Expeditionary Culture Field Guide

ETHIOPIA

U.S. AIR FORCE

About this Guide

This guide is designed to prepare you to deploy to culturally complex environments and achieve mission objectives. The fundamental information contained within will help you understand the cultural dimension of your assigned location and gain skills necessary for success. (Photo a courtesy of Wikimedia).

The guide consists of 2 parts:

Part 1: Introduces "Culture General," the foundational knowledge you need to operate effectively in any global environment.

Part 2: Presents "Culture Specific" Ethiopia, focusing on unique cultural features of Ethiopian society and is designed to complement other pre-deployment training. It applies culture-general concepts to help increase your knowledge of your assigned deployment location.

For further information, visit the Air Force Culture and Language Center (AFCLC) website at http://culture.af.mil/ or contact AFCLC's Region Team at AFCLC.Region@us.af.mil.

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PART 1 – CULTURE GENERAL

What is Culture?

Fundamental to all aspects of human existence, culture shapes the way humans view life and functions as a tool we use to adapt to our social and physical environments. A culture is the sum of all of the beliefs, values, behaviors, and symbols that have meaning for a society. All human beings have culture, and individuals within a culture share a general set of beliefs and values.

Members of a culture also usually assign the same meanings to the symbols in that culture. A symbol is when one thing – an image, word, object, idea, or story – represents another thing. For example, the American flag is a physical and visual symbol of a core American value – freedom. At the same time, the story of George Washington admitting to having chopped down a cherry tree is also symbolic, representing the importance Americans place on personal honesty and leadership integrity.

Force Multiplier

The military services have learned through experience the importance of understanding other cultures. Unlike the 20th-century bipolar world order that dominated US strategy for nearly half a century, today the US military is operating in what we classify as asymmetric or irregular conflict zones where the notion of cross-cultural interactions is on the leading edge of our engagement strategies.

We have come to view the people themselves, rather than the political system or physical environment, as the decisive feature in conflict areas. Our primary objective hinges on influencing constructive change through peaceful means where possible. We achieve this endeavor by encouraging local

nationals to focus on developing stable political, social, and economic institutions that reflect their cultural beliefs and traditions.

Therefore, understanding the basic concepts of culture serves as a force multiplier. Achieving an awareness and respect of a society's values and beliefs enables deploying forces to build relationships with people from other cultures, positively influence their actions, and ultimately achieve mission success.

Cultural Domains

Culture is not just represented by the beliefs we carry internally, but also by our behaviors and by the systems members of a culture create to organize their lives. These systems, such as political or educational institutions, help us to live in a manner that is appropriate to our culture and encourages us to perpetuate that culture into the future.

We can organize these behaviors and systems into categories – what the Air Force refers to as "cultural domains" – in order to better understand the primary values and characteristics of a society. A cross-culturally competent military member can use these domains – which include kinship, language and communication, and social and political systems among others (see chart on next page) – as tools for understanding and adapting to any culture. For example, by understanding the ways different cultures define family or kinship, a deployed military member can more effectively interact with members of that culture.

Social Behaviors Across Cultures

While humankind shares basic behaviors, various groups enact or even group those behaviors differently across cultural boundaries. For example, all societies obtain food for survival, although agrarian societies generally produce their own food for limited consumption using very basic techniques.

Conversely, industrialized nations have more sophisticated

market economies, producing foodstuffs for universal consumption. Likewise, all cultures value history and tradition, although they represent these concepts through a variety of unique forms of symbolism. While the dominant world religions share the belief in one God, their worship practices vary with their traditional historical development. Similarly, in many kin-based cultures where familial bonds are foundational to social identity, it is customary for family or friends to serve as godparents, while for other societies this practice is nearly non-existent.

Worldview

One of our basic human behaviors is the tendency to classify others as similar or different according to our cultural standard.

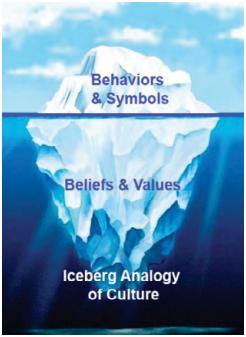
As depicted in the chart below, we can apply the 12 cultural domains to help us compare similarities and differences across cultures. We evaluate others' behavior to determine if they are "people like me" or "people not like me." Consequently, we assume that individuals falling into the "like me" category share our perspectives and values.

This collective perspective forms our worldview– how we see the world and understand our place in it. Your worldview functions as a lens through which you see and understand the world. It helps you to interpret your experiences and the values and behaviors of other people that you encounter. Consider your worldview as a way of framing behavior, providing an accountability standard for our actions and a logical explanation of why we individually or collectively act in a certain manner.

Cultural Belief System

An important component of a worldview is our belief system. A community's belief system sets its universal standards of what is good and bad, defines right and wrong behavior, and assigns a value of meaningful or meaningless. Our beliefs form the fundamental values we hold to be true – regardless of whether there is physical evidence to support these ideas. Beliefs are a central facet of human culture. They are shared views about world order and how the universe was physically and socially constructed.

While all people have beliefs, their specific components tend to vary depending upon respective world views. What people classify as good or bad, right or wrong depends on our deeply-held beliefs we started developing early in life that have help shape our characters. Likewise, these values are ingrained in our personalities and shape our behavior patterns and our self-identities. Because cultural beliefs are intensely held, they are difficult, though not impossible, to change.



Core Beliefs

Core beliefs shape and influence certain behaviors and also serve to rationalize those behaviors. Therefore, knowledge of individual or group beliefs can be useful in comprehending or making sense of their activities. We will use the iceberg model for classifying culture to illustrate two levels of meaning, as depicted. Beliefs and values, portrayed by the

deeper and greater level of the submerged iceberg, are seldom visible, but are indicated / hinted at / referenced by our behaviors and symbols (top level). It is important to recognize, though, that the parts of culture that are not visible (under the waterline) are informing and shaping what is being made visible (above the waterline).

In many cases, different worldviews may present behaviors that are contrary to our own beliefs, particularly in many regions where US forces deploy. Your ability to suspend judgment in order to understand another perspective is essential to establishing relationships with your host-nation counterparts. The ability to withhold your opinion and strive to understand a culture from a member of that culture's perspective is known as cultural relativism. It often involves taking an alternate perspective when interpreting others' behaviors and is critical to your ability to achieve mission success.

As you travel throughout the African Continent, you will encounter cultural patterns of meaning that are common among most African countries. What follows is a general description of 12 cultural domains which are used to frame those commonalities.

CULTURAL DOMAINS

1. History and Myth

History and myth are related concepts. History is a record of the past that is based on verifiable facts and events. Myth can act as a type of historical record, although it is usually a story which members of a culture use to explain community origins or important events that are not verifiable or which occurred prior to written language.

Africa has a history that spans the entire existence of humankind. In ancient times prior to the emergence of written languages, history and wisdom were preserved across generations and

ethnic boundaries through oral folk legends or myths. Most early human evolution began as hunting and gathering cultures in East and South Africa, with countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and South Africa renowned for their early human sites. In the last several millennia, the development of agriculture and pastoralism (animal herding) replaced hunting and gathering lifestyles (Photo: *Kutubiyya Mosque* courtesy of CultureGrams, ProQuest, 2013).

Ancient civilizations evolved in all corners of Africa, inspired in part by peoples from the Middle East bringing trade, beliefs, customs, language, and on occasion, colonization. Far from being isolated empires, the African civilizations were intimately connected by commerce and marriage throughout various regions of the continent, and when confronted by outsiders, managed to adapt to their influences. Eventually, Arab traders introduced Islam to Africa and also instituted the Trans-Saharan African slave trade that lasted from the 7th to 19th Centuries.

The “golden age” of European exploration, which lasted from the 18th to mid-20th century, prompted the wholesale exploitation of Africans resources – first human assets through slavery, followed by natural resources such as minerals, precious gems and metals, and wildlife, thereby diminishing most of what was traditional and African.

The introduction of the European Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade altered the slave trade through both the sheer number of Africans enslaved and through the cementing of a racist ideology of Black inferiority to legitimize the institution of slavery. Slavery decimated the African continent for over 400 years through the forced relocation of an estimated 25 to 30 million Africans worldwide. This figure does not include those Africans who died aboard ships or during capture. While abolition of the slave trade dissolved the institution of slavery, it did not end the European

presence on the African continent nor did it drastically alter their attitudes towards Africans.

Starting in the mid-19th century, European colonialism served to redefine African ethnic relations on a large scale; however, as African societies began to resist colonial rule and seek their independence, widespread ethnic conflict and genocide occurred. Sustained westernization and globalization continue to shape the continent through poverty, disease, and social reform. A history still to be recorded, Africa's future identity faces many challenges in critical areas such as environmental change, ethnic strife, women's health and security, and education.

2. Political and Social Relations

Political relations are the ways in which members of a community organize leadership, power, and authority. Social relations are all of the ways in which individuals are linked to others in their community. Traditional African political organizations in the form of bands, tribes, and chiefdoms have existed for several millennia and continue to influence contemporary African governments. Uncommon in modern society, bands are limited to hunting and gathering economies, such as the !Kung of the southern African Kalahari Desert and foragers of central African forests.

Tribes are still represented today across the African political landscape, although the use of the word "tribe" is sometimes misinterpreted due to its western notion of "primitiveness" and oftentimes substituted with the term "ethnic group." Lacking centralized authority, tribes are organized around segmented descent groups or in some cases age groups.

Everyday governance is discharged through councils of respected elders and sanctioned through ritual and other means. East African pastoralist groups such as the Maasai,

along with some West African tribes and the Berbers in North Africa, represent this type of organization.

Chiefdoms or kingdoms are ruled by kings or queens from a royal clan and generally incorporate millions of subjects. Kingdoms such as the Zulu or Swazi in southern Africa developed through conquest, while others like Ghana's Ashante developed through an association of related traditional states. However, colonialism eventually diluted the power and reach of these empires, whose leaders were often retained as indirect rulers or figureheads.

Today, all three of these political organizations still exist, although in the confines of modern African nation-states created by colonial powers who had little regard or understanding of African cultures. This juxtaposition of modernity with tradition has caused severe conflict throughout the continent.

Challenged to construct their respective "national" identities, regional leaders attempt to do so by diluting the traditionally cohesive power of ancestry. These national ruling elites, who derive their power from wealth and commerce rather than tribal affiliation, feel threatened by loyalty to these traditional organizations, labeling their rule as "tribalism."

This "class versus descent" scrimmage for power has resulted in conflicts across the continent and a dramatic divergence of interests. As a means to overcome these and other issues on the continent, a 53-nation federation, the African Union (AU), was formed in 2002. AU's charter is to promote "greater unity and solidarity between African countries and peoples" by building partnerships in all segments of "civil society."

3. Religion and Spirituality

Religion is a cultural belief system that provides meaning to members of a community. Religious and spiritual beliefs help preserve the social order by defining proper behavior. They also create social unity by defining shared identity, offer

individuals peace of mind, and explain the causes of events in a society. Prior to the arrival of Islam and Christianity, the African continent consisted of orally transmitted indigenous religious practices. As in many societies, African indigenous beliefs influenced diet, subsistence patterns, family structures, marriage practices, and healing and burial processes. In essence, Africans constructed their worldview through their indigenous religions.

Today, the African continent is primarily either Muslim or Christian. Other faiths such as Judaism and Hinduism exist as pockets in different regions of the continent, primarily in urban areas. The historical trajectories of Islamic and Christian expansion in Africa offer intriguing commonalities in how Africans across the continent initially reacted to the introduction of each of those religions. For example, it is common throughout the continent to find a blending of many elements of indigenous religious practices with local Islam and Christianity (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia).

Consequently, many African native religions share similarities with religions such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in their understanding of God as the creator and ruler of all life, although He is considered untouchable by humans.

However, unlike Christianity and Islam, many African indigenous religions believe that God is not directly involved in people's lives. To them there is a spirit world populated with former good and bad human beings. The good spirits intercede with God on behalf of their living families to whom they then relay God's will through dreams and acquired possessions. The bad spirits work to bring misfortune through sickness,

death, or natural disasters to those who behave inappropriately.

Many indigenous African religions revere "nature" spirits living in the sky, water, and forests. These impersonal spirits help protect people from harm and provide them with life's essential ingredients such as water, sun, and wildlife. This belief system is commonly referred to as animism.

Just as spirits mediate relations between God and humans, religious specialists act as mediators between spirits and humans to provide protection from harm.

4. Family and Kinship

The domain of family and kinship refers to groups of people related through blood ties, marriage, or through strong emotional bonds that influence them to treat each other like family members (often called "fictive kin").The traditional African family with respect to marriage, family structure, and descent is a much different arrangement than is found in most American families. Likewise, there are several components of the traditional African family that are common to all African cultures.

First, perhaps the most difficult feature to reconcile to Americans is that of polygyny – the practice of a husband having more than one wife. A benefit of this arrangement is that it promotes societal alliances through marriage, procreation, and family wealth through female labor.

Second, due to polygyny, the family in most African cultures has historically consisted of an expanded set of kin or relatives that extends well beyond the American notion of a nuclear family. This arrangement created a family environment where children considered all siblings as "brothers and sisters" and all of the wives/mothers as "mother."

Third, the extended African family traces descent through either the male or female side of the family, a practice which differs considerably from the American family. Patrilineal descent (through the male side of the family) is the more common approach and usually features polygyny. The matrilineal (through the female bloodline) marriage pattern is more uncommon and almost always features monogamy – it is rare to encounter a wife having more than one husband.

Lastly, it is common for two or more blood lines (lineages) to share a common ancestor and collectively form a clan, which is the largest social unit. Clans do not have formal leaders or organizational structures. Membership is transferred from father to child and cuts across ethnic and social boundaries.

The dramatic social changes in Africa during and after colonialism in the last 4 decades have obviously affected the traditional family, and variations on these 3 features can be found across the continent.

5. Sex and Gender

Sex refers to the biological/reproductive differences between males and females, while gender is a more flexible concept that refers to a culture's categorizing of masculine and feminine behaviors, symbols, and social roles. Gender roles in Africa follow no single model nor is there a generalized concept of sex and common standard of sexual behavior.

Prehistorically, gender role differentiation in Africa's hunting and gathering cultures was based on a division of labor featuring different, yet complementary, sets of responsibilities for males and females, adults and children. Females gathered over half the caloric needs from natural vegetation, while also reproducing and raising offspring. Males were primarily hunters but also assisted with gathering.

These gender patterns continued as agricultural practices advanced.

Females shared in farming while continuing to provide for the family's subsistence, and males produced the cash crops. Pastoralists like the Maasai of Kenya traditionally have featured males involved in cattle-raising and females in food production.

The 19th-century European colonial period introduced a cash economy into Africa, with female labor used to produce the cash crops. By inserting male authority over females, colonial administrators disrupted the distinct yet complementary male/female relationship that had been traditionally African.

More recently, western influence across the continent has dramatically altered the traditional gender roles. Educational and professional opportunities for females, along with increased family migrations to urban areas, have radically altered traditional male and female gender roles.

Likewise, the number of singles parents and even child- or other relative-led families has increased with the predominance of HIV/AIDS-related deaths and warfare, further altering traditional gender responsibilities. Additionally, ethnic conflicts involving abuse of women are prevalent in many unstable countries, and while the rubric of traditional African gender generally remains, the forces of change are gradually ripping it away.

6. Language and Communication

Language is a system for sharing information symbolically, whereby words are used to represent ideas. Communication is defined as the cultural practice of sharing meaning in interaction, both verbally and non-verbally. America is predominantly a monolingual society, where traditionally, fluency in a second language has been considered a luxury rather than a necessity. Conversely, national survival for many societies in Africa required them throughout their existence to adopt multilingual

practices, if for no other reason than to preserve their native heritage.

You may find it challenging to comprehend the scope of Africa's linguistic diversity. There are over 2,000 African languages (many spoken-only) from 6 major language families, and perhaps 100 of these languages are used to communicate among the more dominant ethnic groups such as Berber, Swahili, Yoruba, and others.

Official languages of African nation-states are few, yet the linguistic diversity expressed across the continent (Nigeria has 250 languages) has prompted an awareness of the value of Africa's linguistic traditions. While most areas of the continent speak the adopted language of their colonial past – such as French and Portuguese in West Africa, French and Arabic in Morocco, and English in Kenya and South Africa – the majority of people also speak one or more traditional "indigenous" languages of their and other ethnic groups. As African independence spread throughout the continent, ethnic groups continued to depend on their indigenous identifiers, such as language, to celebrate their "release" from colonial rule and to preserve a sense of indigenous identity.

While communication styles tend to vary by ethnic or social groups, Africans generally are friendly and outgoing people although they tend to communicate with reserve to avoid confrontation. As in most kin-based societies, Africans believe that saving face or protecting one's honor and dignity are of utmost importance; therefore, they avoid public criticism and controversial topics at all costs – even to the extent of withholding their honest opinion or modifying the truth.

Africans admire and even expect extended greetings and small talk, and to attempt to rush or avoid social graces is considered disrespectful. Similarly, Africans avoid direct eye contact when communicating with new acquaintances and people of status,

particularly elders. They also are fond of non-verbal gestures, and it is common throughout African societies for members of the same gender to hold hands or touch while conversing.

7. Learning and Knowledge

All cultures require that the older generation transmit important information to the younger generation. This information can be strictly factual (for example, how to fulfill subsistence and health requirements) and culturally traditional (the beliefs, behaviors, and symbols that have meaning to the community). This knowledge transfer may occur through structured, formalized systems such as schools or through informal learning by watching adults or peers.

The contemporary African educational system hardly resembles the traditional pre-colonial structure, whereby community elders were primarily responsible for preparing youth for adulthood. Their instruction included fundamentals of ethnic ritual and ceremony, along with customary protocol for their distinctive gender roles. A rite-of-passage commemorating their successful journey from childhood to adulthood served as a form of graduation.

European colonialism brought a more structured, formal educational system that catered to a small group of African elite who demonstrated potential to administer expanding colonial territories. Following independence, many African nations adopted the European system because they believed it would prepare them to be more competitive in intra-continental and global marketplaces, thereby enhancing their quality of life.

However, progress in developing and maintaining reliable educational institutions has been slow for a variety of reasons. Since most Africans live in rural environments, they continue to rely heavily on child labor for family survival, resulting in decreased school enrollments or early withdrawals. Likewise, widespread HIV/AIDS epidemics, ethnic conflict, teacher and resource deficits, and inaccessibility to remote rural areas also hamper progress. According to 2005 statistics, only half of the

continent's children were enrolled in primary school, leaving over 40 million African children without any schooling at all.

8. Time and Space

In every society, people occupy space and time in ways that are not directly linked to physical survival. In low-context western cultures, people tend to be preoccupied with strict time management, devoting less effort to relationship-building. Conversely, most African cultures are traditionally high-context societies, whereby people center their activities on socializing and establishing close associations, having little regard for the passage-of-time.

Only after establishing trust and honor will your typical African counterpart agreeably proceed with business. In his worldview, time is a precious commodity used to establish relationships and form alliances. Any attempt to accelerate the tempo at the expense of social pleasantries will likely result in deadlock.

To an African, close physical proximity between individuals encourages cooperative trust, and for centuries they have viewed human linkage as a core element to survival. This closeness is best represented in a traditional African village where strong kinship connections are evidenced by a display of close interpersonal relations among family members.

While conventional African concepts of time and space remain intact, throughout the continent western influence and globalization have stepped up the pace of African living, mostly in urban areas. Consequently, rural-to-urban migrations have reshaped traditional social and subsistence patterns.

9. Aesthetics and Recreation

Every culture has its own forms of creative expression that are guided by aesthetic principles of imagination, beauty, skill and style. Prior to 19th-century European colonization of Africa,

recreation served a vital subsistence role, whereby adolescents and adults alike participated in intellectually stimulating leisurely activities that concurrently served to develop essential hunting and pastoral skills.

Games of chance and skill were important to early childhood development, providing social outlets within and outside their community. Featuring wrestling, jumping and running; traditional African sport was steeped in religious ritual.

Along with colonialism came the introduction to Africa of western sports such as soccer, cricket, rugby and track and field. This emphasis on western sport continued to thrive with African independence and globalization, as seen in sporting events such as the Olympics and the World Cup.

Leaders such as Nelson Mandela skillfully employed sport to promote a unified South African nation. Importing the predominantly “white” game of rugby, Mandela used it to fuse a racially divided country following his election in 1992. This event is the theme of the motion picture “Invictus,” exemplifying how sport can serve to create national identities and overcome ethnic division. His efforts have inspired many other African nations to follow suit.

Likewise, East African countries such as Kenya and Ethiopia have produced the world’s dominant male and female distance runners, and South Africa, Cameroon and Nigeria emerged as strong contenders in the 2010 World Cup. African nations are now competing in leagues such as the International Basketball Association (FIBA) World Championships, and there is also a

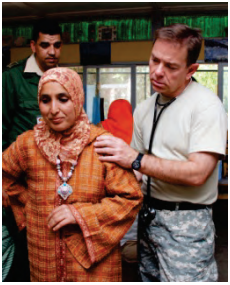
growing number of African basketball players on US college campuses and in the National Basketball Association (NBA).

10. Sustenance and Health

Societies have different methods of transforming natural resources into food. These methods can shape residence patterns, family structures and economics. Theories of disease and healing practices exist in all cultures and serve as adaptive responses to disease and illness.

Despite having only 11% of the global population, Africa is a victim of many of the world's debilitating health disorders. According to the World Health Organization, 60% of the global HIV/AIDS cases and 90% of malarial diseases occur in Africa.

These and other medical conditions are attributed primarily to viral infection and widespread poverty caused by extreme climatic conditions and civil unrest, coupled with inadequate preventative measures. While extensive drought generates widespread famine, civil disturbances generate millions of displaced persons. Likewise, with only 58% of the Sub-Saharan African population having access to safe drinking water, water-born bacterial diseases such as cholera and schistosomiasis are common.



Many people in Africa lack access to western medicine, and as a result depend on traditional health practices to combat disease. In addition, some traditional beliefs run counter to western medical practice and perhaps discourage individuals from utilizing those services even when they are available. This problem is further intensified by lack of federal regulatory healthcare management.

While modern healthcare procedures are more common in urban areas, many rural people rely on traditional practitioners who use a variety of plants and herbs to treat patients. Similarly, many families have their own secret remedies. While in some cases traditional medicine proves effective with fewer side effects than modern drugs, traditional practices do not adequately treat many of the more serious conditions.

On a positive note, western influence has stimulated some progress in combating Africa's health crisis. More resources are devoted to achieving basic human security by assessing disease symptoms early and with scientific accuracy.

11. Economics and Resources

This domain refers to beliefs regarding appropriate ways for a society to produce, distribute, and consume goods and services. Traditionally having an agrarian-based economy, Africa today remains predominantly agricultural, featuring less industrialization than most other parts of the world. Post-colonial adversities such as civil war, disease, poverty, and unstable dictatorships posed unusual hardship on several young African nations; however, Africa currently stands at the cross-roads of economic development with many nations becoming some of fastest growing regions in the world.

Colonialism institutionalized the exploitation of Africa's mineral resources, resulting in today's oil industry dominating the economic market in several coastal regions. A surge in global oil prices; a growing African middle class; and reduction in civil wars, foreign aid, and inflation collectively promise a more positive outlook for the future.

Countries such as Botswana, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, and South Africa are economically the wealthiest on the continent, with regions such as East Africa showing signs of economic stability. Despite the economic upswing, much of sub-Saharan

Africa's future economic prosperity is held hostage by devastating diseases such as AIDS, particularly in areas of southern Africa, and the growing effects of climate change and man-made environmental degradation throughout the subcontinent.

12. Technology and Material

Societies use technology to transform their physical world, and culture heavily influences the development and use of technology. Africa lags far behind most of the world in manufacturing capacity and output. Even the more economically-developed nations such as South Africa are competitively weak when compared to non-African industrialized nations. During the 1970s and 1980s, Africa experienced some growth in raw exports although this increase did little to boost long-term manufacturing capacity.

Today, Africa is experiencing an actual decline in manufacturing capacity due primarily to a lull in the global economy, along with other indigenous issues such as environmental stress, poor physical and organizational infrastructure, and a shortage of skilled personnel. Likewise, African manufacturing capacity is no match against global powers such as China and significant Southeast Asian markets.

International aid from both governmental and non-governmental organizations has helped African nations establish preliminary economic footholds. For example, many of them have dedicated industrial developmental zones to attract foreign investment and increase export-related manufacturing capacity, although Africa is far removed from having a significant role in the global marketplace in the foreseeable future.

Now that we have introduced general concepts that characterize African society at large, we will now focus on specific features of Ethiopian society.

PART 2 – CULTURE SPECIFIC

1. HISTORY AND MYTH

An African Legend

The history of Ethiopia (known as Abyssinia in early times) began mainly in the northern highlands region. It is the oldest independent country in Africa and home to the world's earliest sites of human existence, dating back to 5.8 million years ago. Its territory is believed to be the origin of human kind, with Ethiopia yielding an impressive lineage of early human remains, including those of *Australopithecus afarensis* or a young woman popularly known as Lucy, the world's most complete human adult ancestor. Anthropologists discovered Lucy's remains, believed to be 3.2 million-years-old, in 1974 in Ethiopia's Rift Valley. Ethiopians refer to Lucy as Dinqinesh (den-key-NESH), which means, "Thou art wonderful" in the local Amharic language and have placed her remains in Ethiopia's National Museum in Addis Ababa.

Recent find

More recent excavations in 2010 have uncovered a partial male skeleton identified as belonging to Lucy's species and believed to have been her great-grandfather. Known as Kadanuumuu, which means "big man," this fossil is believed to have preceded Lucy by about 400 thousand years.

Ethiopian Origins

Ethiopia has existed as a state since the 10th-century BC and is likely the only sub-Saharan African nation with historical and cultural ties to the ancient cultures of the Mediterranean. Established during Biblical times, the oldest Ethiopian aristocracy was mostly tribal, in some cases nomadic, and military in nature up through the Middle Ages.

Various records indicate that the earliest Egyptians were aware of Ethiopia's existence despite the fact that it was little more

than a loosely allied network of kingdoms. Perhaps based on their naval explorations of Punt (refers to a coastal city on the Red Sea), the Egyptians themselves believed that their ancestors were Ethiopian, establishing an Ethiopian dynasty in Egypt in 720 BC. Likewise, the ancient Greeks and Romans knew of the Ethiopians and traded with them.

Biblical association: The Old Testament makes several references to Ethiopia ("Cush" to the Hebrews). For example, Moses wed an "Ethiopian" woman (Numbers 12:1), and according to tradition, the Ethiopian nation was founded by Etiopik, great grandson of Noah, with the legendary city of Axum founded by Etiopik's son, Aksumai. Queen Makeda of Sabea (The Queen Sheba), who ruled a vast area including Yemen from Ethiopia's northern city of Axum, was considered a member of this biblical dynasty.

Legend of King Menelik I

Archaeological findings suggest that Ethiopia supported a sizable agricultural and urbanized society by 1000 BC, when according to tradition, the Queen of Sheba ventured to Jerusalem bearing gifts for King Solomon. Ethiopians believe that the two produced a son who became Menelik I, the first emperor of Ethiopia who ruled around 950 BC and founder of the Solomonic Dynasty.

While sources verify that Solomon and Sheba existed, the notion that they had a son who founded the Solomonic Dynasty in Ethiopia is better established in tradition than in physical evidence. However, to Ethiopians this myth is central to their national heritage. Ethiopian tradition goes on to say that Menelik, as a young adult, visited his father in Jerusalem for 3 years to learn Mosaic law and returned to Axum bearing the most holy of relics, the Ark of the Covenant (see *Religion & Spirituality*).

Solomonic Empire

Menelik's line of Solomonic emperors continued for nearly 3,000 years, with only one significant 100-year interruption between the 12th and 13th centuries, and would eventually put 225 emperors on the Ethiopian throne. For much of its early

history, the empire's religion derived from Judaism, allegedly as a result of Solomon's role in establishing the imperial line. However, the empire would experience many changes during that period, most notably the replacement of traditional Judaism with Christianity as the prominent religion.

Folklore

Ethiopia has a rich heritage of traditional folk tales, many of which are familiar to Americans through their popularization in children's books. Animal fables, trickster tales, and creation stories are a few of the common types of folk tales told throughout Ethiopia, with various ethnic groups having a collection of stories passed down from generation-to-generation. Some of these stories include "The Lion's Whiskers," "The Fire on the Mountain," "Pulling the Lion's Tale," and "The Perfect Orange."

One notable work is *Kebra Negast* (Glory of Kings), a collection of mythical stories on the Queen of Sheba and her son, Menelik.

Another popular religious folk tale expresses the belief in Buda (a demon) and the power of the evil eye thought to be held and wielded by those in a different social group and often based on gender or kinship links – in Ethiopia it is low caste peoples who may transmit this power. In fact, the word for manual worker, *tabib,* is also used to denote "one with the evil eye." This belief is a form of black magic or witchcraft whereby a human being can cause injury or death through a malevolent glance or stare. People typically wear amulets or summon God's name to protect against the evil eye. (see *Learning & Knowledge*).

Axumite Empire

The city of Axum, which still exists today, would eventually become in the 3rd-century BC the center of the first recorded

Kingdom in Ethiopia and was the first African political entity to adopt Christianity during the reign of King Ezana in the 4th century AD. Flourishing under both Roman and Greek influence, the Axumite Empire was a trading state that dominated Red Sea commerce between the Nile Valley and Arabia and between the Roman Empire and India. Centered in the highlands of present-day Eritrea and Tigray (Tigre), the empire stretched at its height from the Nile Valley in Sudan to Southwest Arabia.

Axum's Decline

Axum continued as a center of power for several centuries into the Christian era, although it started to decline in the 7th-century AD when merchants from Arabia introduced Islam to peoples along the Red Sea coast, spreading thereafter into the central and southern regions.

Today, Axum is best known for its imperial cemetery where each emperor's grave is marked by a carved monolithic monument known as an obelisk (similar to the Washington monument.). The third largest of these structures was dedicated to Emperor Ezana (pictured).

Middle Ages

Following a period of Jewish control and later restoration of the Solomonic Empire, Emperor Zara Yakub took the throne during the 15th century and became one of the greatest Ethiopian kings. A progressive reformer of both church and state, he centralized imperial power and institutionalized two fundamental segments of Ethiopian state – Christianity and feudalism (Photo: Giyorgis church, Lalibela, © Giustino – courtesy of Wikimedia).

Early Modern Era

What followed was a succession of less significant rulers who were forced to contend with Muslim incursions and foreign influences, although in 1632 Emperor Fasil banished most

foreigners and placed the Orthodox Church in its position of primacy.

Legend of Lalibela

In the 12th century Zagwe Emperor Lalibela ascended to the throne about the same time that Saladin, the Sultan of Egypt and Syria, conquered Jerusalem. It was traditional for Ethiopian Christians who had the means to pilgrimage to Jerusalem, an event that was curtailed now that the holy city was in hostile hands. Emperor Lalibela responded by seeking to establish his capital as a new Jerusalem and holy land, along with a new River Jordan. According to legend, angels carried Lalibela to heaven while he was under the influence of a sleeping potion given by his jealous brother. While there God told Lalibela to return to earth and construct unique churches with the assistance of angels. Commissioning one of the most remarkable construction projects seen in Ethiopia, or even the world, Emperor Lalibela commanded the forces necessary to carve 11 exquisitely fashioned monolithic churches from the solid rock that lay beneath the city, a project believed to have taken 42 years and considered the 8th wonder of the world.

Italy's Colonial Endeavor

Ethiopia's eventual role in European politics resulted from French and British influence in the region, although Ethiopia was one of only two territories that escaped European colonization. As a newcomer to colonial exploitation, Italy decided to invade Ethiopia in 1885. Unlike France and Great Britain, the Kingdom of Italy, was not politically nor militarily prepared for the undertaking.

Menelik II (ruled 1889-1913) defeated the Italians in 1896, although he allowed them to retain the frontier province facing the Red Sea – which they named Eritrea. At the same time, he

sent armies to conquer the southern highlands and surrounding lowlands, annexing them to the traditional Amhara-Tigray kingdom to create the present-day nation-state of Ethiopia with its capital at Addis Ababa (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia).

Menelik also opened the country to Western influence and technology, established diplomatic relations with several European powers, and constructed a railway from Addis Ababa to Djibouti on the Red Sea. The rapid modernization of his nation was Menelik's greatest domestic achievement.

Last Emperor

Following Menelik's death, his daughter, Zawditu, was crowned Empress in 1917, and her cousin, Ras Tafari Makonnen, became regent and successor to the throne. (Of note, Menelik II and Zewditu would be the last Ethiopian monarchs who could claim uninterrupted descent from King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba).

Tafari, who exercised considerable influence at court, ascended to the throne as Haile Selassie I, which means "Might of the Trinity," following Empress Zawditu's death in 1930, whereby he continued Menelik's modernization efforts. French-educated and aware of Ethiopia's backwardness, he began to introduce various Western-inspired reforms, but these changes were hardly underway before war broke out with Italy (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia).

World War II

It was Ethiopia's role in World War II that defined the nation's international identity during the second-half 20th century. Not forgetting its humiliating 19th-century defeat, Fascist Italy sought to establish a vast colonial empire, and therefore, invaded Ethiopia in 1935, forcing Emperor Selassie into exile. Having no intention of permitting Axis control of the Red Sea, the British intervened, forcing the Italians to surrender and restored Emperor Selassie's monarchy.

Communist Revolution

The slow pace of Emperor Selassie's reform effort following the war fostered discontent and led to an attempted coup in 1960. Following continued political unrest, along with a famine that killed over 300,000 people, a creeping coupe reduced the emperor's power, and in 1974, Emperor Salassie's empire was overthrown by a communist regime, leading to his imprisonment and assassination. His monarchy was replaced by a Marxist council called the Derg, with power eventually consolidated in the hands of a military dictatorship led by Mengistu Haile Meriam (pictured), who ruled with violence until his overthrow in 1991.

Throughout the Derg's 17-year rule, social and political unrest dominated the war-torn country. The government denied individual rights to own land, nationalizing it in an effort to collectivize its agriculture. In the late 1980s, the Tigray People's Liberation Front and other Ethiopian ethnic-based resistance groups formed the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), and, together with the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, forced the Derg's collapse.

New Regime

The fall of Communism brought more transformation. The transitional government of EPRDF Leader Meles Zenawi (pictured) was installed in 1991 as a means of stabilizing and strengthening Ethiopia. The new administration established a provisional government sponsoring multiethnic elections under a new constitution. Multiparty elections were held in May 1995, with Zenawi remaining head of government until his death in 2012. He was succeeded soon afterwards by his Deputy Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn (see *Political & Social Relations*).

From 1998 to 2000, Ethiopia and Eritrea fought a bitter war over their common border, and despite international arbitration, the status of the border in mid-2005 remained stalemated and relations between the two nations continues to be hostile (see *Political & Social Relations)*.

2. POLITICAL AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

Political Borders

- Eritrea: 567mi
- Djibouti: 217mi
- Somalia: 884mi
- Kenya: 535mi
- South Sudan:520mi
- Sudan: 478mi

Features

- Landlocked country located on the Horn of Africa.
- Covers over 435,000 square miles and is slightly less than twice the size of Texas.
- Has access to the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden through a port in Djibouti.
- Has a variety of terrain and climate zones (see *Economics & Resources*).

Flag

It has three equal horizontal bands of green, yellow, and red with a yellow pentagram and single yellow rays emanating from the angles between the points on a light blue disk centered on the three bands.

- The yellow pentagram, also known as the National Coat of Arms, is a symbol of the current government and intended to reflect the desire of the nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia to live together in unity and equality.
- Since Ethiopia is the oldest independent country in Africa, other African countries upon their independence have adopted the three colors commonly known as the pan-African colors.

Government Type

Ethiopia is a Federal Republic consisting of three branches to include executive, legislative, and judicial. The Ethiopian legal system is based on civil law having a transitional mix of national and regional courts.

Political Setting

Consisting of members from all of Ethiopia's ethnic groups, the current EPRDF government abandoned traditional provinces for ethnically defined states to form a federal system in the early 1990s. The existing "democratic" government contains 9 semi-autonomous states (each ethnic state known as a national regional state) and two special federally chartered cities, Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa that do not administratively belong to a regional state and, therefore, have the power to raise their own revenues. These territorial demarcations are intended to recognize the national identity of the majority ethnic group within each regional state.

Political Power

Ethiopia presently has 8 major political parties. Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn represents the EPRDF party and was elected its chair soon after his appointment as Prime Minister in 2012. Under both Zenawi and Desalegn, Ethiopians enjoy wider political freedom than with previous administrations (see *History and Myth*).

Executive Branch

- Consists of a prime minister, designated by the party in power following legislative elections, who serves as head of government and has strong executive authority. There are no term limits on the office of the prime minister.

- A ceremonial President (currently Mulatu Teshome Wirtu since 2013) is primarily a figurehead having no real power. The House of People's Representatives elects the President for a 6-year term with eligibility for a second term.

- The 1994 constitution provides for the prime minister to select, with legislative House of People's Representatives approval, a cabinet containing a Council of Ministers.

Legislative Branch

The Legislative Branch includes a two-chambered Parliament composed of a House of Federation that functions as an upper chamber responsible for interpreting the constitution and federal-regional issues and the House of People's Representatives or lower chamber responsible for passing legislation. The former is composed of 108 seats whose members are chosen by state assemblies to serve 5-year terms, while the latter contains 547 seats that are filled through popular-vote elections from single-member districts also to serve 5-year terms (Photo courtesy of Pro Quest, 2009).

Judicial Branch

The Judicial Branch or Federal Supreme Court consists of a president and vice president who the prime minister recommends and the House of People's Representatives appoints to office. The Federal Judicial Administrative selects candidates for federal judge position, with the prime minister‘s recommendation to the House of People's Representatives.

Defense

Ethiopia is a nation of warriors where military service is considered a path to social advancement and economic success. The Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) numbers about 200,000 personnel, making it one of the largest militaries in Africa. The ENDF consists of Ground Forces and an Ethiopian Air Force (ETAF), with no navy – Ethiopia became landlocked following Eritrea’s independence in 1993 and retention of Ethiopia’s naval facilities located there.

Military Inventory

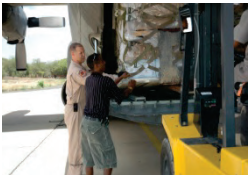
Ethiopia made significant purchases of arms from Russia in late 20th and early 21st centuries before a May 2000 UN arms embargo went into effect. Since much of her equipment suffered

battle damage in the 1998-2000 war with Eritrea, her raw numbers likely overstate the defense force capacity.

Air Force: The Ethiopian air force is believed to have close to 50 combat aircraft (including Su-27s, MiG-21MFs, and MiG-23BNs), around 25 armed helicopters, and about a dozen transport helicopters.

Army: The Ethiopian army possesses approximately 250 main battle tanks, 400 reconnaissance, armored personnel, and infantry fighting vehicles, 400 pieces of towed artillery, 50 multiple rocket launchers, 370 surface-to-air missiles, and a small number of self-propelled artillery. Ethiopia has no strategic weapons and is a party to nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons treaties.

US Security Assistance



Between 2002 and 2006 the US government more than tripled military assistance to Ethiopia in the form of International Military Education and Training and Foreign Military Financing. This aid occurred despite documented evidence from the US State Department and various international humanitarian organizations of Ethiopia's human rights abuse. *(*data from the *Center for Defense Information)*. Of note, Ethiopian officials connected to the human rights abuses have denied the reports.

Be Cautions About Urban Theft

Petty theft involves mugging, snatching, pick-pocketing and opportunistic grabbing from stopped vehicles – most common in Addis Ababa's Piazza or Mercato other urban areas. Airmen should exercise particular caution when visiting crowded public places and keep valuables, particularly cameras and passports hidden.

Ethiopian Air Force Rank Insignia

NOTE: Ethiopian Air Force and Army share same insignia. Army enlisted epaulets are green with red markings and officer is red with gold.

Security Issues

Ethiopia is a case study in modern national security concerns. Three of its neighbors (Sudan, Somalia, and Eritrea) have been accused of helping sponsor or serving as bases for terrorist organizations. Besides resisting Eritrean and Somali radical activities, Ethiopia also has dealt with an unstable Sudan, which has only recently concluded a brutal decades-long civil war that led to thousands of refugees fleeing into Ethiopian camps.

Border dispute: Eritrea fought a protracted 30-year war of independence with Ethiopia (September 1961-May 1991), whereby it defeated Ethiopia and earned international recognition of its independence in 1993. Since then an unresolved border dispute between the two countries constitutes the major external threat to security and stability in Ethiopia. The two neighbors have been in a state of "cold peace" since a December 2000 truce. Neither nation has an interest in renewing a war they cannot financially or politically afford, although this shortfall has not curtailed political posturing on both sides.

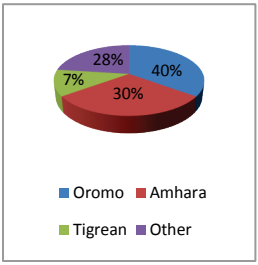
Militant Groups

Two primary factions are the Oromo Liberation Front and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), both of which seek autonomy for their constituent populations or regions. The ONLF is believed to be motivated by the desire to reunite eastern Ethiopia with "Greater Somalia," a reversal of the loss of the Ogaden to Ethiopia in the 1890s. Nevertheless, the lawlessness and political instability along Ethiopia's long and highly porous border with Somalia make it a potential area for extremist activity.

Ethnic insurgencies: Besides coping with rival neighbors, Ethiopia has had to employ its military to combat internal anti-government ethnic insurgencies. Although it has had fewer coups than have plagued other African countries, Ethiopia's turmoil has been no less devastating. To add to its many challenges, Ethiopia has to balance among extreme poverty, droughts, famines, and uneven allocation of land and natural resources, all of which tend to undermine stability.

Relations with the US

US-Ethiopian relations, established in 1903, were good throughout the period prior to Italian occupation of Ethiopia in 1935. After World War II, these ties strengthened based on a 1951 treaty of amity and economic relations. After Ethiopia's 1974 revolution, the bilateral relationship began to cool due to the Derg regimes instituting perhaps the most radical social and economic reform in Africa. The US rebuffed Ethiopia's actions and further rejected her request for increased military assistance. With the 1991 downfall of the Derg regime, US-Ethiopian relations improved, with restrictions on US assistance lifted. Today, Ethiopia has good relations with the US and the West, and since 2001, has played an increasingly important role in US efforts to combat terrorism in the Horn of Africa (HOA)(Photo: Former US Ambassador to Ethiopia Donald Booth during a traditional coffee ceremony – described below).



Ethnicity

Cultural Melting Pot

Ethiopia's population of near 95.5M has an annual growth of about 3% and represents a collection of ancient Middle Eastern and African cultures as seen in its religious, ethnic, and language composition. It includes at least 75 distinct ethnic groups of which the Oromo, Amhara, and Tigrayan hold primacy, collectively constituting nearly 75% of the total population. The Ethiopian people are usually classified by the languages they speak.

Regionally, ethnic groups generally are distinguished between "highland societies" and "lowland societies," where historically, neighboring ethnic groups competed for resources, water, and pasture lands.

Highland Groups

• **Oromo:** Consisting of about 34.2 million people or about 34.4% of total population, the Oromo is the largest group in both Ethiopia and the HOA region, and concentrated primarily in the southern half of the nation. The most widespread ethnic group, it occupies both highland and lowland territories in all regions except Gondar. The Oromo include sub-ethnic clans, each having unique social identities.

For example, its Borana clan remains pastoralist, although the majority of Oromo have become plow cultivators or engaged in mixed farming. Expanding from their homeland in the central southern highlands beginning in the 6th century, the Oromo refer to their region as Oromia, also known as the richest area in the HOA because of its agricultural and natural resources.

The Oromo exemplify how some ethnic groups do not fit within the current political boundaries. They have never maintained political power nor been dominant in Ethiopian political society, mainly because of their internal diversity and geographical expanse.

Traditionally, they have been less united religiously and socially than the Amhara and Tigrayans and never formed an Oromo state, although they have had periods of military and political dominance. There are significant differences in social organization, religion, and economy across the sub-ethnic groups – some are Muslims, others Christians, and still others adhere to indigenous religions. Many live in urban centers. The Oromo traditionally have been suppressed as the Amhara emerged as the dominant group and were expected to adopt Amhara ethnic identity.

Even today, under a federalist government, the Oromo lack appropriate political representation, with large groups of Oromo refugees seeking sanctuary in neighboring border countries and the Middle East. Despite historical repression, their cultural identity remains strong and most consider themselves Oromo, as well as Ethiopian.

Gada System

Among the southernmost Oromo people, elements of the traditional Gada social organization system remain in place, although no longer practiced among the more northern groups. Within the system, boys and men progress through life in 8-year stages. They are organized into subgroups based on age and generation, with each group advancing to the next stage of development through an elaborate rite-of-passage initiation. Political and religious leaders, for example, would be considered members of the 5th stage. Oromo people who no longer practice the system still use it to promote Oromo independence because of its traditional role in defining their social, cultural, and political heritage – particularly their democratic character.

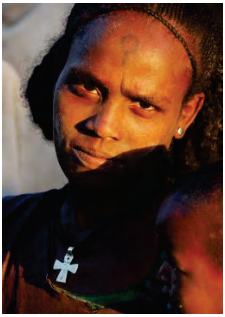
- **Amhara:**

Traditional power: Accounting for about 27% of the population, the Amhara occupy northwestern Ethiopia and, although a minority group, has controlled the country almost continually for the past 100 years. While they are not the dominant ethnic group in Ethiopia today, they continue to play a central role – both inside and outside the country. Claiming descent from King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, they gave rise to the Solomonic dynasty, and their language, Amharic, is Ethiopia's national language. Their established base is the Amhara Regional State, with its capital at Bahir Dar, and Gondar another major city in the region.

The Amhara people are mostly farmers situated mainly in the central highland plateau of Ethiopia. For centuries their predominant religion has been Christianity, with the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church playing a central role in their culture, although about 18% of the population is Muslim. Many

live in the mountains, making it difficult to travel and gain provisions. Plagued by contaminated drinking water, they also risk famine as a result of deforestation.

• **Tigrayan:** Another 6.1% of the people make up the 3rd major group known as Tigrayan, who primarily have occupied the northernmost Tigray Regional State since Eritrean independence. Its capital and population center is Mekele. Ascendant in Ethiopian politics since the fall of the communist Derg, the Tigrean Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF) transformed itself into the EPRDF party that, as noted earlier, has controlled the government of Ethiopia since 1991.



Present-day Tigray is located where the powerful Kingdom of Axum established its legendary heritage as it became the first recorded Kingdom in Ethiopia and the first African political entity to adopt Christianity. Auxumites were a strong-willed and literate people whose monasteries remain centers for learning and translating. Axum today is viewed as a symbol of Tigrayan national consciousness and cultural pride because of the Tigrayans notable defense against attacks from Italian, Egyptian, and Sudanese armies seeking to invade and colonize Ethiopia.

Lowland Groups

• **Somali:** In the eastern Ethiopian region once belonging to Somalia, the majority population remains ethnic Somali despite the migration of many highlanders seeking fortune and extended highland authority. The capital of the Somali Regional State is Jijiga, and ethnic Somalis are predominantly Sunni Muslim. Many maintain the customs and practices of Somalia, remaining loyal to their clans even across borders that are long, remote, and very porous, with smuggling of untaxed or illicit goods common.

• **Afar:** Inhabitants of the northeast Danakil Desert and Depression region of Ethiopia occupy the Afar Regional State (capital city is Asaita). Having extended their traditional influence into neighboring Djibouti, the Afar are primarily pastoralists and herdsmen, and while predominantly Muslim, their cultural practices are in some cases very different from other Muslims.

For example, due to the intense heat, some of their women have been known to go topless while performing their household duties. When they visit other areas, Afar women usually cover themselves. While it is unlikely Airmen will be exposed to this isolated, rural practice; it is beneficial to be aware it does exist, is acceptable behavior in the local culture, and not intended to have sexual implications (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia).

Southwestern Tribes

The southwest corner of Ethiopia, known as the Southern Nations' Nationalities' and Peoples' Regional State (SNNPRS), is renowned for its isolation and unique ethnic traditions. Of the more than 45 ethnic groups that occupy southern Ethiopia, the people of this region are known for their assortment of artistic shells, beads, and body paint accented by a patchwork of ethnicities, worldviews, histories, and beliefs – all preserved by their remoteness and isolation.

• **Mursi:** Numbering close to 5,000 the Mursi are pastoralists who share minimal worldly possessions and express their culture by adorning their bodies. They are most famous for lip plates and earlobe plugs worn by their women. There are a variety of explanations for the lip disk. Some believe it was first used to make women unattractive to slave traders, although

today it is commonly used to determine a young woman's dowry. The size of her lip disk at marriage determines the number of cattle her husband-to-be must pay her family (Photo Courtesy Pierre Martinez).

- **Konso:** Deep in the mountains bordering the Great Rift Valley, the near 170 thousand Konso people make their home. Although related to the fierce, semi-nomadic herdsmen of the south, the Borana, the Konso are a relatively calm people, known for their terraced farms and their carefully constructed villages made with natural wood and stone materials – their structures are crafted with little construction. For example, they never form the wood into beams and planks, but rather, carefully use the natural shape of a branch or bough to its best advantage – a practice that requires great skill.

Wood craftsmen: The Konso people reserve their wood-working skills for one notable spiritual purpose, the creation of totems, or *waga*, to commemorate their dead. In the photo, the old man, who is playing a *krar* or lyre (national instrument of Ethiopia), has carved three new *waga* for placement near a gravesite (Photo: Boy playing in Konso village, courtesy of Wikimedia).

Those ethnic groups covered in this guide represent the tremendous diversity of Ethiopian culture. The Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region, for instance, also includes other large ethnic groups like the Sidamo (about 9% of the total population and, therefore, larger than Tigrayans), the Wolaitta and Gurage, and smaller groups such as the Hadiya, Gamo, and so forth. In addition, the western regions of Gambella and Benishangul-Gumuz are home to several other ethnic communities, some of which straddle the border with Sudan, such as the Anuak, Nuer, and Berta peoples. Finally, the city of Harar is the ancient home of the Aderi people, but also includes sizable communities of Oromo and others.

Social Relations

Social Groups and Status

There are four major social groups in Ethiopia. At the top are high-ranking followed by low-ranking lineages, caste groups, and slaves (to include their decedents). This four-tier system is traditional within Ethiopia's hierarchical, class-oriented society where wealth is the chief criterion for social stratification. Having wealth earns respect and recognition, and one's status or wealth has traditionally been ascribed (assigned) based on family lineage, although exposure to Western influence has opened opportunities for gaining status through personal achievement.

In rural areas wealth is typically measured by the amount of grain and cattle a person possesses, while in urban parts it is normally accrued based upon education, vocation, and social network. Some jobs, such as lawyers and federal government employees, are considered more esteemed than others than others. Many professions carry negative associations, such as potters or metal and leather workers, and are considered of low status and frequently are isolated from mainstream society. Likewise, owning a vehicle is a symbol of wealth and high status because there are few available to purchase.

Social Etiquette

Sociable and generous, Ethiopians delight in an opportunity to entertain friends in their homes, and therefore, an invitation to a private home should be considered an honor. Punctuality is not expected, although considerable tardiness is considered rude. Expect to remove your shoes at the door and shake hands with each individual.

Before or after eating, also expect to socialize over a cup of coffee – it is important you accept the coffee if offered as it is considered impolite not to do so (see *Coffee Ceremony* below). Ethiopians are relatively formal and believe table manners are a sign of respect.

Do not be surprised if no eating utensils are offered, as food is typically eaten by hand from a communal serving dish, although done so with decorum. For example, before the meal it is proper to wash your hands from a small earthenware or metal jug brought to the table by a family member. You are expected to extend your hands over the basin while water is poured over them.

Also, it is preferred to use the right hand for eating, as the left hand is reserved for toilet hygiene and considered unclean. However, this issue has decreased in importance due to contact with Westerners. It is customary for the guest to initiate eating, although hierarchy dictates that the eldest person is the first to take food from the communal plate.

It is also traditional for the host to serve guests tasty morsels in a process called "gursa," although this custom is often reserved for close friends and family. With the hands he or she places the morsel in the other person's mouth. Since this is done out of respect, it is proper to accept the offering.

Weddings & Family Events

Weddings are major social events. Following the ceremony in a local church or hotel, the wedding party will conduct a drive-by procession followed by a reception and photo opportunity. Wedding gifts are not expected. (see *Family & Kinship).* Children commonly accompany parents during social events and will be seen in restaurants late in the evening. Likewise, children's birthday parties are considered main events.

Likewise, you can anticipate your host to encourage you to take more food, as providing an abundance of food is a sign of hospitality. During meals, participation in conversation is considered polite, while complete attention to the meal is thought to be impolite. It is also appropriate for a guest to stop eating when the host has finished. The meal ends with another ritual hand-washing and coffee ceremony.

Giving Appropriate Gifts

- When invited to an Ethiopian's home, it is appropriate to bring an inexpensive gift such as pastries, fruit, or flowers to the host.
- Gifts are also given to honor significant events or religious occasions.
- Since Ethiopia is a poor country, an expensive gift is not appropriate and may be viewed negatively.
  - For example, it may be seen as an attempt to gain influence, or may embarrass the recipient who would be unable to match in kind.
- A small gift for the children is always appreciated. It is best to avoid giving alcohol, particularly to conservative Muslims whose religious practices forbid its consumption.
- It is best to present the gift with both hands or only the right one, as the left hand is considered unsanitary (see *Sustenance & Health)*.

Coffee Ceremony

When invited to an Ethiopian home, expect to participate in their traditional coffee ceremony, and be prepared to drink at least three cups of coffee, always complimenting the flavor of the first cup. Coffee is a national drink, and its brewing has developed into a ritual which rivals the traditional Japanese tea ceremony for its grace. The ceremony is traditionally recreated every morning in all its many features throughout many households.

Commercial coffee houses, called *buna beit*, will perform the ceremony for each table of customers.

Participants in the ceremony typically sit on a grass or flower-strewn floor with an aroma of incense burning in the background. Typically, a woman or young boy enters the room to wash and roast the beans over charcoal. The roasted beans are then hand-ground and added to boiling water. Sugar is placed within small cups without handles and the water/coffee mixture is added. Participants typically sip the coffee slowly, inhaling the aroma of the coffee before sipping.

The first round (called "awol") is served, starting with the eldest person, and when the first cup is finished, the "jebena" (coffee pot) is again refilled with water for the second round (called "tona"), followed by a third round (called "baraka"). The second and third rounds are noticeably weaker than the first, as the same ground beans are used throughout the brewing process. In Ethiopia, coffee is often served with popcorn and is sometimes served with a sprig of *'tena adam*,' a strong-tasting aromatic herb. In some regions, coffee may be spiced with ginger, cinnamon, or cloves or even salted.

Khat Chewing

After meals men from some ethnic communities are known to chew khat (cot), a mild stimulant from a leafy green tree branch grown in the Ethiopian Highlands and elsewhere in the region. Ethiopia is known to grow the best khat in the region. While chewing khat is not illegal in Ethiopia, its sustained use can lead to addiction. Scientists compare its stimulation to that of several cups of strong coffee. Likewise, this substance has had a profound influence on Ethiopian society, as researchers estimate that some families spend a great portion of their income on the plant.

Religion in Ethiopia

While the world's three great religions – Christianity, Islam, and Judaism – are represented in Ethiopia, Christianity was long considered the State religion, (although it no longer is constitutionally). Despite dominance of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) in the last century, currently Orthodox Christianity and Islam each constitute perhaps 40% to 45% of the Ethiopian population.

Orthodox Christianity was introduced to the ancient Axumites from the Byzantine world in about 340 AD, thereafter spreading southward into the highlands region. **Islam** was introduced a few centuries later by merchants from Arabia to peoples along the Red Sea coast, spreading thereafter into the center and south.

Orthodox Christianity was the official religion of the imperial court and of the establishment until Haile Selassie was deposed during the 1974 revolution. Thereafter all religions were made equal, and the Orthodox Church was disestablished. While religious freedom was the policy, tensions between the two major faiths were never completely resolved, and lingering disputes exist to the present day in some areas of the country. For the most part, though, Ethiopians treasure a tradition of coexistence among religious communities. In most regions Orthodox Christians and Muslims generally respect each other's religious observances and tend to tolerate intermarriage and religious conversion in certain areas (Photo courtesy of Pro Quest 2009).

As in Western cultures Ethiopians tend to be monotheistic, which means worship of "One God." In general, Christians tend to live in the populous highland economic centers, while

Muslims and adherents of traditional African religions typically inhabit the more isolated lowland regions. However, some Muslims who are important in the business community comprise a considerable population in highland Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa.

Orthodox Christianity is most strongly represented among the predominant Tigray and Amhara ethnic groups; while Islam exists among the Somali, Afar, and Oromo (particularly those in the southern highlands). Gurage, and Sidama in the southwest contain a mixture of both faiths. In many regions, the two communities coexist, particularly in urban areas.

Distinguishing Christians & Muslims

Besides living near their respective churches or mosques, each group has its own strict and elaborate dietary laws that require separate markets, restaurants, and hotels. Apart from prayer times whereby Ethiopian Muslims typically wear Arab-inspired ceremonial dress, there is little physical distinction between Ethiopian Muslims and Christians. (see *Political and Social Relations* for ethnic characteristics*).* In addition, Orthodox Christian women wear a white shawl (*netella*) in church, while Muslim women wear a head-covering or *hijab* (See *Aesthetics & Recreation*).

Protestants number perhaps 11 million, constituting up to 10 percent of the population. There are substantial Protestant communities in western Oromiya, southern parts of the country, and increasingly in urban areas. Smaller groups include Roman Catholics (about 500,000), Eastern Rite Catholics, and Ethiopian Jews. Traditional or tribal religions are practiced by about 12% of the population, particularly in the South. A large number of foreign missionaries are active, especially in the south and southwest borderlands. Although missionary activity through the centuries has produced some converts to European denominations, the vast majority of Ethiopians remain Orthodox Christian or Muslim.

Ethiopian Orthodox Church

EOC Origins

The EOC evolved from the Coptic Orthodox Church, the official name of the largest Christian church in Egypt. It is not to be confused with its Catholic counterpart, the Ethiopian Catholic Church, although EOC doctrine is similar to Catholicism in its emphasis on celebrating Mass and reverencing icons and patron saints. (Photo © Steve Evans, courtesy of Wikimedia).

Christian Doctrinal Dispute

In AD 451 the Council of Chalcedon, the last council recognized by the Anglican Communion, rejected the Monophysite doctrine that espoused the belief that Jesus Christ has only one divine "nature" rather than two, divine and human, as asserted at the Council. The Chalcedonian Creed considers Jesus the second person of the Holy Trinity having "full humanity and full divinity," a belief promoted by today's Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches. Likewise, most Protestants consider the concept of the Trinity as defined by the Council to be orthodox doctrine.

Conversely, the EOC promoted the Oriental Orthodox or Monophysite belief in the one single unified Nature of Christ. (The EOC is often referred to as the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahedo* Church with the Tewahedo referring to the Monophysite doctrine). While the EOC holds a different viewpoint regarding the Nature of Christ, it does strongly believe in the Trinity – God is one in three and three in one: the divine Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Despite the nature of this long-term controversy, in modern times, Oriental Orthodox churches are generally acknowledged by Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant Christendom.

Judaic Influence

With the spread of Islam in Africa, Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity became somewhat detached from Christian influence, resulting in its resemblance to a Judaic form of Christianity with some differences. While many Ethiopian Orthodox Christians consider themselves biblical "chosen people" and descendents of Solomon and Sheba, they haven't fully embraced Judaic doctrine, particularly as interpreted in western tradition. For example, Orthodox Christians believe Jesus was the Messiah while Jews do not. However, like Jews, Orthodox Christians adhere to Old Testament guidance regarding kosher diet, circumcision, and Saturday Sabbath. The EOC is, likewise, the only established church that has rejected the doctrine of Pauline Christianity that proclaims the Old Testament lost its regulatory influence after the coming of Jesus.

Baptism

Baptism is considered one of seven Christian Orthodox Holy Sacraments – along with Holy Communion, confirmation, penance, the Unction of the Sick (healing ritual), Holy Orders (ordainment), and matrimony. It represents Christian rebirth or purification of a child, occurring 40 days following the birth of a boy and 80 for a girl. The child is anointed with oil 30 times over the entire body, then dipped in water 3 times while the Holy Trinity is summoned.

Worship Practices

Closely reflecting those of the earliest Christian Church, Ethiopian orthodox practices are rigorous and systematic. Members are known to fast 165 days of the year (Clergy 250 days-per-year), including every Wednesday, Friday, and throughout Lent and Easter. They often omit breakfast and eat only vegetables throughout the fast day. Ethiopian Christians are expected to attend church services both on Sundays and holy days, normally commencing at 6 am and continuing for up to 3 hours. Easter services, for example, start the Friday prior and end on midnight Easter Sunday. Attendees usually stand

for the duration of the worship service. Visitors are welcome to attend EOC services providing they remove their shoes, cover their arms and legs, and show respect for Church traditions.

Fasting

The practice of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity involves, among other features, a complex system of fasting.

- Because Ethiopian Orthodox Christians value meat and animal products, fasting by their definition involves total abstention from animal products, while all non-animal foods may be eaten during their fasting days that include every Wednesday and Friday, Lent, and many others.
- The Islamic faith also has its own unique system of fasting that is part of the Five Pillars of Islam.

Islamic Faith

While the Orthodox Church has dominated political, cultural, and social life of the Ethiopian population, Islam and Islamic institutions such as schools and mosques historically were tolerated by the imperial system. Ethiopian Muslims are predominantly Sunni and are distinguished by their belief that the leader (*Caliph*) of the Muslim community (*Ummah*) should be elected. Shi'a, which do not reside in Ethiopia, believe he should be a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad.

Islam has played a relatively minor role in Ethiopian history and culture, due in large part to the dominance of Christian imperial rule. Even today, Christian highlanders continue to settle and extend their cultural and political influence into Muslim territories.

Origins of Islam

Islam dates to the 6th century when the Prophet Muhammad was born in Mecca, in the country currently known as Saudi Arabia. Muslims believe that while Muhammad was meditating

in the desert, the Archangel Gabriel visited him over a 23-year period, revealing the Qur'an, or the "Holy Book," to guide their everyday life. The Qur'an represents a core belief that helps shape Muslims' lifelong values (Photo Courtesy Pro Quest, 2010).

Meaning of Islam

Islam is more than a religion to its adherents – it is a way of life. The term Islam literally means submission, and a Muslim is "a person who submits to God." Islamic doctrine can be summed up in its five pillars which serve as the foundation of Muslim life.

Five Pillars of Islam

- **Shahada (Faith):** "There is no god but God and Mohammad is His Messenger."
- **Salat (Prayer):** Pray five times a day.
- **Zakat (Charity):** Donate alms to the poor.
- **Sawm (Fasting):** Abstain from food, drink, and sexual relations from sunrise to sunset during holy month of Ramadan (Discussed below).
- **Hajj (Pilgrimage):** Travel to Mecca, Saudi Arabia if possible at least once.

Basics of Islam

Prayer: Muslims pray every day and several times throughout the day. They wash their hands, elbows, face, ears, feet, and wet their hair to cleanse the body prior to prayer.

Mosque: Islamic house of worship.

Holy cities: The Grand Mosque in Mecca, Saudi Arabia is the site of the Hajj or pilgrimage. Medina, Saudi Arabia is revered as the burial site of Muhammad. Muslims also consider Jerusalem, the site of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, holy because they believe Muhammad made his nighttime ride to heaven from there.

Day of Worship: Friday is the holy day of worship for Muslims.

Inshallah: Arabic saying, which means all things occur according to God's Will, particularly future events.

Shared Perspectives

Many Islamic tenets parallel the other two major world religions, Judaism and Christianity. In fact, Muslims consider Christians and Jews "people of the Book," referring to biblical scriptures, who share their monotheistic belief in one God.

Abraham: All three faiths trace their lineage back to Abraham, known as *Ibrahim* in Islam. However, Christians and Jews trace their line back to Abraham, his wife Sarah, and their son Isaac; while Muslims believe that they descend from Abraham and his Egyptian concubine, Hagar, and their son Ismail. According to Muslim tradition, Abraham, under pressure from Sarah, took Hagar and Ismail to Mecca and left them there to fend for themselves, thus establishing the Arabian Peninsula.

Scriptures: Much of the content of the *Qur'an* is similar to teachings and stories found in the Christian Bible's Old and New Testaments, and Muslims view Islam as a completion of previous revelations to Jewish and Christian prophets. However, Muslims believe that man distorted the Holy Bible and that Muhammad received God's true revelation (Photo: Mosque in Harar, courtesy of Wikimedia).

Jesus: The three religions differ significantly over role of Jesus. While Christians consider Him the divine Messiah who fulfills the Jewish Scriptures, Jews are still waiting for the Messiah to come. Muslims recognize Jesus as having been a prophet, but do not acknowledge the Christian view of His divine nature. Muslims do not believe in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and regard both Jesus and Muhammad (along with the other prophets) as mortal men.

Concept of Jihad

The concept of Jihad, or striving, is a fundamental element within Islam. Traditionally, it applies mainly to an inner striving to elevate the principled, higher, more civilized and moral elements of one's own being and the pursuit of God's will, to

lead a virtuous life. Don't confuse this traditional, common concept of "internal" Jihad with the publicized violence often referred to as Jihad. Most Muslims are strongly opposed to terrorism and believe it is contrary to Islamic beliefs.

Religious Myths in Ethiopia

- As with the Roman Catholic Church in Europe, the Ethiopian Orthodox church had a period of "Dark Ages," or isolation, which stimulated development of various myths that were added to her doctrinal teachings. Many of these legends became traditions that are still practiced in the church.
- One of these teachings is based on the belief that the original Ark of the Covenant (which Moses built in the Wilderness) is secretly housed in a monastery in the northern city of Axum. As the legend goes, only a few monks actually have seen the ark. Ethiopians strongly believe in the ark's existence, and therefore, each local church has its own ark replica that is hidden from public view by a heavy curtain. Each year village peoples conduct elaborate ceremonies reenacting the return of the ark to Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem.

Judaism in Ethiopia

A distinct form of Judaism, historically known as Beta Israel ("House of Israel" in Hebrew), has existed in Ethiopia for many centuries, although its practices vary from traditional Judaism. Non-Jewish Ethiopians refer to the Jewish community as Falasha (meaning "Exiles" or "Strangers"), a term the Jews consider derogatory. When in the late 20th-century, civil war and famine threatened the Ethiopian Jewish population, the Israeli government launched rescue efforts known as Operations Moses (1984) and Solomon (1991) to

accommodate Jewish migration to Israel. As a result a majority of the Beta Israel community, comprising more than 120,000 people, moved to Israel under its Law of Return, which has given Jews and their families the right to settle in Israel and obtain citizenship. The immigration is ongoing, although a few Jews have elected to remain in Ethiopia (Photo Courtesy of Wikimedia).

Tribal Religions

Some ethnic groups believe in the traditional power of natural forces over human existence. Known as animism, this religious form is rarely based on sacred doctrine but rather verbal traditions passed through several generations.

The traditional religious practices of Ethiopia's largest ethnic group, the Oromo, have survived alongside both Christianity and Islam. The Oromo believe in one God known as *Waaqayoo,* often called Waaqa, who is creator of the universe. He is pure, all-powerful, and is intolerant of injustice, crime, sin, and falsehood. Waaqayoo is believed to deliver His blessings to Earth in the form of rain.

Embodied in this faith is the conviction that ancestor spirits have great power and exert potent influence on the daily lives of family members. Oromo believe that nature teams with these spirits in rushing rivers and majestic trees. For example, the Sof Omar caverns in the Oromo Regional State have particular significance in traditional Oromo religion. Some of these ancient cults produced an unusually impressive type of art and architecture seen in ancient temples and palaces, and the monolithic obelisk of Axum.

Likewise, the lowland Karo people believe natural and inanimate objects house spirits with supernatural powers over human

beings, while the lowland Omo River people use their spiritual sense of the cosmos to guide their agricultural lifestyle. They look to the sun to predict the seasons and the stars to indicate flooding.

Rastafarianism

An unusual, 20th-century development on the Ethiopian cultural scene was Rastafarianism. In the late 1920s, a Jamaican Back-to-Africa movement leader, Marcus Garvey, foretold the arrival of an African leader who would shepherd his people back to their homeland and the ultimate Promised Land. The movement derives its name from the title and name of its savior, Ras Tafari, prior to his coronation and adoption of the imperial name, Emperor Haile Selassie. Emperor Selassie granted land in the Rift Valley to the Rastafarian community, where many adherents have now staked their claim in the Promised Land. Many adherents also live in Addis Ababa (Photos on this page courtesy of Wikimedia).

Although Haile Salassie was dishonorably buried following his Derg assassination, his followers disinterred his remains in 2000 and respectfully reinterred them at Addis Ababa's Trinity Cathedral. Despite the fact that many members of Ethiopia's Rastafarian community witnessed his reburial, Ras Tafari will forever be their *Living* God. It is therefore wise to avoid mentioning Haile Selassie's death to a Rastafarian or discussing him in the past tense.

Bob Marley and Reggae: In the US revered performer of reggae music, Bob Marley, is credited for helping spread both Jamaican music and the Rastafarian movement to a worldwide audience in the 1960s and 70s. He was the lead singer, song writer, and guitarist for the reggae band, The Wailers.

Marley's best known hits include "I Shot the Sheriff," "No Woman, No Cry," "Could You Be Loved," "Buffalo Soldier,"

“Stir It Up,” "Jamming,” “Redemption Song,” “One Love," and, together with The Wailers, “The Three Little Birds.” The compilation album, *Legend* (1984), released 3 years after his death, is reggae's best-selling album.

Religious Holidays

The EOC doesn’t follow the western Gregorian calendar and adheres to the older Julian calendar (See *Time & Space*). Therefore, their holidays fall on days Westerners aren’t accustomed to. For example, the Ethiopian New Year is 11 September with many other religious holidays, festivals, processions and celebrations commemorated throughout the year. The primary Christian holidays include Timkat or Feast of Epiphany (19 January that celebrates the baptism of Jesus), Fasika or Easter (date variable in March or April to celebrate Jesus’ resurrection), Meskal (27 September commemorates the finding of the true cross on which Jesus was crucified), Ganna or Christmas (7 January to honor Jesus’ birth) and various holidays for saints and angels. Celebrations usually extend for 3 days and consist of processions, all-night prayer devotions, feasts, and gift exchanges.

Ramadan

The object of Ramadan is to subdue life’s passions and draw oneself nearer to God by purifying the body. It is a time for inner reflection, self-control, and reading the Qur’an. Because the Islamic calendar is based on the moon’s appearance, Ramadan occurs at a different date each year on the Western calendar. When it occurs during the summer, keeping Ramadan requires great focus and endurance because people will not hydrate for up to 18 hours, despite extreme climatic conditions. It is common for Muslims to break their fast at sunset with a light meal followed by sunset prayer and then dinner.

Muslim celebrations: Muslims celebrate *Ramadan*, a month-long time for inner reflection, self-control, and God. It includes *Eid Id al-Adha* or Feast of the Sacrifice (also called *Arefa*) and *Arefald al-Fatar*, which is a 3-day feast at the end of Ramadan. Muslims also celebrate *Moulid* to commemorate the birth of the prophet Muhammad.

Common celebration: *Meskal,* which coincides with winter's end, was celebrated before the advent of Christianity and Islam and has been adapted by all faiths. Each religion or culture celebrates it in different ways, but some customs are similar. Urban people visit friends and relatives in the countryside, and on the eve of *Meskal*, each person places a tree branch vertically into a pile. The people dance around the pile, while a community elder lights the branches with fire. Christians tie a cross made of two branches to the top of the bonfire. The direction it falls is believed to forecast the coming year, as interpreted by a local elder or religious leader. Families and friends gather the next day to dine and continue to celebrate.

National Holidays

- September 11 Enkutatash (Ethiopian New Year)
- September 27 Meskal (Finding of True Cross)
- January 7 Gena (Christmas)
- January 19 Timkat (Epiphany)
- March 2 Battle of Adwa (First victory over Italians)
- Variable dates Faseka (Easter)
- April 6 Victory Day (Selassie's return to the throne)
- May 1 Labor Day
- May 28 National Holiday
- August 28 (date varies) Prophet Mohammad's birth
- Eid al Fitr marks end of Ramadan

4. FAMILY AND KINSHIP

Importance of Family

Across all tribal and ethnic boundaries, the family remains the single most important institution in Ethiopia. Extended families, which are two or more nuclear families to include parents and offspring plus their families and close friends, usually live near each other, sometimes all together in the same compound, often resulting in little individual privacy.

Family Organization

Ethiopia is a patriarchal society, which means the male head of family or tribal line leads the family network. The basic extended family structure is much larger than the typical Western nuclear unit, with the eldest male usually serving as decision-maker. Individuals achieve recognition or social standing through their extended family, and their collective actions determine family honor. Likewise, family needs are put before all other obligations, including business.

Authority: Elders are generally responsible for settling disputes within a clan or kin group. The father is seen as an authority figure, in whose absence, the eldest adult son leads the family network. Men are usually the primary source of income and control the family finances, while women are responsible for domestic life and have significantly more contact with the children.

Importance of age: Age is highly respected in Ethiopia, where traditionally, adult children are expected to care for their parents. In rural areas sons bring their brides to live with or near their father's family. With the advent of urban living, however, this trend is changing, with children often living apart from their families, making it difficult to support them.

Urbanites have a responsibility to send money to their rural families and often try their best to relocate their family unit to the cities, although maintaining land and a home in the rural community remains a priority.

Descent is traced through both the maternal and paternal lineages, although the male line is more dominant than the female, and it is, therefore, customary for a child to take the father's first name as his or her last or second name. In rural areas, villages are often composed of kin groups from the male line that offer support during difficult times.

Housing

A single compound sometimes houses up to three or more generations in the male line, and in rural areas, a father typically provides a separate house in the compound, along with a plot of land, for each son.

Traditionally, Ethiopia's ethnic groups have built homes in their own distinctive style. For example the Somalis, who are nomadic herders, use stick frames, canvas, plastic, or animal hides to build homes that are easily dismantled and transportable (pictured above).

Harari homes (pictured right) are famous for their flat wood-beamed roofs and multi-leveled sitting rooms where family members and their guests rest and socialize.

The **Dorze**, who are accomplished weavers among the Omo River people, are known for their woven houses that resemble beehives (pictured left).

In cities, a typical family shares one or two rooms separated from other families by thin walls, while in rural areas homes typically consist of a single, multi-functional room used for sleeping, socializing, and

cooking. Many of them also double as businesses, either as shops selling small goods or as restaurants. In the past, animals typically were kept indoors, and this practice continues among some rural communities.

Marriage

The legal marriage age for women in Ethiopia is 18, although the average age for a first marriage is 16, with some women having married as early as ages 12 or 14. Traditional marriage customs, found primarily in rural areas, vary by ethnic group, although many customs are trans-ethnic. Traditional marriage represents the union of two families, and individual choice of spouse is limited. Arranged marriages are the norm, although this practice is becoming less common, especially in urban areas where Western-style dating and choosing one's spouse are more popular practices.

Likewise, both Ethiopian men and women commonly marry foreigners, especially Eastern Mediterranean people who have been settling in the region for centuries. Also, romance and marriage to Westerners is increasingly widespread.

Polygyny: In Muslim communities, polygyny – the practice of a husband having more than one wife – was once a common practice that is becoming less popular primarily due to the cost of sustaining multiple households. The ceremonial aspects of marriage in Ethiopia are complex. The presentation of a dowry from the male's family to the female's family is common. The dowry – which varies depending on the family's wealth – may include livestock, money, or other valuables.

Proposal & ceremony: The proposal usually involves the groom's elders requesting the marriage from the bride's family. The elders are traditionally the individuals who decide when and where the ceremony takes place. Weddings

can be costly, as they're typically elaborate family events lasting 2 or 3 days. Both families prepare food and drink for the ceremony by brewing honey wine (*tej*) and local beer (*tella*) and cooking large quantities of food, especially meat dishes.

Christians often wed in Orthodox churches, and a variety of wedding types exist. For example, *takelil* involves the bride and groom participating in a special ceremony whereby they agree never to divorce, although this type of commitment has become rare in recent years. Westernized wedding attire is seen in urban areas.

Divorce

Like many other societies, marriage is not always a lifelong proposition in Ethiopia. Divorce and extramarital relations commonly occur in both rural and urban communities. Research indicates that early marriage and childlessness are the two primary influential factors.

Social Issues

Premarital rape: Among certain ethnic groups, particularly in the south, a man may seek to short-cut pomp and ceremony – or if the marriage offer is rejected – he may opt to kidnap and rape his intended bride, rendering her as an unacceptable bride to other men. By ruining her prospects for a preferable marriage, both to her and her family, the man would likely gain her hand in marriage. This practice has seen some reduction owing to education and community leadership.

Pregnancy: While teenage marriage is considered problematic in many modern societies, it is commonplace and acceptable in Ethiopia. Likewise, since poverty is widespread and medical services are severely lacking, early pregnancy is considered a medical problem in many cases. Early pregnancy and lack of adequate medical care can result in many preventable maternal and infant deaths, as well as birth complications.

Passage Rites

Birth: When a baby is born to a Christian family, the mother takes it to her family's home. A baby boy will remain there with his mother for 40 days and a baby girl for 80 days. Thereafter, the baby is baptized in a ceremony witnessed by the whole family to include godparents.

Death is considered an integral part of daily life since famine, AIDS, and malaria take many lives. Three days of mourning for the dead is the norm. Christians bury their dead on the church grounds, and Muslims do the same at the mosque. Upon learning of the death of a loved one, men and women wail and tear at their hair to express their grief. Muslims customarily bury their dead within 24 hours, and Christians within 24-48 hours. (see *Religion & Spirituality).*

Inheritance Laws

Inheritance laws follow a fairly regular pattern. Before an elder passes away he or she orally states his or her will or wishes for the disposal of possessions. Children and living spouses are typically the inheritors, but if an individual dies without a will, property is allotted by the court system to the closest living relatives and friends.

While individuals do not officially own land, its usage is inheritable. Men are more privileged than women and usually receive the most prized properties and equipment, while women tend to inherit items associated with the domestic sphere. We'll discuss gender roles further in *Sex & Gender*.

Talking about Family (see *Language and Communication*).

Building Rapport through Family Values

Sharing in the Ethiopian reverence of family is a great way to gain respect and acceptance. Expressing reverence for the family unit (especially elders) and love for your own family will help elevate your status, and bring you closer to your local counterparts.

5. SEX AND GENDER

Display of Affection

Ethiopians view sexual relations as personal and private. Public display-of-affection of a sexual nature is considered unacceptable even in family circles. However, controlled affection in the form of a greeting is a common practice (see *Time & Space*). Of note, homosexuality traditionally has been unaccepted, even unlawful, although gaining some acceptance in urban areas.

Gender Roles

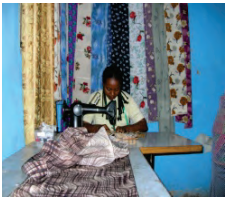
Gender roles in Ethiopia are generally distinct and rigid as compared to many western cultures. Men are viewed as the "first" and women the "second" gender, although Ethiopians are known to be hard working, honest, and trustworthy regardless of their sexual affiliation. Women have usually performed traditional roles within the home to include household upkeep and childcare.

Women

As in other traditional societies, a woman's worth is measured in terms of her role as a mother and wife. Not only have Ethiopian women been responsible for most child-rearing and household responsibilities, they have also played an important part in the rural agricultural economy. Their duties and privileges are well-defined, and they often lead sheltered lives, although gender division in urban areas is less pronounced than in the countryside.

Rural Women: Over 85% of Ethiopian women reside in rural areas, where peasant families are engaged primarily in subsistence agriculture. Rural women are integrated into the local economy,

which is labor intensive and physically demanding for both them and their children. The 1974 revolution (see *History & Myth* section) did little to improve the lifestyles of rural women, as land reform failed to change their subordinate status that is deep-rooted in traditional values and beliefs. While improved economic conditions would notionally enhance their standard of living, real change would require a transformation of attitudes from both government and society.



Urban Women: Unlike rural women, there have been some changes for women in urban areas, where education, healthcare, and employment outside the home have become more available. Although a few women with higher education have found professional employment, most hold low-paying jobs. About 40% of employed women in urban areas work in the service sector – mainly in hotels, restaurants, and bars. Employment in production and related areas, such as textiles and food processing, accounts for 25% of the female work force, followed by sales, which accounts for about 11%.

Professional Workplace Relations

- Male and female co-workers are expected to respect each other's honor, particularly in Muslim communities.
- Men are expected to maintain professionalism and avoid the perception of sexual interest.
- Airmen should avoid any perceptions of unprofessional relations that would result in dishonor to both a woman and her entire family.

Gender Issues

While there have been only a few formal studies concerning women in Ethiopia, many outside observers have commented on the physical hardship that Ethiopian women experience throughout their lives. Such hardship involves excessive manual labor while maintaining the homestead, raising children, and cooking. Ethiopian women traditionally have

suffered socio-cultural and economic discrimination and have had fewer opportunities for personal growth, education, and employment than their male counterparts.

Inferior status: While women may have certain legal rights, their civil liberties tend to vary from one ethnic group to another. Despite legal reforms which expanded and enhanced a variety of rights for females, cultural traditions in both rural and urban areas continue to undermine substantial improvements in women's quality of life. During extended periods of conflict, many men died leaving female-headed households that have become some of the poorest and most marginalized in the country. Likewise, their patriarchal society tends to stress education for boys over girls. Traditionally, females are viewed as less competent than males and unworthy of an education.

Workplace: Gender issues are also common in the workplace where, for example, a woman may be of higher "rank" but expected to cater to guests as her gender role. Employment at a baseline level is fairly equivalent, although men tend to advance ahead of women. Women factory workers in Addis Ababa earn about a quarter of the wages men earn for the same type of work – a practice that exists despite a 1975 proclamation stipulating equal pay for equal work regardless of gender.

Likewise, since professional women also retain responsibility for the home and children, they oftentimes experience difficulty balancing their duties. Another concern is the high marriage rate among young women, especially given the country's extremely high fertility rate and overpopulation.

Female circumcision: The current Ethiopian government, for its part, has endorsed reform policy that would establish political, social, and economic equality for women. Changes to the civil code resulted in a reformed Family Law in 2000 which

addressed the current regime's interest in advancing women's positions in society, although women remain underrepresented in formal politics and at all levels of society. The government has also encouraged and promoted both governmental and nongovernmental outreach programs to curtail the prevalent practice of female genital cutting (FGC), which involves varying degrees of female circumcision – a procedure estimated to have been performed on 70-75% of Ethiopian women. Performed for cultural, religious, or other non-therapeutic reasons, the procedure typically results in injury and long-term health consequences.

According to Netsanet Asfaw, Ethiopia's first woman Minister for Information, many Ethiopian women have themselves long endorsed the FGC practice likely because it has traditionally carried various social and economic implications for women to include determining their worth for marriage. In Asfaw's opinion, only increased education would likely modify attitudes toward FGC and other harmful practices. Others would also argue that along with education is a need for improved healthcare in general to see improvements in women's health to include reduced FGC.

Reform Challenges

With a poor population that suffers from low literacy, the challenges in advancing women's opportunities and restraining violence against them are abundant. Following the 1974 revolution, women made some gains in economic and political areas. The Revolutionary Ethiopia Women's Association (REWA), whose membership reached over 5 million, took an active part in educating women. The enrollment of women in primary and secondary schools increased by about 32% over a 10-year period, although the rate of enrollment for urban women far exceeded that rural women.

6. LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

Language Families

There are 86 known indigenous languages in Ethiopia: 82 spoken and 4 extinct. The vast majority of these languages can be classified within three families of the Afro-Asiatic super family: Semitic, Cushitic, and Omotic.

Related to Hebrew and Arabic, the primary Semitic languages, are Amharic (or Amarigna in the local pronunciation), spoken predominantly in the central and northern regions, and Tigrinya (pronounced "ti – grin – ya"), spoken in the province of Tigray (Tigre) and Eritrea. A smaller Semitic language group known as Gurage is based in an area of land approximately 150 kilometers or 93 miles south/southwest of Addis Ababa and divided into at least three subgroups known as Northern, Eastern and Western Gurage.

Cushitic language forms are spoken by Oromo, Somali, and Afar people living in various highland and lowland regions. This language family takes its name from the Kingdom of Kush, centered about 2000 years ago on the banks of the Nile in Sudan. The Oromo refer to their language as "Afaan Oromo" or sometimes "Oromiffa," but not "Oromigna." The Semitic languages, such as Amharica, add the 'nga' ending, while the Cushitic do not.

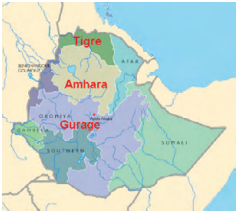
Found solely in Ethiopia, Omotic speakers live predominantly in the south between the lakes of southern Ethiopia's Great Rift

Valley and the Omo River. Omotic languages are closely related to the Cushitic and consist of two regional sub-families – Northern and Southern Omo. The Northern group consists of 11 languages, while the Southern embodies 5. The diversity of Omotic languages indicates Omo ancestors have been in place for many millennia.

Primary Languages

Amharic is the native language of perhaps 30% of the people and traditionally has been the national language used for primary school instruction, commerce, and government administration. It has been replaced in many areas by local languages such as Afaan Oromo, spoken by perhaps 40% of all Ethiopians, and Tigrinya which is spoken by about 80% Orthodox Christian and 20% Muslim (also spoken in neighboring Eritrea).

Amharic's primacy derives from the dominance of the Amhara people throughout Ethiopia's modern history. After the fall of the Derg regime in 1991, the new federal government granted all ethnic groups the right to develop their own native languages and to establish mother-tongue primacy in their education systems – this was a notable change in previous policy. Therefore, most residents usually speak Amharic or Afaan Oromo in addition to their native language, for example Afar. Rural people commonly speak only their own particular dialect because knowledge of the Amharic national language is acquired through education. Many educated citizens speak several indigenous languages.



Secondary Languages

More than 80 other languages (of which there are more than 200 dialects) are spoken in Ethiopia. English is the most widely spoken foreign language and is taught in all secondary schools. French is heard occasionally in parts of the country near Djibouti, formerly French Somaliland, with Italian sometimes heard among neighboring Eritreans although not spoken in Ethiopia.

Communication Style

As a general rule, Ethiopians are humble, respectful, and speak in soft tones. They are often reluctant to show emotion – a characteristic that is deeply ingrained in their culture. They appreciate modest demeanor, consider boasting rude, and loud voices overly aggressive. They treat any hint of superiority with contempt. Ethiopians pride themselves on their eloquent speaking style to include using metaphor, allusion, and wit. They often use exaggerated phrases to emphasize a point.

Normally, they tend to be non-confrontational and offer what they believe to be the expected response rather than say something that might embarrass another person. Honor and dignity are crucial to Ethiopians, and they will go out of their way to keep from doing anything that could bring shame to another person. Therefore, it is important to treat your Ethiopian colleagues with utmost professionalism and never behave in a manner that could cause embarrassment or loss of dignity or respect.

Discussion Topics

Sports, music, culture, sightseeing and travel are preferred topics to discuss. It is best to avoid discussing potentially sensitive topics such as politics, religion, family, ethnicity, status, and sex-related themes. It is difficult to gauge in advance people's views about these subjects.

Visiting

In Ethiopia, visiting serves an important social function. Rural dwellers visit friends and family members frequently and without advance notice, while urban residents prefer to know ahead of time, particularly from outsiders. In new social environments, Ethiopians often appear formal and reserved at first. They avoid disclosing themselves to strangers and, therefore, limit responses to short answers.

Friendship

It is important for Airmen to understand that forging relationships is a complex and refined process, and it may require several visits to gain mutual understanding and trust.

Ethiopians value friendships and traditionally honor guests with warm hospitality. In most cases, men and women converse freely and enjoy a relaxed visit. In some Muslim homes, men and women do not socialize together.

Topics to Avoid

- Abruptly announcing bad news.
- Sensitive political discussions, such as relationship with Eritrea.
  - Your comments could possibly be viewed as critical and derogatory.
  - As a general rule, be a good listener and withhold your opinions.
- Discussing religion, family, ethnicity and sex.
  - Ethiopians are passionate about their faith.
  - Muslims in particular are not receptive to attempts to convert them to another belief.
  - It is best to avoid initiating discussions about family matters.
  - Ethiopians are not usually comfortable talking about private or personal matters outside of their family circle.
  - It is inappropriate for a male to inquire about Muslim female family members.
  - Once they get to know you well, the local people will likely inquire in their native phrases “How are you (Tena-Yestelegn or Endmenot)?” and “How is your family” as part of their daily greetings.
  - It is best not to directly ask to which ethnic group an Ethiopian belongs, although if it would be appropriate for you to ask if the person was born in the associated area with their language.
  - Because status is hierarchal, there are distinctions between classes and ethnic groups in some regions, although this practice has declined in importance.

Common Gestures

- Ethiopians keep a reasonable distance during conversation, particularly with strangers.
- It is considered respectful to stand when elders enter a room and to greet them first by bowing your head when you enter the room.
- If serving food or drink elders are served first.
- Pointing with the finger or foot is inappropriate – use the entire hand.
- It is impolite to stare or maintain prolonged eye contact.
- Keeping your hands by your side rather than in your pockets while conversing is considered polite.
- Trilling the tongue expresses excitement or happiness.
- Slow head nods indicate reflection or sorrow while quick nods show agreement.
- Walking between people who are conversing is considered rude behavior.

Greetings

Greetings are courteous and warm in Ethiopia. The most common form of greeting is a handshake, with both hands used when shaking hands with highly-respected people. New acquaintances shake hands gently with one or both hands.

Following the handshake, Muslims usually place their right hand over their heart to express sincerity. Muslims also shake hands to solidify a deal. After a close personal relationship has been established, relatives and friends may kiss several times on the cheeks. Kissing and hugging are part of the normal greetings and is not, in any way, an expression of sexual affection. It is common to see women kissing women, women kissing men, and men kissing men on the check in public. They rarely hug and kiss a person whom they do not know.

Across genders, men should wait to see if a woman extends her hand. There is generally little touching between the sexes; however, if a foreign businesswoman extends her hand, a cosmopolitan Ethiopian may accept it to avoid offending her.

Greetings should never be rushed. Once you establish a good relationship with your Ethiopian counterpart, it is customary to ask about his health and to spend a few minutes in "small talk," inquiring about the person's family, health, job, etc.

Age is a factor in social behavior, and the elderly are treated with the utmost respect. When an elderly person or guest enters a room, it is customary to stand until that person is seated and bow by lowering the head as a way of showing deference for one senior in position.

Phrases vary among ethnic groups, but some form of "How are you?" is typical. For example in Amharic, friends and peers say *Indemin nih?* to a male or *Indemin nish?* to a female. Older or respected people are greeted with *Indemin nawot?* A more formal Amharic greeting is *Tena Yistilin* (May God give you health). In Afaan Oromo, one greets members of either sex with *Akam jirta?* The Tigrinya form is *Kameleha?* for a man, or *Kamelehee?* for a woman. The elderly greet grandchildren by kissing them on the forehead; who respond by returning kisses on the elderly's knees.

Greeting etiquette: People are addressed by title (Mr., Mrs., Miss, Doctor, etc.) followed by their given or first name. They typically use title and first name rather than surnames. For example, Captain Daouda Camara would be properly addresses as "Captain Daouda." In fact, second names are not family names but refer to the father's first name and used to distinguish one person from another. For example, Captain Daouda's child named Dawit would be Dawit Daouda, but always referred to as Dawit. Women do not take their husband's second name since there is no family name. Therefore, a man, his wife, and their children will all have different second names. Parents can be greeted by the name

of their first child (e.g., “How are you, Sheba's father?” or “Hello, Solomon's mother”). Once a close relationship is established, it is common to address colleagues using more informal language to include addressing each other on a first-name basis. As a guest in Ethiopia, it is appropriate for you to wait for your host to initiate informal conversation.

Behavior to Avoid

- Bewilderment when treated strangely – some Ethiopians may view and treat foreigners as objects rather than humans beings.
- Driving too fast – pedestrians do not abide by Western road etiquette. Stray animals are abundant.
- Arguing with the local people – most will assume you know little if anything about their country and will consider it their duty to inform you. Listen politely.
- Profanity is considered obscene and extremely offensive – even more-so than in the US.
- It is impolite to lick your fingers while eating.
- Frequenting public restrooms – many tend to be unsanitary.
- Touching walls, shrines, or artifacts in any mosques, temples, or churches.
- Showing bottom of your shoes, particularly to Muslims – soles are considered unclean and should be hidden.
- Asking for coffee when tea is served, and vice-versa.
- Using offensive American slang – most Ethiopians are familiar with its meaning and take offense.
- Making the two-finger victory sign (a sign of a political opposition group) or the “A-OK” sign – it may be offensive to some local people.

Hiring An Interpreter

Be cautious when hiring an interpreter, as people tend to remain loyal to their own ethnic group or clan. Therefore, it is best to hire someone who represents the dominant ethnic group and language in that particular location.

Criticism and Humiliation

- Concept of constructive criticism doesn't exist in parts of Ethiopia.
- You should avoid giving public criticism – if you need to approach an issue critically, it is best to avoid assigning blame to a particular person.
- Individual criticism in the presence of a person's peers could result in a loss of face – one of the highest values to Ethiopians.
  - It is best to privately discuss an issue with the individual.
- In a group, never single out an individual who may be at blame. When discussing a problem, never identify names and avoid making eye contact with the person at fault.
  - An indirect approach is preferred to confrontational language. Never say something like "This is wrong." Instead, use hedge phrases like "I think" and "perhaps" – for example, "Perhaps this approach would prove more effective."
  - Make comments such as "as you know" to promote confidence in your Ethiopian counterpart, even if he may not know. It's effective to say "We find it useful to …" rather than "you didn't respond correctly."
  - It is best to frame your comments as a friendly conversation, stressing that you aim to teach and mentor by offering constructive improvements rather than assign blame or dictate your own agenda.
  - If someone has an impractical idea, you could say, "This is a logical approach, although we previously tried to implement it with little success." Referring to a "past" failure indirectly expresses your desire to avoid reoccurrence.

Useful Translations

ENGLISH	AMHARIC	AFAAN OROMO
Do you speak English?	Englizegna menager yechelalu?	Affaan Engilifaa ni dubataa?
Please/thank you	Ebakoten/amesegenalhu	Maaloo/Galattomi
How long?	Mene yahel yereqal?	Amam turaa?
How much?	Sente yawetal?	Meqa dha?
How many?	Sente?	Meqa dha?
Yes/No	Awo/Aye	Eeyyee/Lakii
How/What	Endet/Mene	Akamiti/Maal
When/Why	Meche/Lemen	IYoom/Maalif
Where	Yet	Esati
Which/Who	Yetu/Ma	Esakami/Enyu
What is your name?	Semo manew?	Maqaan kee enyu?
My name is…	Yene seme (name) new	Maqaan koo (name) dha
We are Americans	Americanoch nene	Nuti Americani dha
Foreigners	Yewycghe ager swoch nene	Halagaa
Food/Time	Megeb/Gize	Midhaan/Yeroo
Do you need?	Yefelegalu?	Nibarbaadaa?
Hello	Erdata	Qarqaarsa
Calm down	Aaraam sha Teregaga	Aaraam baasheed
Help me	Zamaa sara marasta Erdagn	Kumak am ko
Good Morning	Endemen aderu	Akam bulte
Good Evening	Endet ameshu	Akam olte
Good Night	Dehana ederu	Nagaan buli
Get me a . . .	. . . Yamtulegne	Naakeni
Do you have ..	. . . Alote	Qabdaa
One at a time	Ande beande	Tokko tokkon

Language Training Resources

Please view the Air Force Culture and Language Center website at http://culture.af.mil/resources/index.aspx for language training resources.

7. LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE

Literacy

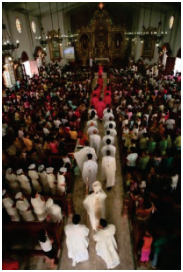
Total population age 15 and over that can read and write: near 49%

- Male: average 57%
- Female: average 41%
  (2015 estimates)

Traditional Education

Historically, education was private, stressing religion as its central theme, with the Orthodox Coptic Church maintaining its dominance. The needs of the soul were stressed over those of the human body, with emphasis on the pursuit of modesty, humility, and thoroughness. Nobles prided themselves on being patrons of education, the arts, and literature – elite parents hired resident scholars to teach their children and generously contributed to church-sponsored schools.

Both Christian Orthodox and Muslim houses of worship remain involved in pre-primary religious education. In Orthodox churches children learn writing and reading skills before entering public, government-run schools. Of note, Ethiopia has more than a quarter million trained priests educated within this traditional system, with more than 20,000 churches and monasteries providing traditional education. Missionary schools, which charge fees and provide religious and secular government-mandated education, are generally considered superior to government schools.



Separate Religion and State

The Ethiopian government interprets the constitutional provision for separation of religion and state to mean no religious instruction permitted in secular schools, whether public or private, although religious clubs are allowed. Likewise, various clerical schools are allowed to teach religion as a course of study, with people

generally granted freedom to worship in their respective churches, mosques, and synagogues.

Italian Influence

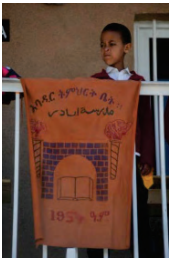
The Ethiopian educational system suffered dramatically under the 6-year Italian rule (see *History & Myth)*, with thousands of educated Ethiopians killed and survivors exiled to England, France, and the US. Before the Italian invasion, Ethiopia had over 4,000 students in schools, while afterwards the number dropped to 1,400. Italians manipulated Ethiopian loyalty through illiteracy, creating a dual-system of education whereby European children received sound academic training, while Ethiopian children were educated for servitude – their inferior education stifled their ability to challenge Italian authority.

Missionary schools had to comply with Italian educational regulations and were influenced to further segregate the Ethiopian school system. Ethiopian schools were limited to teaching in Ge'ez (the liturgical language of the Orthodox church), Tigrinya, and Amharic, where religion rather than science was stressed. Italian scholars had learned from the mistakes of ancient Rome where native British chiefs were allowed to receive a good education. They, therefore, influenced Italian leadership to limit Ethiopian education to elementary level and not teach the Italian language in Ethiopian schools (Photo courtesy of Pro Quest, 2009).

Haile Selassie and Derg Influences

The public school system continued to suffer under Emperor Haile Selassie's reign. The education system saw marginal growth, with only 400 schools spread throughout the country, educating only a small percentage of the population. The system was plagued with teacher shortages, high dropout rate, and an attendance rate of a dismal 10%. Amharic was the national

language used for instruction, although people outside the highland region did not speak the language.



Under the Derg regime Ethiopia's education system improved tremendously, with the number of schools doubling the first 10 years (1974-84). Emphasis was placed on a curriculum that focused on the cultural needs of both rural and urban areas alike. As a result, the literacy rate vastly improved, although still more than 50% of the total population remained illiterate.

Until 1991, many children fought in the civil war and were unable to pursue an education. Starting in 1993 schools were allowed to teach courses in the local languages for the first time, and the curriculum was geared more towards the cultural aspects of a region's specific ethnic population.

US Support to Education

As part of its ongoing commitment to support Ethiopia's educational system, the US in 2005 donated over 50,000 English-language reading books for use in primary schools across the country. This donation is part of a program administered by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) that is also providing over 100,000 5th-grade English textbooks and more than 300,000 copies of educational magazines for use in Ethiopian schools.

Present-day Educational System

Education expenditures are about 6% GDP, and although less than half of all school-aged children are enrolled, classrooms are overcrowded. Many schools have adopted a shift system whereby students attend school for 4 hours-per-day, with one group of students attending a morning class and another group in the afternoon.

The system falls behind other African countries in providing basic academic skills of reading, writing, and math. The

curriculum is not very well organized and attendance is sporadic. Primary education, grades 1–6, begins at age 7 and secondary education, grades 7–12, at age 15.

Education is free from primary through university level and is compulsory at the primary level. Thereafter, further education depends on access to facilities. While there are an abundance of primary schools scattered across the countryside, secondary facilities are exclusive to larger urban areas. Consequently, enrollments decline drastically from the primary to the secondary level, with secondary facilities severely overburdened.

Children who do well in elementary school generally progress to secondary school. According to United Nations estimates, 47% of children in the appropriate age-group attend some primary school. Attendance among girls, at 41%, lags significantly behind boys, at 53%. At the secondary level, only 13% of children in the appropriate age-group attend (15% of boys, 10% of girls).

After the 10th grade, students are separated into university-bound candidates, who receive concentrated academic instruction, and those who receive commercial, polytechnic, teaching, or other professional training.

University System

The university system fosters academic research in cultural and physical anthropology, archaeology, history, sciences, linguistics, theology, and business; although a lack of funding for adequate resources has constrained its development. The library system is inferior, with computers and internet access limited. While the main university campus is in Addis Ababa, there are five other campuses located at other regional state

capitals, as well as many government-run technical colleges. In recent years, a number of private colleges have sprung up to meet the demand for university-level instruction, especially in Addis Ababa.

While university attendance is free, admission is extremely competitive. Every secondary student takes a standardized examination to get into college. The acceptance rate is approximately 20% of all the individuals who take the tests. There is a quota for the various departments, and only a certain number of individuals are enrolled in their desired majors. The criterion for enrollment is based on the grades of first-year students – those with the highest marks are granted their first choice of study. (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia).

Ethiopian Folklore

(see *History & Myth)*

- One who loves you warns you.
- If a blind man says he will throw a stone at you, he probably has his foot on one.
- You do not need a light to see someone you know intimately at night.
- Where error gets to, correction cannot reach.
- When spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion.
- A close friend can become a close enemy.
- The witness of a rat is another rat.
- The frog wants to be as big as the elephant and bursts.
- A single stick may smoke, but it will not burn.
- What one hopes for is always better that what one has.
- Advise and counsel him, if he does not listen, let adversity teach him.

8. TIME AND SPACE

Concepts of Time and Space

Ethiopians have a moderate perspective of time and are flexible in meeting schedules, although their attitudes to time can be quite variable and context-specific. Generally speaking, Ethiopians value and respect being punctual, although not necessarily to the extent that Westerners place on 'being on time.' You should find that their attitude towards personal matters unusually tolerant compared to our western culture.

Flexibility: Ethiopians are very flexible when unforeseen circumstances such as lack of transportation or family illness arise that would cause a delay or absence. This attitude doesn't suggest lack of regret when missing a meeting – it just means that in Ethiopian society, most personal issues take precedence over all other commitments.

Personal space & eye contact: Likewise, they typically maintain some distance when speaking with someone and like to establish eye contact. Actually, avoiding eye contact could be interpreted as a sign of hiding something. However, they consider prolonged eye contact or staring to be rude behavior. Touching on the shoulder or on the arm when talking face-to-face with someone of the same sex is okay but touching or holding the opposite sex with intimacy is not proper (see *Sex & Gender*).

Space Between Friends:
Friends, particularly of the same sex, generally are considerably more affectionate with one another and have closer spatial relations than you may be accustomed to in America. It is normal for male Ethiopians to hold hands or have their arms around each other while walking or for people of the same sex to kiss each other on the cheeks when greeting. These gestures signal friendship, not homosexuality, and to back

away would likely cause offense. They value friendship, and close friends have great influence on situational outcomes, more-so than in American culture (see *Language & Communication)*. The close friend in essence becomes part of the family and is considered trustworthy.

Taking Photos: Ethiopians generally value their privacy and expect outsiders to respect that privilege. It is therefore wise to ask permission to photograph local citizens.

Don't Forget Prayer Time: Muslims take time during the working day for prayers, so it is important that you plan your business appointments accordingly. Orthodox Christians also may take time off work for particular Saints days and religions holidays.

Conducting Business

Business interactions are hierarchical and formal. An agenda traditionally is not part of their local culture. When one is used, it primarily serves as a guideline for discussion and a springboard to other related business topics.

For Ethiopians it is a cultural imperative to develop a personal relationship prior to conducting business, and therefore, any attempt to by-pass or rush what tends to be a time-consuming process could hamper success.

Meetings start with extended social pleasantries. For example, you can anticipate being offered tea or coffee and asked questions about yourself and your family. You will likewise be expected to inquire about the other person.

Patience is necessary to building effective cross-cultural relations. Reaching consensus or agreement generally takes longer than Americans are accustomed to, and it may require several meetings to accomplish what you would generally handle via a routine phone call.

Meetings seldom have a scheduled ending time, as it is considered more important to focus on building relationships than watching the clock. The meeting will end when everyone has had their say and the most senior Ethiopians decide to adjourn.

Since they generally only conduct business with people they consider friends, they have difficulty saying "no" to requests from business associates. Therefore, not saying “no” does not indicate they will necessarily do what they appear to have agreed to do – they simply agree for the sake of politeness. Likewise, delivery dates and deadlines are considered estimates rather than firm commitments.

Negotiations

- It is best not to expect immediate decisions, as reaching agreement usually requires follow-on discussions and negotiating for mutual benefits.
- Disagreements should be handled in a calm, diplomatic manner and should never involve raised voices and anger.
- It is helpful to find ways to compromise, even if it results in delays, and seek “win-win” outcomes.
- It is good to remember that Ethiopians are extremely patient and tend to consider time on their side.
- If the negotiation involves cost for an item, you may have to bargain, so it is advisable to initially ask a higher price than you are willing to accept.

Government influence: Furthermore, local government exerts great influence in the business sector, particularly in matters pertaining to contracts with outside agencies. Therefore, it is wise to maintain cordial contact with government officials and agencies.

Hierarchy: It is also effective to understand the corporate culture of specific companies, as some – particularly family-owned – are more hierarchical and formal than others, and

managers typically do not seek consensus in decision-making. Employees are expected to show proper deference and respect towards those in superior positions to include age and rank. For example, in most companies the highest ranking person makes decisions.

Employees will range from feeling empowered to speak out in the management process, to those who simply execute the instructions from their leadership. As in other collective cultures, Ethiopians do not strictly separate their personal and work lives, and it is common practice for managers to take a paternalistic role with their subordinates.

Timekeeping

While much of the world marks time according to the Gregorian calendar, Ethiopia has its own calendar known as Ge'ez. Based upon the ancient Coptic Calendar, the Ethiopian calendar falls 7 years behind the Gregorian calendar, owing to alternative calculations in determining the date of Jesus Christ's birth. While in the Western world the current year is 2013, in Ethiopian society it is 2006. The Ethiopian Calendar has 12 months of 30 days each, plus 5 or 6 additional days (sometimes known as the 13th month), which are added at the end of the year to match the calendar to the solar cycle.

Time in Ethiopia

In Ethiopian society the 24-hour day begins at sunrise, with the day divided into 12 hours each of daylight and nighttime. The time-of-day falls 6 hours behind Western time, which means midday begins at 0600 rather than 1200 and midnight at 1800 rather than 2400. Therefore, a 9 AM meeting in Ethiopia would correspond to 3 PM in Western culture. This time difference poses opportunities for confusion and tardiness. Also, the time zone is 8 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time or 3 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time.

9. AESTHETICS AND RECREATION

Attire

Ethiopians are a proud people and believe it is important to be dignified in one's behavior and appearance. To them the way one dresses makes a statement about that person's attitude and self worth. Ethiopia is a conservative society where dress is modest for both them and their foreign guests. Ethiopian men and women working as professionals or in office environments typically wear Western-style clothing, while other people wear traditional attire.

For example, both men and women may wear *shammas*, a type of cotton shawl worn in a variety of ways. *Shammas* made from a heavier weave are known as *gabis*, whereas *netellas* are more scarf-like and are made from a light gauze-like cotton fabric. They are commonly worn for formal occasions, with men wearing them around their waist. Both types of *shammas* are often white and bordered with colorful pattern pieces (*tilets*).

White is also a common color for women's dresses (*abesha kemis*) and men's long shirts and accompanying trousers. Some of the pastoral groups in the Ethiopian lowlands, such as the Afar and Somalis, wear light cloth *shirits* wrapped around the body, which are not only comfortable, but also conform to Muslim clothing restrictions.

During holidays and other important occasions, Ethiopians of the northern and central regions wear traditional white cotton clothing decorated with various designs depicting a symbol of an Orthodox cross. (see *Religion & Spirituality).*

Recreation

All Ethiopians enjoy visiting friends and relatives and attending local parks (*Menafesha)* and markets. Of note, Addis Ababa is said to have Africa's largest market called the Mercato. Urban

people routinely watch television, attend sporting events and movies, eat at restaurants, and take their children out for desserts. Few rural residents have electricity and typically attend community events and play with their children. Chess, checkers, and cards are favorite games. Soccer and track-and-field are the most popular sports, and in rural areas, sports also include *gena* (similar to field hockey) and *gugs* (horse racing). Rural women usually do not play sports but socialize at home.

Distance running: Ethiopians are exceptionally proud of their distance runners, who have been highly successful in the international sports arena. For example, at the 2004 Summer Olympics 7 of the 12 medalists in the men's and women's 5,000 and 10,000 meter events were Ethiopian. One medalist, Meseret Defar, holds the world record for the 5,000 meter event and was awarded the 2007 Female Athlete of the Year by the International Association of Athletics Federation.

Another prominent Ethiopian distance runner is Kenenisa Bekele, 2004 Olympics gold medal winner in the Men's 10,000 meters and world record holder in both the 10,000 and 5,000 meter events. Of note, Haile Gebrselassie, two-time Olympic gold medal winner in the Men's 10,000 meters and the current world record holder in the men's marathon, is proclaimed a heroic idol throughout Ethiopia (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia).

Art Forms

Religious art, especially Orthodox Christian, has been a significant part of the national culture for hundreds of years. Illuminated Bibles and manuscripts, traced to the 12th century, and the 800-year-old churches in Lalibela contain Christian paintings, manuscripts, and stone relief. Likewise, Islamic mosques reflect broader Muslim architecture.

Most art forms were religious until the late 1800s, when the influx of foreigners created a demand for more secular images – although depicted in a more conservative style. Classical Ethiopian paintings, traditionally associated with Orthodox Christian iconic imagery, were done in a two-dimensional "folk"

style that is very direct. Good characters are shown in full face, with both eyes visible, while evil characters are displayed in profile having only one eye visible. Black lines clearly delineate the contours of characters. Secular narrative paintings illustrating legendary Ethiopian stories (such as the meeting of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon) are depicted in a similar direct style.

Working mostly within this traditional style, **Qes Adamu Tesfaw** is one of Ethiopia's best known modern artists. As has long been customary for religious painters in Ethiopia, Tesfaw received religious training in addition to developing his painting skills, ultimately being ordained for the Orthodox priesthood and given the honorable title "Qes"(Graphic courtesy of Wikimedia). Also, modern artist Afewerk Tekle is renowned for his lively and colorful stained-glass windows.

Music

Music is used in religious ceremonies and for entertainment. Special instruments include the *begena* (a lyre), *kebero* (a drum made from wood and animal skin), and *tsenatsil* (a type of rattle). *Azmaris* (traveling singers) are important to the musical tradition. Despite modern Western influences, traditional Ethiopian music remains popular. Christian music is believed to have been established by Saint Yared in the 6th century and is sung in Ge'ez, the liturgical language. Both Orthodox and Protestant music is popular and is sung in the primary ethnic languages. The traditional dance, *eskesta,* consists of rhythmic shoulder movements and usually is accompanied by the kebero and the *masinqo,* a single-stringed violin with an A-shaped bridge that is played with a small bow. Foreign influences exist in the form of Afro-pop, reggae, and hip-hop (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia).

10. SUSTENANCE AND HEALTH

Diet

The most popular dish in Ethiopia is ***wat***, a thick stew containing meat or vegetables served on ***injera***, a spongy unleavened sourdough flat bread made from fermented teff (a perennial grass used as a cereal crop) flour. Injera, which traditionally is a staple of every meal, and wat are popular dishes in highland areas. In the north, most people eat ***shiro***, a thick sauce made of chickpea flour and spices.

A vegetarian porridge made from different combinations of beans, lentils, chickpeas, potatoes, collard greens, carrots, and cabbage is the most common food in nearly all regions of the country and especially popular during religious fasting periods when no animal products are eaten.

Two national dishes are ***kai wat***, a spicy meat or vegetable (usually potatoes or pumpkin) stew that contains ***berbere*** (a red spice mixture containing chili peppers and various other spices), and ***tibs***, finely diced and cooked meat. ***Shekla tibs*** is a dish of sautéed meat served in a hot clay pot.

A less spicy type of wat that does not include berbere is ***alitcha wat***. ***Niter kibbeh***, a clarified butter containing ginger, garlic, cardamom, and other spices, is also an essential element of Ethiopian cooking. Besides the native dishes, most restaurants in Ethiopia also serve spaghetti, a remnant of Italian influence.

Meat

Besides sheep other meats commonly used in Ethiopian dishes include chicken (***doro***), beef (***yebere siga***), goat, and lamb (***bege***). The Gurage enjoy a popular dish called ***kitfo***, which consists of raw beef dressed in a berbere and niter kibbeh mix. Kitfo is served with ***qocho*** (a bread prepared from the ***ensete***

plant, which is related to the banana) and sometimes spinach. Pork usually is not used in Ethiopian cooking because of Islamic and Ethiopian Orthodox dietary restrictions.

Cheese and Fruit

An Ethiopian cheese made from cottage cheese and yogurt and similar to feta cheese is customarily eaten after the spicier dishes as a way to cool the palate. Available fruits include oranges, bananas, mangoes, papaya, avocados, grapes, tomatoes, and lemons.

Beverages

Desserts are not typically part of Ethiopian cuisine. Instead, meals usually end with the popular coffee ceremony. Other traditional Ethiopian beverages include *tej* (honey wine) and *tella* (beer). One of the largest honey-producing countries in the world, Ethiopia uses large quantities to produce tej.

Dietary Customs

Ethiopians typically eat two or three daily meals, depending on their income. Children eat separate from or before their parents, except on holidays or on special occasions. Urban Ethiopians frequent cafés and restaurants, although traditionally eating out was viewed as a sign of laziness or of a poor home life. When dining in restaurants, it is appropriate to modestly tip, although over tipping is frowned upon.

Dining Etiquette: (see *Political & Social Relations*).

Health Issues

Poverty is widespread, with slightly less than half the population living below the basic needs poverty line. Health indicators are generally poor.

Communicable diseases are the primary illnesses, with acute respiratory infections such as tuberculosis, upper respiratory infections, and malaria high on the Ministry of Health's list of priority health problems.

Other major infectious diseases include bacterial and protozoal diarrhea, viral hepatitis (A, B, C, and E) typhoid fever,

cholera, rabies, meningitis, and water-born schistosomiasis. Outbreaks are usually devestating because few citizens are vaccinated, and only about a quarter of the population has access to safe water. Poor sanitation, malnutrition, and a shortage of health facilities contribute to infectious diseases.

Healthcare System

The healthcare system is insufficient even with notable improvements in recent years. Healthcare is inconsistently available in urban centers, while in rural areas where the vast majority of the population resides, access to health care varies from limited to none. For example, Addis Ababa and other major cities have some medical facilities, but most Ethiopians do not have access to proper medical care.

The nation has few physicians, life expectancy remains very low, and infant mortality is extremely high. Average life expectancy at birth is 61.48 years, for males it is 59.11 years and 63.93 years for females (2015 estimate).

HIV/AIDS: Reports indicate that as many as 1.15% of adults are infected with HIV/AIDS, which has contributed to falling life expectancy since the early 1990s. According to the Ministry of Health, a third of young adult deaths are AIDS-related.

Malnutrition and food insecurity are widespread, especially among children. Ethiopia's structural food deficit is so severe that even in the most productive years, at least 5 million people require food relief.

Social and Health Programs Reconstruction: During the 1990s the government increased funding for social and health programs, which brought corresponding improvements in school enrollments, adult literacy, and infant mortality rates. These expenditures stagnated or declined during the 1998-2000 war

with Eritrea, and since the ceasefire, outlays for healthcare have grown, although far below what is needed.

Poverty reduction: In 2002 the government embarked on a program that called for greater spending in education, health, sanitation, and water. Again in 2004, it launched a 5-year program to expand primary healthcare, and in early 2005, it began distributing antiretroviral drugs for HIV-infected adults.

Restricted Food & Dietary Customs

- Strict religious dietary and fasting customs influence the Ethiopian diet.
- Muslim and Orthodox Christian beliefs forbid eating pork – most Muslims do not consume alcohol.
- Orthodox Christians avoid closed-hoof animals and those that do not chew a cud.
  - Abstain from dairy products and meat on Wednesdays, Fridays, and during Lent and other fasting periods.
  - Slaughter animals for food with the animal's head turned toward the east while throat is cut "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."
  - Muslims slaughter them "In the name of Allah the Merciful."
- Muslims during holy month of Ramadan daily fast from sunrise to sundown.
- People wash hands before meal is served.
  - Traditional for oldest person to wash first.
- All food eaten by hand and from common platter taking food with right hand.
- Host expects guests to eat and drink freely until food is finished – host may occasionally say "please eat."
- Guests expected to stop eating when host is finished

11. ECONOMICS AND RESOURCES

Economic Overview

One of the world's poorest countries, Ethiopia primarily bases its economy on rain-fed agriculture, constituting nearly 41% of gross domestic product (GDP). The Mengistu regime imposed radical changes, notably nationalizing all banks and industries and collectivizing farmland. Improvements in crop yields and living standards improved temporarily until drought and famine reversed the trend, placing a burden on government expenditures. The current EPRDF government has sought to reform and modernize the economy, although land remains a collective resource not to be individually owned (Photo courtesy of Pro Quest 2010).

Three major crops believed to have originated in Ethiopia include coffee, grain sorghum, and castor bean. Ethiopia's natural resources (see *Technology & Material)* include small reserves of gold, platinum, copper, potash, natural gas, and hydropower from its chief water source, the Blue Nile that rises into T'ana Hayk (Lake Tana) in northwest Ethiopia. There are no significant fishing or forestry industries.

Services include retail trade, public administration, defense, transportation, and tourism and constitute the second largest economic component. Manufacturing and mining are a distant third and fourth. Defense outlays have been high since the early 1990s and resulted in an overall budget deficit – most recently because of 1998-2000 war with Eritrea – although spending has since declined. Ethiopia is heavily dependent on international donor support, particularly in times of drought.

Agricultural Production

This sector provides by far the largest percentage of exports and employs up to 85% of the population. About 20% of potential arable land is actually cultivated, and almost exclusively dependent on direct rainfall, with some small-scale irrigation in limited areas. Lacking modern equipment and techniques, farming methods are largely primitive, with farmers depending on livestock and basic agriculutral tools to cultivate the land. In the highlands, grains (barley, corn, teff, and wheat), pod-bearing plants, and oilseeds are the major crops, while at lower elevations, sorghum and sugarcane are prominent. Honey and beeswax are major cash crops – Ethiopia is the world's 10th largest honey producer.

Two bush crops – coffee, which is the major export, followed by khat – are primary cash crops that flourish in various highland areas. Ethiopia's *coffee Arabica* (Arabian coffee) is grown in the wild forests of southwestern highland districts of Kaffa and Buno.

Legal & illegal substances: Primarily cultivated in the eastern highland region of Hararge, Khat's use is legal in Ethiopia, Djibouti, Yemen, and a handful of other countries despite its addictive effects, although the Ethiopian government does not encourage its cultivation. Besides producing khat (pictured) for local use and regional export, Ethiopia is a transit hub for illegal drugs to include heroin originating in Southern Asia and destined for Europe, as well as cocaine destined for markets in southern Africa. Ethiopia is also an illicit producer of cannabis, (largely for domestic use) methamphetamine, and ecstasy.

Additionally, Ethiopia's fastest growing agricultural export is cut flowers, a market that did not exist before 2003 and by 2005 rose to its 6th largest export. Other notable exports are niger and sesame seeds.

Pastoralism

Ethiopia is home to an estimated 7 million pastoralists who tend a large number of cattle, sheep, and goats. Most livestock is found in the dry lowlands of the eastern and southern regions that are more suited to animal husbandry

than farming. Ethiopia has the largest livestock population in Africa, and in 2005-06, for example, the count was estimated equal to Ethiopia's human population.

Land Tenure

All rural land is state-owned with peasants cultivating individual plots that are subject to reduction and redistribution as the rural population increases. Since they do not own land and are unable to provide collateral for loans, farmers have little motivation to invest in soil or water improvement methods. Privatization has been considered as one alternative to the current arrangement, although many people fear this approach would result in a largely landless rural population working as tenants on large land holdings; as occurred in various periods of Ethiopian history up through Haile Selassie's reign.

Foreign Economic Relations

Ethiopia has long maintained commercial relations with its immediate neighbors, Sudan and Yemen, and with West European countries to include Britain, Germany, and Italy – all of whom purchase large quantities of coffee. Recently, trading relations have broadened, and as of 2002, Ethiopia's most important markets have expanded internationally to China, Japan, and Saudi Arabia, along with its HOA neighbor, Djibouti. Primary imports include fuel and refined petroleum products (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia).

Banking

The National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE – pictured), headquartered in Addis Ababa, is Ethiopia's central bank and serves as Ethiopia's banking regulatory agency. The NBE controls the vast majority of the banking industry's capital, deposits, and assets, although the percentage of its total assets has dropped from over 93% in

1998 to a little less than 80% in 2004 (most current reporting). While the remaining bank industry assets are controlled by a few private banks, by law, no bank operating in Ethiopia is allowed majority foreign ownership. Likewise, foreign investment is low, although rising (Photo Courtesy of Wikimedia).

Economic Outlook

Positive indicators: Despite Ethiopia's generally poor economic standing, there are some positive signs. The economy saw an average growth rate of nearly 9% between 2004 and 2006, spurred by agricultural growth and expanding industry and services sectors. Trade has benefited by a rise in coffee prices after several years of declining prices.

Debt reduction: Since 2001 Ethiopia has qualified for over USD 1 billion in debt reduction under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative sponsored by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Major challenges: These reductions in debt repayments, combined with a lowering of defense spending, have aided in channeling more of Ethiopia's budget to areas such as health, education, and infrastructure. Private investment has also increased in recent years as market-based reforms take hold. According to the World Bank's 2008 Country Assistance Strategy paper, Ethiopia may be entering a new phase of more rapid economic growth, while simultaneously experiencing what might be called "service delivery take-off." If the take-off proves more than a short-term anomaly, Ethiopia could leave the ranks of one of the poorest countries in the world sooner than might have been previously expected. Nonetheless, Ethiopia still faces major challenges if it is to continue its economic growth.

Currency

Ethiopia's unit of currency is the birr, which has a current USD exchange rate of 21.55 birr per 1 USD. The birr is divided into 100 santim, with Ethiopian coinage based on units of 1, 5, 10, 25, and 50 santim.

Geographic Overview

From arid deserts to icy mountaintops, Ethiopia's topography and natural environment are as amazing as its traditions. Having one of the most varied terrains of any country in Africa, it is one of the highest countries in the continent, with its greater part located in its central highlands measuring up to 15,000 feet and offset by inhospitable deserts sinking below-sea-level.

Together these extreme environments serve as a refuge for a number of plant and animal species found nowhere else in the world. Stretching from the Middle East to southern Africa, the Great Rift Valley divides Ethiopia in half and is the most prominent geological feature in the country.

Climate

As with its terrain, Ethiopia also has a variety of climates. Daily high temperatures in the highlands average between 60°F (16°C) and 74°F (23°C). The capital city of Addis Ababa (which means "New Flower"), located in the central highland's uppermost elevation, has daily highs averaging 77°F (25˚C) in the hottest months (May and June) and average daily lows are 41°F (5°C) in the coldest month (December). In the western lowlands, the hottest days average 95°F (35°C) but can rise to 120°F (49°C). The rainy season is from mid-June to mid-September in the highlands, and the period from October to February is extremely dry. Rainfall varies widely from year-to-year, a factor that proves problematic for Ethiopia's two main sources of sustenance, agriculture and pastoralism (Photo Courtesy Pro Quest 2010).

12. TECHNOLOGY AND MATERIAL

Technology

Ethiopia's industrial and manufacturing sector is very limited, consisting of roughly 16% of the country's GDP. It has an even smaller effect on the country's employment figures, with only 5% of Ethiopians working in this sector.

Addis Ababa is the center of much of Ethiopia's technological activity. Under the *Derg* government, virtually all large and medium-sized industries were nationalized. Since the mid-1990s, the government has been slowly privatizing some of these enterprises, although government ownership of land has hampered industrial expansion – businesses are unable to use the value of their land as collateral.

Primary products are processed foods and beverages, textiles, leather, chemicals, processed metals, and cement. Of these products, leather (in the form of goat and sheep skin) is the only significant export – primarily to Saudi Arabi – while the food processing industry is the largest employer.

Energy Sources

Aside from waterpower and forests, Ethiopia is not well endowed with energy sources. In general, she relies on forests for nearly all of her energy and construction needs, resulting in extensive deforestation of much of the highlands during the last three decades.

Ethiopia has started construction on a geothermal plant in the Great Rift Valley which will use the earth's interior heat to provide energy. Ethiopia derives about 90% of its electricity from hydropower, which means electricity generation, as with agriculture, is dependent on abundant rainfall. Hardly half of the country's urban areas are connected to the national power grid.

Plans are in place to exploit natural gas reserves in the southeastern lowlands, estimated at 4 trillion cubic feet, while exploration for gas and oil is underway in the Gambela region bordering Sudan. Refined petroleum is imported, with some oil hauled overland from Sudan.

Transportation

By any measure, Ethiopia's transportation network is inadequate, primarily because rugged terrain and sporadic weather patterns inhibit construction. Many villages and essential resources are isolated and oftentimes inaccessible. For a country of its size, the transport network is limited and needs both upgrades and expansion. Service is unreliable and concentrated primarily in Addis Ababa. A bright spot is Ethiopian Airlines, which delivers efficient and reliable service domestically and internationally and provides maintenance and training for other regional carriers.

Roads: Ethiopia has about 15,000 miles of roadways, of which just over 2,000 miles are paved. Almost all primary roads are gravel, including those that connect Addis Ababa with major cities and towns across the country. Some 75% of government spending on infrastructure is targeted at improving the road network.

Railroads: Ethiopia has only one railroad, a 7485-mile line that connects Addis Ababa with the port of Djibouti. Ethiopia and Djibouti jointly own and operate the line, which carries up to 800,000 passengers and 250,000 tons of freight per year. Like the road system there are plans for railroad renovation and expansion (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia).

Inland Waterways: Ethiopia has no significant navigable waterways, although limited ferry service is available on Lake Tana. The Baro and Awash rivers are navigable only in the rainy season. The Abay (Blue Nile) is not navigable within Ethiopia's borders.

Civil Aviation and Airports: Ethiopia has two international airports. One in Addis Ababa and the other Dire Dawa with some 40 airfields located elsewhere. Bole International Airport in Addis Ababa handles 95% of all international air traffic and 85% of domestic flights. A major renovation and expansion of Bole was completed in 2002 (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia).

Internet

The internet has opened Ethiopia to the world.

- Largely confined to urban areas where internet cafes are widespread.
- Service is saturated with dial-up connection slow.
- Broadband exists in larger hotels, although it is expensive.
- Wireless connections are found primarily in international hotels in popular locations such as Adidas Ababa.
- The limited service and expense have opened ETC to national criticism, with frequent public demands for privatization or alternative providers.

Telecommunications

The Ethiopian Telecommunications Corporation (ETC) currently controls the national communication system. The telephone network in major cities and towns is fairly efficient, although public phones are in short supply and direct-dial services are inconsistent. Rural residents primarily rely on mail and word-of-mouth for communication. While the number of fixed lines and mobile telephones is increasing, the combined fixed and mobile-cellular teledensity is only about 35 per 100 persons.

Only one television and four radio stations broadcast in Ethiopia, which also has the second lowest internet penetration rate in sub-Saharan Africa (only Sierra Leone is lower). Expansion efforts have been hampered by the largely inaccessible rural population and government's refusal to permit privatization of the telecommunications market (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia).

Environmental Concerns

Environmental issues include deforestation, overgrazing, soil erosion, desertification, and water shortages in some areas due to water-intensive farming and poor management. Natural hazards include frequent droughts and a geologically active Great Rift Valley susceptible to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Droughts have increased in severity since the 1970s in step not only with shortfalls in crop production but also with a burgeoning population growth.

Not only is Ethiopia challenged even in good rainfall periods to produce enough food for its population, the loss of soil nutrients and concurrent reduction of land available for agriculture are also critical concerns. In an average year, some 2-4 million citizens are in need of emergency food aid. The government has sponsored resettlement programs for people living in environmentally degraded areas in which the land is no longer capable of sustaining the growing population, although few have been successful.

Urban pollution in Ethiopia is most prevalent in the region around Addis Ababa where over 32% of the daily solid waste generated in the city ends up untreated and deposited in open sites, rivers, drainage channels, and even city streets.

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