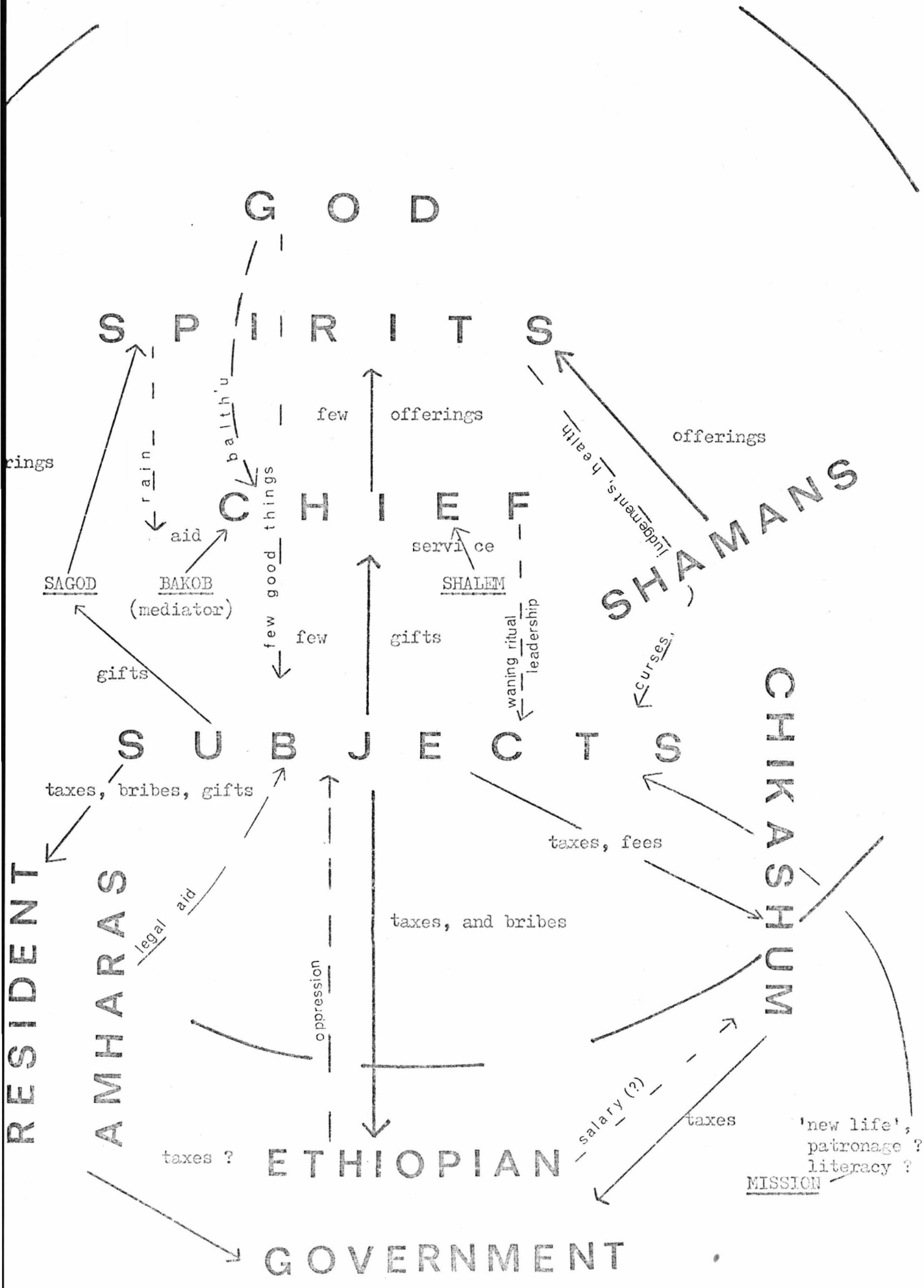


Figure Six - The Contemporary Order.

The Contemporary Order

The contemporary order is confused and unfavorable to the Dime. Uncontrollable forces are politically predominant. Shamans seek to enable the Dime to control their own lives, using the guidance and power of their spirits. The increasing number of internal leaders reflects the decreasing amount of control each has. The resident Amharas and the Chikashum 'mediate' between the Dime and Government officials, with the Amharas biassed towards the Government, and Mamo towards the Dime.

The lack of political autonomy has not made internal positions of leadership less desired. The rewards are not great, but in such a poor and oppressed society any increase in relative wealth and honour is a valued prize.

History, Chance and Change

My analysis has been hampered by the absence of any recorded 'history' of the Dime. The picture presented of the 'traditional' order is a reconstruction which cannot be verified. It is built from the reminiscences of old people, and from information others had gained only at second hand. Nevertheless, the uniformity of the outline given by numerous informants suggests that it is at least not wildly inaccurate.

The events which shaped contemporary Dime society were a mixture of chance and design. It was, for example, Menelik's policy to pacify the south-western region, but 'chance' that the 'in-between' region of Dimam was one which the invaders found suitable for residence. The fortunate Bodi lived in such an inhospitable land that

they were never enslaved or colonised, and even benefitted from the Amhara presence in the region by trading wildlife produce for guns, which later enabled them to successfully attack the poorly-armed Dime.

The slave trade decimated the Dime, who might well have died out but for the chance intervention of the Italians, followed by Haile Sellassie's measures against slavery, which were largely due to international pressure. Even as late as 1951, the Dime appeared to Haberland to be on the verge of extinction. If the process of cultural disintegration, upon which he laid such stress, had continued, only the 'Amhara' children of Dime concubines would remain, and the Dime would have joined the numerous 'primitive' peoples who have been extinguished by the advance of 'civilization'. That they remain reflects little credit on the District Government, which has throughout adopted a 'predatory' policy towards the "backward" minority groups in its region. Recently, the Dime faced a one-sided war against the heavily armed Bodi, and many were killed. The police and District Government officials made no move to stop the slaughter until a foreign visitor reported the situation to higher authorities.

Unpredictable events have played a major part in saving the Dime from extinction, but equally important is the presence of a small number of highly resourceful individuals. The last ten years of Dime history is largely the story of the current Chikashum and a few successful shamans. In one way or another, these men have resisted Amhara and 'Ethiopian' domination and ensured that the Dime have progressed a little from slavery.

It is not necessary for a people to be subjected to such obvious 'benefits' as schools, agricultural programmes, urbanization

and migrant labour for them to change. Although the Dime have not been 'modernised' by such measures, they have altered radically in the last 25 years. Events since the revolution suggest that the next 25 will bring an even greater transformation.

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Plate 1.

Stone steps lead up the terracing to the houses of Mangada, ex-chief of Uth'a, in the village of Gaiz.

Plate 2

This terracing in Gaiz was built about ten years ago. The house at the top belongs to Mangada.

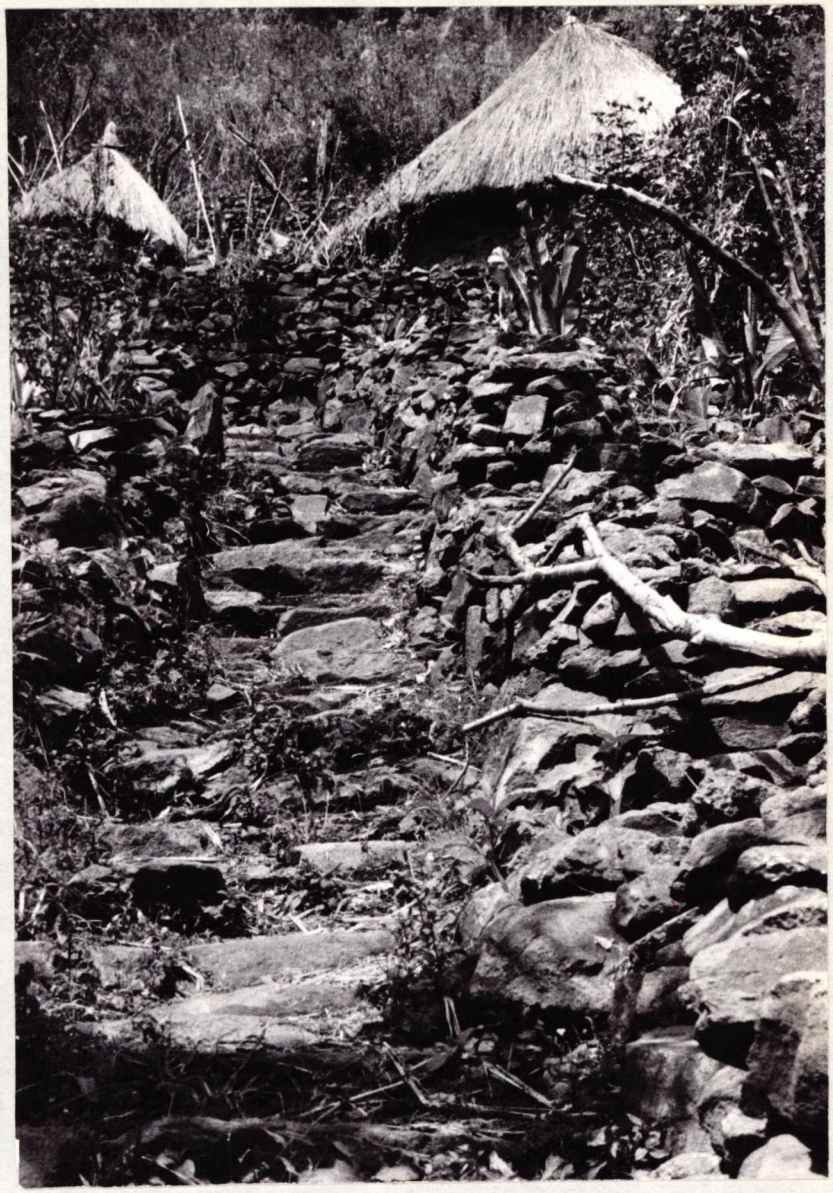

Plate 3

The author's house under construction in Woch'o village. Usually, house wall's are made of stone, rather than just of wood.

Plate 4

Mamo Dolinde, right, mourns the death of his mother at her funeral in Shira village.

Plate 5

Mourners at the funeral of the village chief of Shinga.

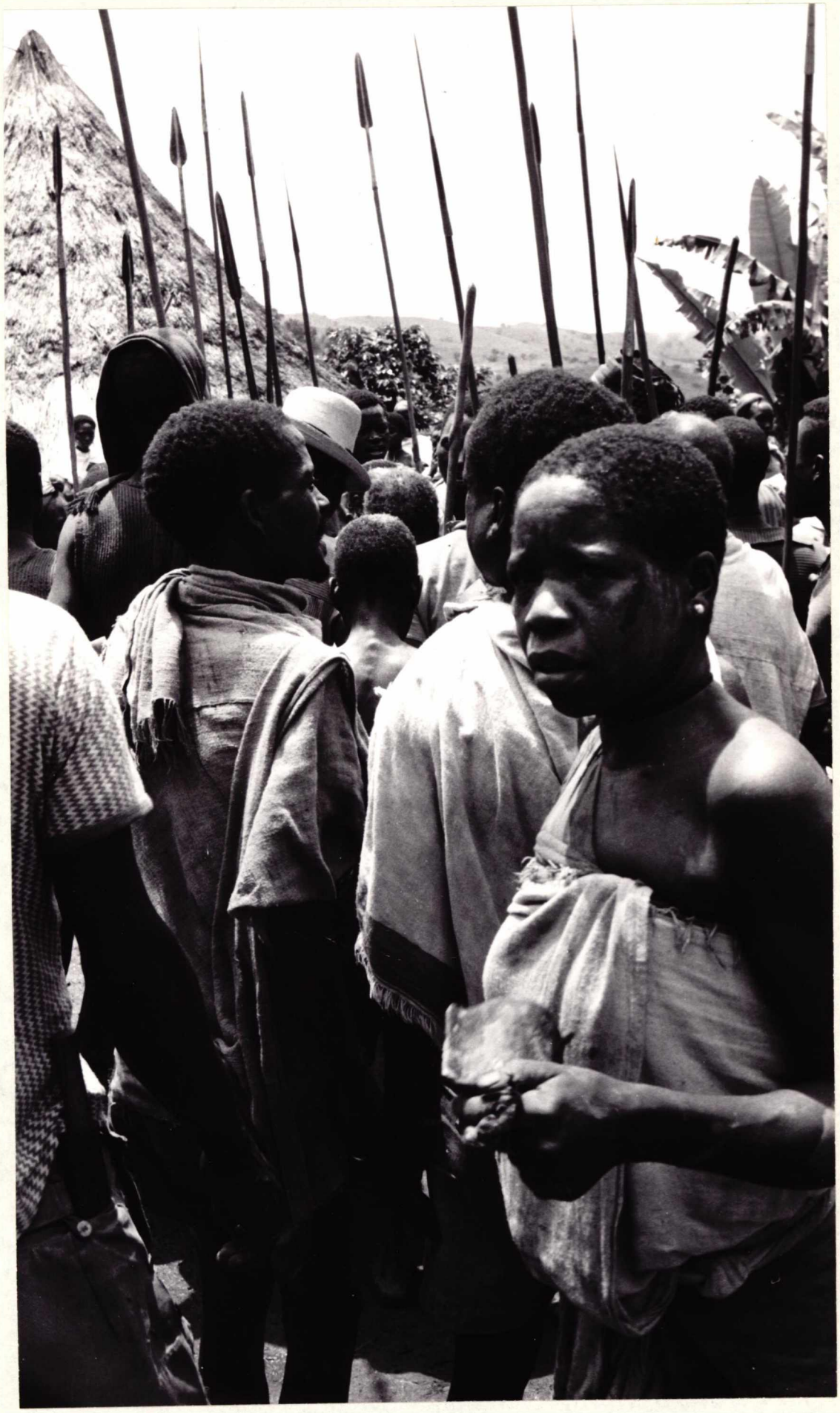

Plate 6

The body of the village-chief leaves the village, wrapped in cow skins. The path to the burial place is obscured by the clouds. (This photograph was taken by Judy Todd. The author is in the foreground, second left).

Plate 7

A work-party turns over the earth, in preparation for t'eff planting. Metal-tipped digging sticks are being used. In the background are granaries belonging to Mamo Dolinde, owner of the field.

Plate 8

Girma, Mamo's eldest son, separates the head of the t'eff from its stem, using a knife mounted on a wooden tripod.

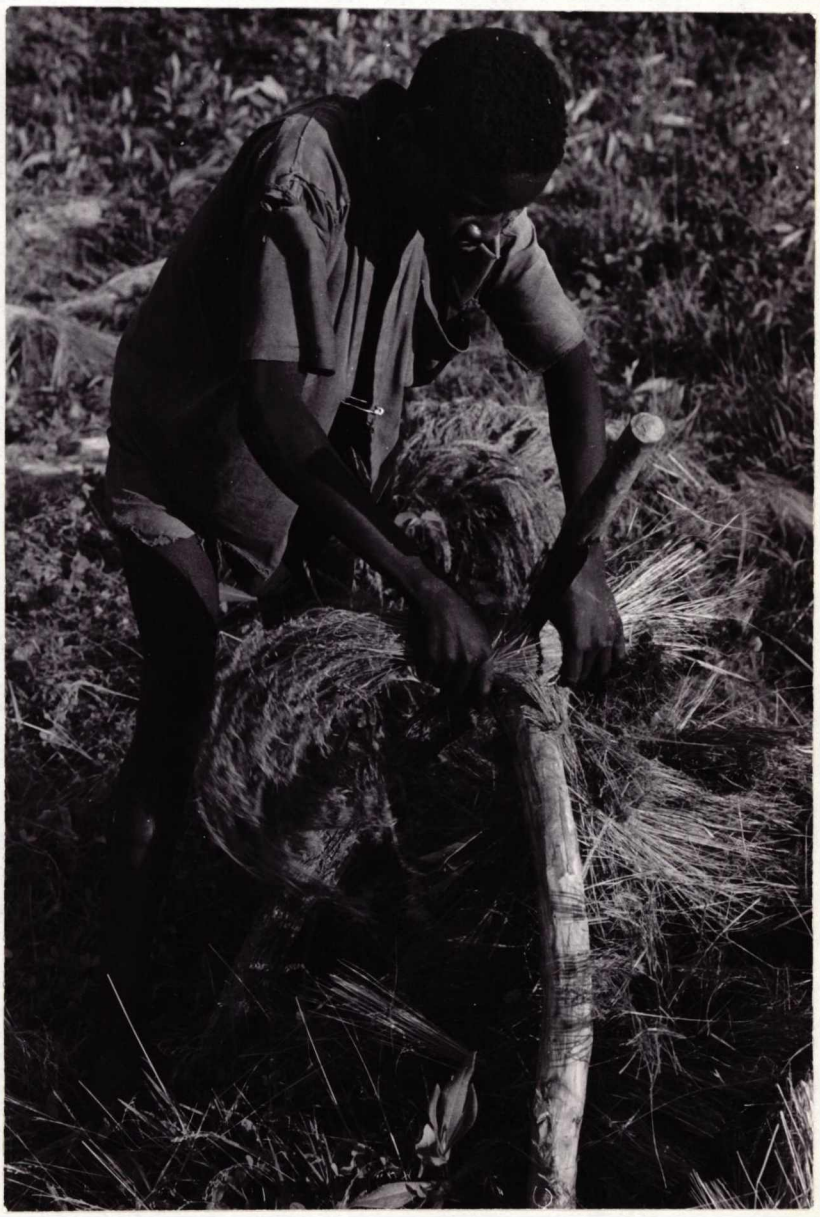

Plate 9

T'eff is carried to the granary. On the right is an ensete tree.

Plate 10

Madane, Mamo Dolinde's first wife, buys a pot in Garo market.

Plate 11

Boys at play on the main path out of Woch'o village.

Plate 12.

The blacksmith of Woch'o village makes a bracelet from bullet cases.