

**Complex Development-Induced Migration  
in the Afar Pastoral Area  
(North-East Ethiopia)**

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# Discussion Paper

## Complex Development-Induced Migration in the Afar Pastoral Area (North-East Ethiopia)

### I. Introduction

Afar nomadic clans located in the harsh desert east of the Abyssinian highlands (Tigray, Wello, Shoa) have for centuries played a major role as traders and middlemen. Since their progressive integration into the Ethiopian Empire and the agricultural development in the Awash Valley, the Afar region has faced complex migration movements: pastoralists have been forced to change the pattern of the transhumance after their eviction from the fertile banks of the Awash river and, in a way parallel, thousands of highlander farmers have settled into the region. Such migratory movements have occasioned destitution among pastoralists; cultural waste linked to colonisation by non-afar civil servants, traders and farm workers, resulting in micro-conflicts; opposing pastoralists groups in competition for water and pasture; and/or afar pastoralists and highlander settlers considered as foreign occupants.

### II. Regional background

The Afar Region is located in the Northeast of Ethiopia, sharing international borders with Eritrea and Djibouti. Afar land, about 150,000 km<sup>2</sup>, stretches from the Allideghi plain of the Middle Awash Valley in the south to the coastal depression of the Red Sea in the North. (Woldemariam, 1993:1) Administratively, the Afar Region is structured into five zones, 28 *woreda*<sup>1</sup> and an Argobba,<sup>2</sup> a special *woreda* located in the south-west, down Ankober's escarpment (North Shoa). The Afar people, over one million in Ethiopia,<sup>3</sup> originally Cushitic, like their Oromo and Somali

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<sup>1</sup> In Ethiopia, the administrative division equivalent to a district or a county.

<sup>2</sup> Argobba, a Muslim sedentary population located in Ifat and Hararghe. Historically, they are linked with the oldest Muslim kingdoms in Ethiopia, the Walasma dynasty and the Ifat. Cf. Aklilu Asfaw, « A short History of the Argobba », *Annales d'Ethiopie*, Vol. XVI, CFEE, Maisonneuve et Larose, Paris, 2000, pp. 173 – 183.

<sup>3</sup> Official figures from Afar Region census, used in 2000 by DPPA, are the following: total Region 1,117,148 (zone 1: 326,146; zone 2: 234,645; zone 3: 129,464; zone 4: 142,352; zone 5: 343,541). In Djibouti, Afar constitute about

neighbours, are predominantly nomadic of origin and the majority are still practicing “transhumant pastoralism” for subsistence.

The Northern part of the Afar Region, around the lower Danakil Plain, is predominantly a semi-desert with thorny species of shrubs and acacias; further south in the Awash valley, steppic vegetation is dominant. Both ecological stages are facing bush encroachment with *prosopis juliflora* (called *wayane* by the Afar), which take over from more nutritive browsing varieties. Rainfall distribution is generally bimodal throughout the region. The *sugum*, or small rains, normally occur in March – April and the *karma*, heavy rains, take place in July – September. Some areas along the escarpment (Tigray – Wollo) as well as the southern part of Afar additionally could benefit from a slight shower period in December, called *dadaa*. In all these seasons, the occurrence of rainfall is highly erratic and determines the transhumant movement. The total amount of rain could vary greatly from year to year resulting in severe drought when rainfall deficit exceeds one rainy season. (Piguet, 2001:7)

The Afar Region is one of the poorest regions of Ethiopia and is neglected by national development efforts. It is only in recent years that efforts have been undertaken to provide basic infrastructures such as road accessibility and administrative buildings as well as education and basic health services for each of the *woreda*. All of the regional economy is polarised by the transit road to Djibouti port, which is the main route for importing and exporting goods through the Afar Region. This road has led to a typical ‘truck-stop economy’ with towns such as Deciotto, Logiya, Mille, Adaitou, Gewane and Gadamaitou, where water facilities, commerce and services are quasi-exclusively related to truck drivers needs and, in some locations, include contraband activities. (Piguet, 2001: 1-2)

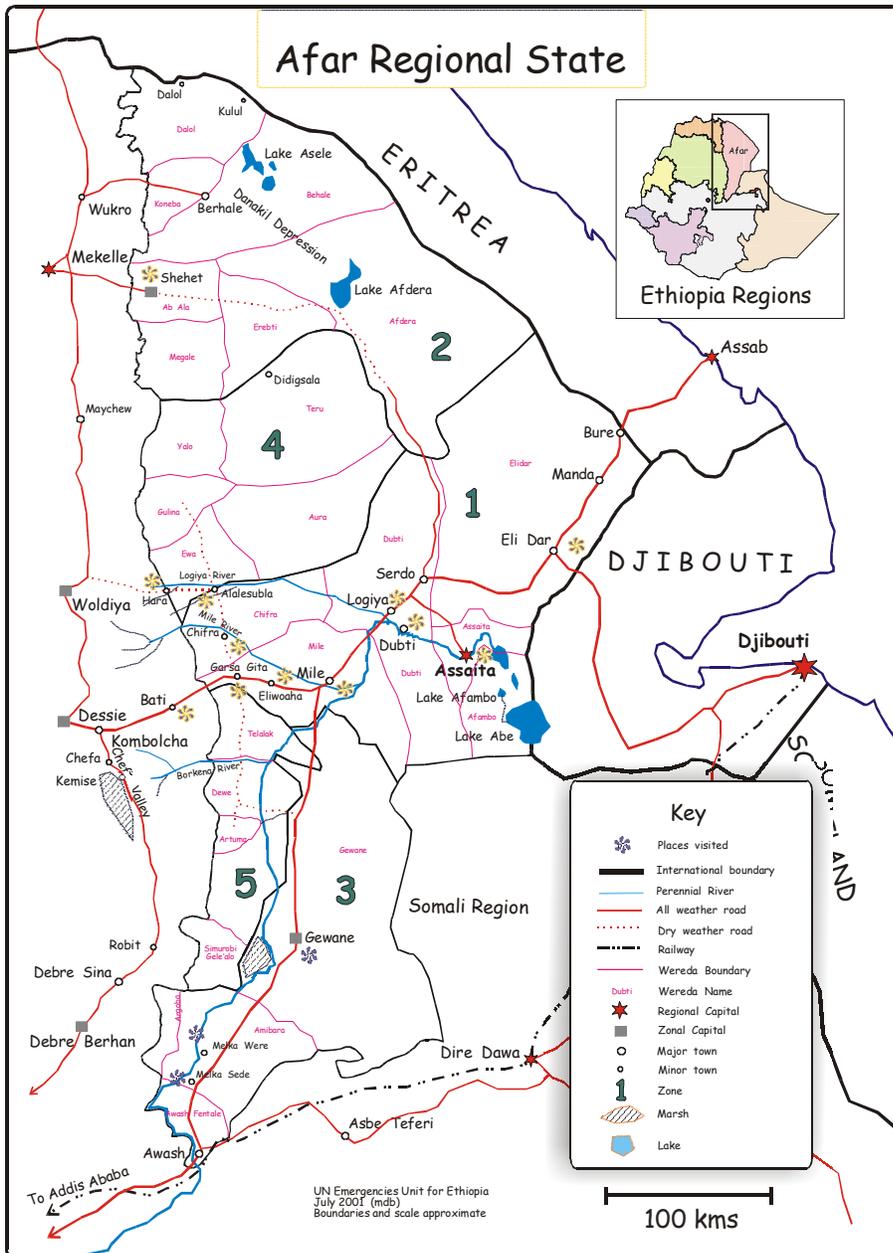
### **III. Rangelands in the Awash Valley and their Importance to Afar Pastoralists**

Seasonal herd mobility, changing herd composition and traditional institutions of mutual help are used to maintain the sustainability of the system, both ecologically and economically. But over

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250,000 people and in Eritrea, most likely less than 100,000. In the Horn of Africa, demographic data is mostly based on projection and approximation, due to uncertainties linked with census technical feasibility and/or political and ethnical balance reasons.

the four last decades, the introduction and expansion of irrigated mechanized farming and the setting aside of large areas of grazing land for national parks and conservation use has had a tremendous socio-economic as well as political impact on pastoralists' and agro-pastoralists' subsistence economy. This system has come under growing pressure and is increasingly vulnerable to environmental stress. Changing land use and politico-economic, demographic and institutional changes have all contributed to the growing crisis of Afar pastoralism. (Bondestam, 1974; Gamaledin, 1987 / 1993)



**Figure 1: The Afar State**

Besides the bread basket agriculture in the Awsa, between Assaita and Afambo, irrigated cotton agriculture schemes set up first by the imperial government in the 60s together with the Awash Valley Authorities and the participation of private companies (e. g. Handels Vereniging Amsterdam (H.V.A.), Amibara-Malka Saddi irrigated farm scheme; Mitchell & Cotts, Tendaho Plantations Share Company in Dubti and Dit Bahri), before being transformed into State Farms under the Derg, contributed to displacing the Afar from traditional grazing areas as the riverbank is preferred as a wet season grazing retreat.

Socio-economically, Afar claim that the introduction of irrigation, which has resulted in the formation of small towns with large numbers of highland migrant workers,<sup>4</sup> has undermined their culture. Prostitution and thievery, which were unknown some years ago, are now widespread in the towns. Many young Afar, both men and women, are absorbed into the urban-based irrigation scheme culture, occupying the lowest skilled activities like watchmen and cleaners. Clan integrity is also beginning to suffer, as the clan is unable to maintain all its members in one place due to the changing nature of pastoral production. While the role of demographic and environmental forces are recognised, political constraints have also contributed to the crisis of Afar pastoralism in the Awash valley. In the end, the Afar have been excluded from the mainstream of Ethiopian development. (Ali Said, 1997:136, 137)

In 1988, a Red Cross report concluded that there was a cultural marginalisation of the Afar pastoral population:<sup>5</sup>

“The Afar feel that their way of life has failed in terms of the viability of their pastoral economy, politically in the maintenance of their regional autonomy and competition with their regional adversaries. The introduction of modern institutions, education and technology in the region on a limited scale and the awareness of their inferior position have further undermined the effectiveness of their culture. The traditionally self-reliant Afar that defied any external encroachment or subjugation now find themselves dependent and

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<sup>4</sup>Amibara and Awash Fentale woreda (South Afar), the non-afar population, represents respectively 20,228 people or 50.3% of the entire population of the woreda and 10,282 people, 55.3% of the total. For Assaita and Dubti woreda, figures are respectively 13,823 (26%) and 17,475 (25,9%). (CSA, 1999) With the new Tendaho dam under construction, non-afar populations will increase drastically in Dubti and Assaita woreda.

<sup>5</sup> The report's issue is coincided with the set up in 1987 by the Derg of the Assab autonomous region, which had included only 40% of the Afar and answered partially to the Afar nationalist claim.

willing to receive any assistance and protection against stronger opponents and for this they are willing to accept a less loftier position.” (ERCS, 1988:4)

About three decades ago, the Afar economy based on pastoral movements, supplemented to a very limited extent by trade, was still a viable economy, until the 1973-74 drought and famine designated as *Jahum* (the famine which throws out people or forces them to migrate), followed ten years later by the *Saba sabat* famine.<sup>6</sup> Using the foot-hills for wet season grazing and the riverside of the Awash for the driest season, the Afar had managed to produce a viable economy. Viability was also maintained by the traditional production system, which had built-in survival strategies and supplementary and alternative production activities for the tiny minority sloughed off from the pastoral production system.

During normal years, the Afar move their herds from homes based generally within a radius of 20 km, but seldom more than 50 km, from reasonably permanent dry season watering places. In times of severe stress, Afar are forced to move their herds for greater distances of up to 150 km. (Cossins 1972:55) Mainly in connection with market demand, cattle have increased within the total livestock currently held by the Afar and their pastoral economy may be in a transitional stage, where the “camel complex,” according to Herkovits’ concept, is slowly giving way to a “cattle culture.” Such development has induced human and livestock population increases beyond the carrying capacity of natural resources (ERCS, 1988: 18) and already the effects of overgrazing and desertification can be seen in the lowest arid areas, as well as in better grazing areas along the highlands escarpment and in the southern part of the Afar region.

#### **IV. Awash Valley Agricultural Development and Land Tenure Issue**

Since the 60s and the creation of the main irrigated schemes in the Awash valley (Amibara / Melka Werer, Tendaho / Dubti, Dit Bahir and Assaita), cohabitation between pastoralists and farmers has constantly presented difficulties. At the time of the Empire, all of the riverbank was reserved for agriculture; with the Derg regime, agriculture schemes were nationalised and managed in state farms. Moreover, the administrative reforms implemented by *kebele*

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<sup>6</sup> The well-known Ethiopian famine in 1984-85, designated as “saba sabat” (77) according to the Ethiopian orthodox Julian calendar.

administrators<sup>7</sup> have always been seen as a constraint by the Afar. Since 1995, the new federal Constitution set up the pastoralist rights over the land and, under EPRDF<sup>8</sup> instigation, over 16,000 hectares of former state farms have been returned to the Afar Region by the Tendaho Agriculture Development Enterprise;<sup>9</sup> the Afar, however, do not have traditional know-how for cultivation. (In the past, the Afar ruled the Awsa sultanate and the sedentary people working in the farms.<sup>10</sup>) There are two types of Afar farming: production with irrigated gardens along the Awash and beyond, and production using rain-fed agriculture. In regards to the first, big scheme agriculture, developed with irrigation canals, are concentrated on cash crop production, mainly cotton. Secondly, rain-fed agriculture focuses on producing staple foods. For the Awsa rain fed agriculture, the most common type of contract between Afar landlords or clan representatives and the Oromo or highlander farmers are the following: (a) the farmer is cultivates the land and shares the corn harvest, up to 50 % for the landlord and 50 % for the producer. They share the grain instead of cash payment; (b) it is also common that landlord and farmer share a house or compound in the town as a part of the contract. (Piguet, 2001:25)

The effects of irrigated schemes raise common issues about land tenure rights, restricted access to the best traditional lands and grazing areas, pressure on natural resources, effects on patterns of transhumance, the effects of in-migrants notably on the environment, and socio-economic change within pastoralist societies. In regions where people are critically dependent on natural resources with low and uncertain incomes, customary tenure rules had been the main ways of providing security of land tenure and food security. Both State control of land tenure and private investment, however, have tended to be detrimental to the interests of local people living in marginal lands. (Getachew, 2001)

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<sup>7</sup> In Ethiopia, the smallest administrative division, equivalent to the municipalities in rural areas or an urban district in town. The administrator plays a key role in the implementation of policies, e.g. pastoral or agricultural development and social control.

<sup>8</sup> Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front

<sup>9</sup> The Tendaho Agriculture Development Enterprise (TADE), a State company linked to the Federal government, is still in charge of two farms in Dubti and Dit Bahir. Cotton production is TADE main target, producing an average of 20 quintal per ha over the 7,400 ha cultivated.

<sup>10</sup> Awsa Sultanate on the lower Awash constitutes the only area where the Afar have developed agriculture for centuries. Awsa people (Awwsi Mara) constitute 13 sedentary tribes, mainly the Dardora, the Haralla, the Integer, the Doba'a and the Songo have Arab and Oromo or Somali origins, previous to be dominated by Afar with the introduction of the Modayto Sultanate in XIXth century (D. Morin, 2004 : 63 – 72).

## V. Non-Afar Settlers in the Afar Region

Along the Awash river, Afar clan leaders representing the communities are mostly allocating land to non-Afar farmers who have to pay back up to a third or half of the harvest. After a regression phase in the 1980s and 1990s, linked with drought, economical desorganisation and political disturbances, new concessions and projects have been initiated and will contribute to an extension of the irrigated schemes. The new dam under construction in Tendaho is linked to a project attending to extend Dubti irrigation up to 60,000 ha concentrated on sugar cane, one of the most suitable crops to produce bio carburant.<sup>11</sup>

In the Amibara irrigated scheme and the surrounding pastoral area, Getachew Kassa noticed a strict labour division where the non-Afar population are working in irrigated farms, administration and business activities together with the descendants of a few Afar leaders representing the dominant class.<sup>12</sup> However, according to the author, the effective conversion of settled pastoralists to agriculture remains an illusion as the main available opportunistic activity so far is charcoal processing. Getachew concludes that for the pastoralists, schemes essentially benefit a rich minority of clan leaders. Settlement schemes, conflicts and insecurity have restricted the mobility of pastoralists and their herds with serious consequences on the productivity of their herds.

Such a situation has a big impact on labour markets as far as farmers are concerned. With the recent years of drought, part of the agro-pastoralists clans in the Awsa are now working full time as shepherds, up to now an activity which was only common during inter-cropping seasons. Farm workers in the big schemes are also facing difficult times like in Melke Sede, when workers had been promptly dismissed after the flooding in 1999.<sup>13</sup> Such a situation facilitated a “hit and run” management conception, which might be incompatible with agriculture development on a long term.

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<sup>11</sup> Issayas Mekuria, « Nine Billion Birr : Largest Ever Sugar Factory to be Erected », *Fortune*, February 20, 2005.

<sup>12</sup> Getachew Kassa (2001) *Among the Pastoral Afar in Ethiopia: Tradition, Continuity and Socio-economic Change*. International Books, Utrecht.

<sup>13</sup> Y. Guinand, *Afar Region Awash River Floods*, UNDP-EUE, Rapid Assessment Mission 7 – 10 September 1999.

The present decentralisation process requires a real devolution and, consequently, the active participation of local groups in the management of natural resources. This is particularly important in relation to high potential key resources in and around river basins that have been a point of struggle and competition among different interest groups in the region. Furthermore, the rights of pastoralist and agro-pastoralist societies whose livelihoods are based on transhumance need to be protected in a context where increasing economic and political pressure on resources and the interest of investors seem likely to override the interests of the more remote and voiceless people.

The context of the river valleys where agro-pastoralists live may require the development of guidelines for resource sharing and resolving conflicts involving formal and informal customary institutions, in which the government and other agencies could play a role of mediation. There is a need to find a balance between protecting the rights and interests of marginalized groups of agro-pastoralists as defined in the Constitution, and promoting national development, which will attract more non-Afar settlers. This may involve negotiated resource sharing, as well as compensation and benefits in terms of infrastructure and service development for the displaced groups.

## **VI. The Reverse Economic Flux of Migration and Urbanisation**

Due to recurrent drought, pastoralists have been unable to cope with subsistence crises, and thus, more and more have become involved in rural-urban migration. Destitution drives them to sell even the reproductive animals, which constitute the heart of their herds. In the end, they are obliged to request help from their kinship, mainly traders and clan leaders (Toupet, 1977).

Today, pastoralists' movements are linked to urban areas on a seasonal basis. Their stays in and around the localities have become longer and/or some pastoralists are in the process of settling. Facing recurrent droughts, insecurity and economical difficulties, pastoralists have been forced to change their special strategies; they are now more close to the urban centres and the proportion of their income linked to livestock is decreasing. Most of the localities set up along the main roads are partly populated with urban dwellers and partly with "pastoralist villages," who are settled

following hardship in the bush following droughts. Sedentary truck-stops, villages, towns or former displaced camps where highlanders are settled also belong to such crisis strategies for the pastoralists.

Henceforth, clan kinship and relatives are in the centre of the economical and social organisation for the entire group or clan. Despite income diversification, monetary economy has worsened the household food economy. For the ex-pastoralists facing sedentarisation mainly around urban areas, economical reorientation and solidarity systems, which could bring them sufficient income, are changing. Finally, urban development is creating a new structural continuity linking urban Afar dwellers and the bush, but mainly on the benefit of the first group.

## **VII. Highlanders Migration and Social Changes**

Collecting Afar census remains a particularly difficult exercise, due to a large dispersion of the population on desertic areas. Demographic data and projection based on the result of the 1996 Ethiopian census given in 2005<sup>14</sup>, estimates a total population of 1,359,000 people with only 122,000 urban dwellers (9%). Non-Afar population represents 89,979 people (8.3%), but migration effects and consequences of the HIV epidemic have not been taken into account. (CSA, 1999) Without recent, good statistical data, specialists estimate that about 15 - 20% of the Afar population are now out of the pastoral economy.<sup>15</sup> Beside statistical uncertainties, such phenomena might increase in the coming years together with new social practices like inter-ethnic marriages, which constitute a good indicator of social change among the Afar pastoralists, a society considered as reluctant to modernity. (Piguet, 2006 : 156)

The Afar region, the last area effectively controlled by the central Ethiopian government, has been included in the territorial administration only after 1944.<sup>16</sup> Fifteen years later, the set up of irrigated schemes in Amibara and Tendaho and the nearby urban development of Melka Sede,

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<sup>14</sup> The results of the latest official census (2007) will be released in the coming months.

<sup>15</sup> Such distinction is theoretical because we have to take into account multi-activities as most of the Afar are now becoming urban dwellers and are still in connection with the “bush economy;” those are client for all cash income and staple food and in exchange they are providing live animals to urban markets.

<sup>16</sup> Date of the palace revolution, when *Fitawraré* Yayo Hammadou, supported by Haile Selassie, took action to arrest the sultan Mohamed Yayo, who was accused of collaboration with the Italians. The next year, Mohamed Yayo, who died in Addis Ababa, was replaced by one of his Adahisso cousins, Ali Mirah Hanfare. (Aramis Houmed Soulé, 2005 : 57 – 63)

Melka Werer and Dubti quickly represented attractive localities.<sup>17</sup> Today, in Amibara and Awash Fentale *woreda* (Middle Awash Valley), the non-Afar population constitutes a majority. In Assaita and Dubti (Awsa), the non-Afar population rises up to 26%. Facing such situation, elders and *kedo abba* (clan leaders) are insisting that inter-ethnic marriages, started under the Derg regime when highlanders migration increased drastically and concomitantly within the Afar society, moral and cultural codes have been less respected.

At the beginning, the non-Afar population essentially originated in Wello and was linked to the Awsa by historical and religious ties. First, it was mainly a seasonal movement by poor tenants and daily workers employed temporarily in the cotton fields. With the development of urban centres, various technicians and administrative clerks settled in the Afar Region since the end of the Imperial era, as well as traders. Some of them have largely benefited from the contraband trade coming from Djibouti. Demographic growth in the highland and such “illegal” opportunities have attracted migrants who set up retail shops in the towns along the highway, which runs through Djibouti and Addis Ababa, and in villages along the escarpment. For the Afar involved in the contraband, Bati markets have played a key-role and most of the people involved (traders, middlemen, truck drivers and caravans) all have improved their income in connection with “illegal” trading. In 2002, the Ethiopian government initiated severe police measures against illegal trade; consequently, contraband continued on different ethnic and geographical bases.

### **VIII. Antagonism between Afar and non-Afar Populations Settled in the Region**

For the Ethiopians, the Afar Region is considered as a particularly unsafe area due to the perception of the Afar as murders (murder cases among the Afar are related to the *bilou*<sup>18</sup> practice and the customary law, the *mad'a*.<sup>19</sup>) In court cases where Afar and non-Afar file suit

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<sup>17</sup> For detailed studies about the Amibara and Dubti irrigated schemes, cf. Getachew Kassa (2001), Maknun Gamaledin (1993) et Noël Cossins (1973).

<sup>18</sup> *Bilou* means the blood price and the right to take a revenge by killing the murderer or one of his relatives. Before a judgement, the murderer can ask for the sultan's protection, then the customary law meeting, the *mablo*, takes place where both parties' representatives and *mad'a* specialists will determine the punishment sentence and penalties.

<sup>19</sup> Le *mad'a* est l'ensemble des règles orales ayant pour but la sanction des infractions. A ce titre, la *mad'a* relève autant de la coutume non écrite que du code stipulé. (D. Morin, 2004 : 216) In English, cf. Pankhurst, Alula and Getachew Assefa 2008. *Grass-roots Justice in Ethiopia: The Contribution of Customary Dispute Resolution*. Etudes éthiopiennes 4. Addis Ababa: Centre Français des Etudes Ethiopiennes; Jamaluddin Abdoukader Redo (1973), *The Afar Customary Law (Mada'a)*, September (unpublished manuscript).

against each other, the first party remains unreachable in the bush, where the State and its administration are only formally present. In the towns, the situation has changed; inter-community contacts, with elders and clan leaders' meetings, have attempted to solve cases and to implement coexistence measures. However, intercommunity suspicions remain. Afar pastoralists coming in a town often feel inferior and contempt due to their lack of knowledge about urban and sedentary culture. Facing such discomfort, the Afar can be aggressive (using their war knife, the *jilleh*, a long curved knife). Coexistence statements, therefore, should not hide the fact that inter-ethnic relations remain fragile.

In the Bati area, Oromo and Afar contacts are restricted to the market days, when the Afar come to sell livestock and butter (ghee). Around the market places considered as neutral areas, competition for land and grazing remains bitter. In the past, the Afar and Oromo used to kill each other, and the murderer was considered having accomplished a brave act. Up to now, murders, often followed by clan-related clashes, are still frequent along the escarpment, the *dokka* for the Afar or the land of the fear, in opposition to the *la'o*, the land of the light located in Djibouti near the coast.<sup>20</sup> On their side, Oromo often declare that they frequently fear the Afar, considered as murderers, who after clashes are usually disappearing in the Afar lowland, where they benefit of clan's protection.<sup>21</sup>

In Dubti, Logiya and Assaita, three localities having important orthodox communities,<sup>22</sup> confrontation between Muslims and Christians remains ever present in the mind. Such situations illustrate the bitter competition between the Afar and Highlanders. Numerous Ethiopians, Muslim and Christian, are now settled in the Afar Region and even the half-cast children benefiting from a higher education are facing negative attitudes and have to fight to be accepted. In the southern part of the region contacts are more linked to the ethnic border. Despite tensions linked with resource competition, inter-ethnic marriages are more frequent; locally, moreover, Kerreyu and Afar are trying to impose coexistence on a local basis. (Piguet, 2006)

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<sup>20</sup> Dokka and La'o are also designating the west and the east of the afar territory.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Abou Hussein, Oromo resident in Kersa near Bati, January 23, 2004.

<sup>22</sup> According to the Orthodox priest in charge of the new church in Assaita, the population of the Christian community has decreased about 50% from more than 3,000 to 1,500. That movement occurred after December 2003, when the Afar regional Administration moved out of Assaita to the new regional capitale, Samara.

### **VIII. Pastoralists' Marginalisation**

Pastoralists worldwide have been marginalised, excluded from their best resources and subjected to sedentarisation and resettlement programmes. (Salzman and Galaty 1990) In Africa generally, and especially in East Africa, notably in the Horn, relations with the States have been characterised by encroachment of agriculture, expropriation of pastoralists' communal resources, expansion of protected areas, and displacement of pastoralists to marginal lands. (Markakis 1993, Mohamed 1999, Doornbos and Markakis 2000, Manger 2000) Likewise, Ethiopian State interests in promoting irrigation, and pervasive prejudices that view pastoralism as an irrational, outdated and inferior form of livelihood, have paved the way for the displacement of pastoralist groups from areas designated for irrigated development. (Hogg 1997, Ayalew 2001, Getachew 2001) As a side effect, there have been concerns with resettling pastoralists and pressuring them to adopt a settled way of life. Development projects, starting from imperial times, have evicted and excluded pastoralists from crucial resources, notably dry season grazing areas, especially in the Awash Valley. Settlement programmes, established in the 1960s and expanded during the Derg, have also had the same effect. Such attempts have tended to fail, and the irrigation projects have attracted the settlement of migrant labourers from the highlands, who competed with the interests of pastoralist groups.<sup>23</sup> Issues of land rights, compensation, conflict mitigation and joint development have often not been given the consideration they deserve.

The view of pastoralism as an inefficient way of life which should be replaced by sedentary agriculture still seems to prevail to this day. In theory, the Constitution (1995) guarantees the rights of pastoralists to free land for grazing as well as agriculture and the right not to be displaced from their land. In practice, however, the Ministry of Agriculture's Extension Programme (1999) seeks to encourage settlement of pastoralists (Ayalew 2001 : 85) and the new Tendaho dam to irrigate about 60'000 ha in lower Awash valley is under construction. The current promotion of private investment in irrigated agriculture, looking now to develop agro carburant, has also heightened conflicts. It can furthermore be expected that, just as the current famine crisis has promoted the view that resettlement is necessary, the concerns with developing

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<sup>23</sup> See also Getachew (2001:100-2), and Ayalew (2001:98-9).

irrigated agriculture for cash-crop production and using the potential of the river valleys to ensure food security could well lead to further antagonisms with pastoral populations, unless mitigation measures are envisaged and compromises negotiated. Otherwise, further river valley development could have double negative resettlement effects. On the one hand, pastoralist groups may continue to be displaced from high potential resources near the rivers, thereby endangering the viability of their production system, exposing them to food insecurity, and resulting in the view that they need to be settled or resettled. On the other hand, irrigation is likely to promote the migration of highland workers to work on projects, and river valleys may be considered appropriate sites for resettlement of highland famine victims. Such measures could exacerbate resource competition and aggravate conflict with and between pastoralists communities, unless compensation, negotiated resource-sharing and joint development are envisaged from the planning stage through to the implementation of such interventions.

The current context of famine has worsened resource conflicts between highland and lowland groups and among pastoralist groups themselves in the lowlands. Such conflicts often result in displacement and the use of force to justify claims to territory and access to resources. Peace-making initiatives by local elders, government and non-government agencies have sought to address these conflicts, negotiate agreements and promote understanding and mutual coexistence. Greater cooperation, coordination and collaboration between local, regional, federal and international initiatives in this respect could improve conditions and forestall potential conflicts. Initiatives to promote peace-making involving traditional peace-making institutions and the various stakeholders often have an important, and sometimes neglected, contribution to make. Furthermore, in the peripheral lowland areas, notably in the East of Ethiopia (Afar and Somali), external conflicts are affecting local populations and complicate peace-making processes. This requires negotiations across borders and involves inter-state relations, and has become a concern of the whole Horn and East Africa and even further due to political, religious and sociological linkages with the Middle East.

Encroachment by irrigated schemes first established some 40 years ago have been on the increase over the past 25 years. The intensification of irrigated agriculture has highlighted the key question of water resource sharing and difficulties encountered by populations located

downstream.<sup>24</sup> Grazing land access has also become a problem and in times of drought pastoralists have migrated to the highlands, causing clashes with sedentary farmers or at times invaded schemes. This may even be agreed with producers when cotton prices are depressed in order to obtain subsidies or assistance. In some cases agreements have been reached between state schemes and pastoralists.<sup>25</sup> The irrigated agricultural schemes have also led to the development of a number of towns in Afar and Karrayu areas such as Dubti, Melka Werer and Metahara, which have become multi-ethnic.<sup>26</sup>

For the Afar, highlander settlers are not welcomed in the Afar region but they are not able to resist the non-Afar population influx linked with economic development. On the top of that, Afar leaders are particularly ambiguous on that point. By converting “reserved” grazing land into renting plots cultivated by highlander farmers, afar leaders are looking for further opportunities to get additional lease contracts.<sup>27</sup> Those Afar leaders use to deliver statements about their land integrity and struggle for it, but in practice, by the generalisation of lease contracts, they are attracting more highlanders who settle in the Afar Region.<sup>28</sup>

## **X. Conclusion**

Migratory trends, induced by an overpopulated highland facing resource scarcity, both in the pastoral and agricultural areas, will most probably extend over the coming years and decades.

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<sup>24</sup> Even in locations outside the pastoral areas, irrigation such as the scheme between Woldiya and Kobo have negative effects for downstream pastoralists and resulted in the Afar seeking to destroy the dams. Likewise, the Dubti-Dit Bahir cotton production scheme involving diversions from the Awash undermined the Awsa agro-pastoral economy, resulting in reprisals by the Afar.

<sup>25</sup> The Tendaho Agriculture Development Enterprise, a State company in charge of two farms made agreements with the surrounding pastoral populations to share security responsibilities, involving seven Afar clans, who obtained priority pasture rights. Likewise, further south, the Karrayu around Merti Sugar plantation are in charge of the security and in exchange benefit from crops residues, and many agro-pastoralists are settled all around the plantation.

<sup>26</sup> For example, Melka Werer, the most populous town in Amibara district with eight ethnic groups, mostly Argobba, Oromo, Amhara and Tigray.

<sup>27</sup> Such lease contracts concern agriculture and other sectors like salt extraction and charcoal processing. (interview with Ali Gardo, APDA director, Logiya, July 25, 2005)

<sup>28</sup> Du point de vue des Afar, les « highlanders », chrétiens et musulmans confondus, sont tous considérés comme des intrus dans la région et à leurs yeux demeurent invariablement des *gallaitou*. (...) Mais alors, que dire de ces multiples contrats de sous-traitance liant des chefs afar à des travailleurs éthiopiens ? On baigne ici en plein paradoxe, car si d’une part, ils sont accusés d’occuper la terre des Afar, par ailleurs, ils constituent les rouages indispensables à la pérennisation de l’économie de rente qui se développe en dehors du pastoralisme. (Piguet, 2006 : 173)

Besides spontaneous migration flows, Ethiopian authorities have resumed the resettlement programmes initiated under Haile Selassie and continued by the Derg with the well-known harsh social and economical side effects. (Pankhurst 1992, Gebre 2000, Wolde Selassie 2002) In order to absorb such long-term movement, Ethiopian federal and regional governments need to set up a migration policy which will look ahead from resettlement programmes moving people with all the authoritarian risks linked with such (so-called) voluntary programmes. Push and pull factors analysis should be the prerequisite to implement migration programmes as well as the interests of native populations. Is voluntary migration essentially linked with “push” factors regarding the poor living standard and the risk of destitution balanced with attracting factors (pull) by developing infrastructure (health, education, etc.) and economical opportunities, even when those are limited to seasonal employment as daily workers?

A major political (and psychological) difficulty has to be seen with the various ties between part of the local elite and the national one promoting technical innovation and economical growth in a sense imposing market economy and “modernity” without a proper analysis of feasibility and sustainability of the so-called economical improvement. Economical rationality – based on short term profits for some elites (hit and run attitude) - linked with infrastructure implantation, is far from the actual question of facing voluntary displacement or not. Most of the time, migration decisions are linked with the strong push factors (expulsion) and (moderate) pull factors or simply expected ones. As far as the Afar are concerned, non-Afar migration, in a way similar to resettlement programmes, even if such programmes are not implemented in the Afar region, has a triple objective: (a) offering economical opportunities to highlanders and contributing to address the high demographic density in the highlands, where land is scarce and soil fertility declining; (b) highlanders settlement, particularly Tigreans, can contribute to solve an old political and strategical problem: the control of the Afar Region; (c) pastoralists destitution, which might be addressed by sedentarisation and resettlement programmes, also will be seen as a contribution to enforce control over the Afar population.

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