

THE REPERCUSSION OF SOCIO- CULTURAL PRACTICES ON ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTIONS: THE CASE OF WOGÄRA AWRAJA, 1965– 1985, NORTHWEST ETHIOPIA

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Abstract

This study examines the interplay between socio-cultural practices and environmental degradation in selected woredas (districts)—Sätit-Humära, Wälqayét, and Ṭägädé—within the Wogära Awraja of Northwestern Ethiopia from 1965 to 1985. It identifies socio-cultural practices and environmental trends that significantly impacted the local environment. The research details how factors such as climate change, hunting, agricultural practices, overgrazing, over-cultivation, deforestation, drought, and famine collectively threatened the survival of these societies. By analyzing environmental degradation through this lens, the study encourages a re-evaluation of socio-cultural practices, potentially fostering radical shifts in environmental attitudes. Qualitative in nature, this research relied on primary sources including archival documents, observations, and in-depth interviews. Secondary sources comprised relevant books, articles, and other scholarly works. The findings indicate that the environment is perceived as a critical factor influencing both the mental and physical well-being of society, and vice versa. Consequently, effective environmental management must be intrinsically linked with an understanding of these socio-cultural practices. This approach enhances the mutual responsibility and influence between the environment and society.

Keywords: *society, environment, socio-cultural practice, farming practice, deforestation, overgrazing.*

1. Introduction

This study examines the interaction between socio-cultural practice and environmental destruction in the Sätit-Humära, Wäḥqayét, and Ṭägädé Woräda between 1965 and 1985. It focuses on both chronologically and thematically selected socio-cultural practices and environmental destruction in those districts within the specific periods. This is because, according to the archival letter written on 10 July 1965, the year 1965 was a period of widespread human and animal disease due to natural disorders. The diseases caused by natural disturbances in the area killed the local society. The surrounding society needs to use natural resources to prevent and cure this disease. For example, it is believed that they “crushed the Neem tree (*Azadirachta Indica*) and drink it, then they would be cured of malaria.”¹

In addition, the period had also showed that the traditional and mechanized farming expansions had affected the environment.² Within the special control of the central government, varieties of grain and cash crops such as sesame and cotton had produced.³ According to the archival letter written in 1985, the wide range of environmental change in the Wogära *Anwaja* was caused by deforestation, productions of charcoal, resettlement, and famine.⁴

Socio-cultural practices refer to the way of life, the style of agricultural practices, the communication among themselves, the

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- 1 CGAZAC, Folder No. ፶፭/254, File No 1350/3/57, Dated 3 July 1957 E. C., A letter written from Tezerea Hailemeskel, main manager of the Imperial Ethiopian Government, Minster of Public Health Haile Selassie Health Institute, Training Center Gondar, Ethiopia, to *Ato* Aklilu Geberhiwote, manager of Humära Health Center, Humära.
 2. CGAZAC, Folder No. ፬/28, File No 4048-25-15-05, Dated 12 March 1958 E. C., A letter written from Yohanes Kidanmariam, Vise Minister, Addis Ababa, to *Ato* Habteabe Bayeru, *Mekete*/Minister of Planning Board Organization Manager Addis Ababa.
 - 3 CGAZAC, Folder No. ፬/28, , File Number ፩፻፩/1/01/7, Dated, 11 November 1975 E. C., A letter written by Adane Mamuye, Commission Respondents, Gondar Provincial Administration Office of the Interim Military Government of Ethiopia, Gondar to Strategy and Technology Department, for Early Warning and Planning Department, Addis Ababa.
 - 4 CGAZAC, Folder No. ፶፭/254, File No ፻፶፫/01/1354/78, dated 9 July 1978 E. C., A letter written from Fentie Betew, Northwest Ethiopia planning region Gondar Kifele Hagere planning office manager, Gondar, to Gondar province Agricultural and Developmental Office, Gondar.

production of crops, the style of nutrition, the spirituality and the emotional characteristics of a society or social group.⁵ Individuals tend to hold on to these practices at all times, regardless of the environment in which they find themselves. Examples of sociocultural practices include social values, religious beliefs, business practices, social organization, and attitudes toward work.⁶ Environmental degradation means changing and disturbing the environment that is considered harmful and undesirable. For example, environmental change has been caused by deforestation, agricultural practices and charcoal production leading to desertification and global warming.⁷

Societies and environment have always been interlinked.⁸ However, humans have played a major role in the destruction of the natural environment.⁹ The practices of traditional activities of human beings such as religious beliefs and practices, farming practice and commercial activities had been to the exploitation and damaged the natural resources.¹⁰ The cumulative effects of these all lead to the destruction of the environment.¹¹ According to Edgar Hertwich, the emphasis on ideals and values faces great challenges because the socio-economic structure of human interaction with the natural environment and the resulting

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- 5 Paul Prior, "A sociocultural theory of writing." *Handbook of Writing Research* (2006): 54-66.
 - 6 Azemina Masovic, "Socio-cultural factors and their impact on the performance of multinational companies." *Ecoforum* 7, no. 1 (2018), 1-2.
 - 7 Andrew S Goudie and Heather A. Viles, *The earth transformed: an introduction to human impacts on the environment*. John Wiley & Sons, (2013), 4.
 - 8 John Barry, *Environment and social theory*: (Routledge: 2007), 16, and Gopalkrishnan R. Iyer, "Business, consumers and sustainable living in an interconnected world: A multilateral ecocentric approach." *Journal of business ethics* 20 (1999), 284.
 - 9 Ilan, Kelman et al. (2014). Millennium Alliance for Humanity and the Biosphere (MAHB): Integrating Social Science and the Humanities into Solving Sustainability Challenges. *Understanding Society and Natural Resources: Forging New Strands of Integration across the Social Sciences*, 25-43, 39.
 - 10 Sitti Latifah et al. (2015). The influence of personal religious practices on destructive behavior to natural resources and environment. *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*, 6, 20, 155-157.
 - 11 William, Beinart. African history and environmental history. *African Affairs* 99, no. 395 (2000):270.

human environmental impact are highly problematic and do not take nature into account.¹²

Socio-cultural practiced related to solve the environmental protections has not reduced the structural environmental burden of the practice of the local communities.¹³ However, our intellectual culture's tendency to offer environmental and socio-cultural explanations for human ecological outcomes and human actions in general makes clear the nature of our relationship with nature and our collective causal influence on environmental problems. In the local context of environmental problems, only an environmental perspective could to accommodate the diversity of societies and their understandings on nature.¹⁴

As pointed out above the paper focused on the impacts socio-cultural practices on the environmental destruction in the Sätit-Humära, W^älqayēt, and Ṭägädē Woräda.¹⁵ The three Woräda's (Sätit-Humära, W^älqayēt, and Ṭägädē) are located in northwest Ethiopia that bordered by Gondar *Awraja* to the south, Eritrea to the north, Tigray province to the northeast, Sudan to the west, and Semèn *Awraja* to the southeast.¹⁶ They were with in Wogära *Awraja* administration before the annexation by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in 1991.¹⁷

12 Edgar, Hertwich. *Assessing the environmental impacts of consumption and production: priority products and materials*. UNEP/Earth print, (2010): 17.

13 Simachew Bantigegn Wassie. Natural Resource Degradation Tendencies in Ethiopia: a review. *Environmental Systems Research* 9, no. 1 (2020), 7.

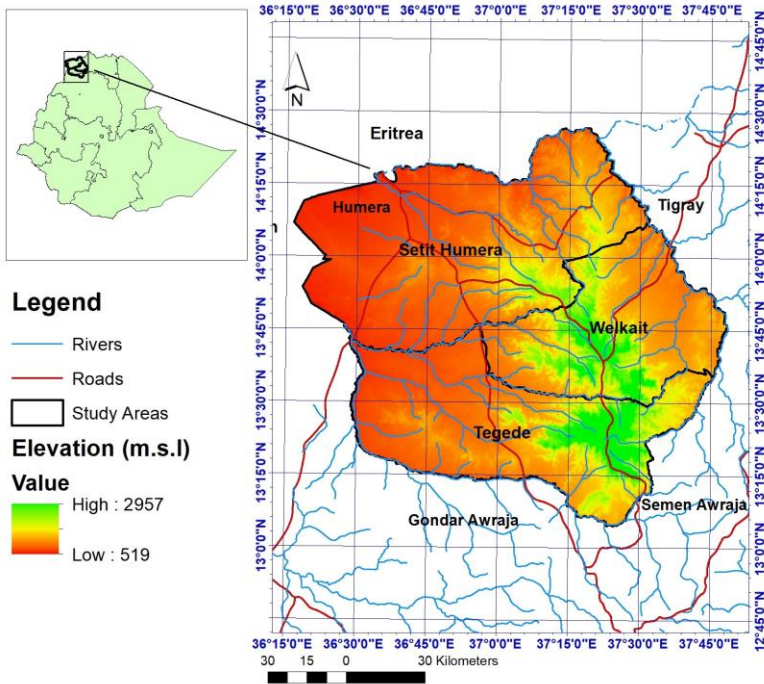
14 Girma Taddese. "Land degradation: a challenge to Ethiopia." *Environmental management* 27, no. 6 (2001): 815-818.

15 Walter Kok, "Self-settled refugees and the socio-economic impact of their presence on Kassala, Eastern Sudan." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 2, no. 4 (1989): 419.

16 CGAZA, Gondar: Second Growth and Development Seminar in Begemdir and Semien Province, November, 1964, 1.

17 Luca Puddu, "Border diplomacy and state-building in north-western Ethiopia, c. 1965–1977." *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 11, no. 2 (2017): 235.

Map 1: Map of the Study Areas



Source: CSA 2007 Ethio-GIS data set: This map is the map of Wogära *Anraja*'s Woräda's such as Sätit-Humära, Wälqayét, and Ṭägädé before 1991, showing the relative location of Wogära *Anraja* in relation with Sudan, Eritrea, Tigray, Gondar *Anraja*, and Semèn *Anraja*.

This study drew upon both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was gathered from archival materials, field observations, and in-depth interviews conducted as part of my survey work in three Woräda's of Wogära Anraja, located in northwest Ethiopia near the Ethio-Sudanese borderlands, between 1965 and 1985. Secondary sources were collected through a comprehensive literature review, which included various published and unpublished works. Additionally, interviews with local informants provided valuable information regarding the historical background of socio-cultural practices and environmental degradation. The data collected through these diverse techniques was then analyzed using a qualitative-descriptive approach.

2. The Causes of Socio-Cultural Practices on the Environmental Destructions

The communities in the study areas are deeply dependent on their environment and natural resources for their well-being and survival. This reliance, however, has led to some critical issues. For medicine and protection against various diseases, are now facing extinction due to unsustainable harvesting practices.¹⁸ This highlights a broader problem: how societies exploit natural resources and manage waste has significant environmental consequences. If these practices aren't carefully managed, they can lead to widespread environmental destruction, impacting people, animals, plants, and the natural world as a whole.¹⁹

A letter from March 12, 1969 E.C., indicates that a lack of available medicine in the study area led to significant disease among cattle and camels.²⁰ This issue foreshadowed widespread hunger within the community, as their survival was heavily dependent on these animals.

18 CGAZAC, File No 14/546/59, Dated 25 February 1959 E. C., A letter from Let. Colonel Tamerat Yegäzu, respected in Bägemedre and Semén Province Regent, Gondar to Däjazmač Adanä Mäkönnän, Governor of Wogära District, Dabat.

19 See on this: Aregay Waktola, *Exploratory Study of two regions in Ethiopia to Identify target areas and partners for intervention*. DCG, 1999, 44. See also Simachew Bantigegn Wassie, Natural resource degradation tendencies in Ethiopia: a review. *Environmental systems research* 9, (2020): 4-5.

20 CGAZA, Folder No ፩/35, File No ፬፻፱/52/2871, Dated 12 March 1969 E.C.

Figure 1: A letter about the damage caused by cattle and camel diseases

**PROVISIONAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT
OF SOCIALIST ETHIOPIA**

Ref. No. **ወመ**1/52/2871

Addis Ababa - Date 12/07/1969

Minister for Agriculture and Population
Addis Ababa

In Bägemeder and Semén Governorate-General, especially in the three districts of Sätit-Humära, Wälqayét, and Ṭägäde, they are in trouble due to the presence of cattle and camel disease and the lack of medicine to prevent the disease. Before the camel disease worsens, spreads, and causes serious damage, we are sending urgent medicine and doctors to inform them so they can receive the necessary treatment.

Ethiopia *Tigedem*

Atnafu Abate

Lt. Col

Provisional Military Administration Derg

Vice Chairman

CC:

- Minister for National Administration
- For the administration of Bägemeder and Semén Governorate-General
- For the congregation of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church
- Patriarchal General Office of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church
- For the Angel of Paradise Yohannes Ambau

Where they are

TA.F.A.Z

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Journal of Afroasiatic Languages, History and Culture (JAAL). Vol. 14, No. 2, 2025

Cultural practices in the region have had a mixed impact on the environment. Historically, activities such as hunting, shifting cultivation, charcoal production, and small-scale agriculture significantly influenced the local environment. For instance, hunting was often tied to cultural holidays. Communities would engage in hunting during the winter seasons, sometimes burning forests to flush out and kill migrating animals.

While some communities, particularly in areas like Woräda's Sätit-Humära, Wälqayét, and Ṭägädé, traditionally emphasized environmental protection through their cultural practices, this was not always the case. In other parts of the study area, a lack of monitoring and control contributed to environmental destruction. One clear consequence of these practices was widespread deforestation, with many forests being destroyed for charcoal production, often used for tax purposes.

Societies have always adapted to their environments, shaping their surroundings to meet their needs for subsistence and cultural practices.²¹ This process can involve the domestication of plants and animals and often focuses on particular natural resources. However, communities living in borderland areas like Sätit-Humära, Wälqayét, and Ṭägädé have significantly impacted their environments through agricultural practices, charcoal production, and traditional hunting.²² Different lifestyles inherently lead to different kinds of environmental changes.

The communities in the study area exhibit a rich diversity in their environments, species, and human cultures. Many plant species are used for traditional medicines and house construction. Yet, not all plant species are valued equally; different social groups recognize distinct properties and qualities in particular plants to satisfy their needs. This perception of value influences how resources are managed and controlled.²³

Unfortunately, the management and control of plant resources in these regions have often been poor, leading to environmental

21 E. J. Milner-Gulland, "Interactions between human behaviour and ecological systems." *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 367, no. 1586 (2012): 270.

22 Belete Belachew Yihun. "Setit-Humera: A Blister on Ethio–Sudanese Boundary Disputation." *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 31, no. 1 (2016):109.

23 Addisu Asefa, "Assessment of Ecotourism Potentials of Protected Areas: The Case of KAFTA-SHERARO National Park, NW Ethiopia." *Journal of Culture & Tourism* 1, no. 1 (2017): 106-125.

destruction. This issue is deeply intertwined with socio-cultural values and traditional ecological knowledge. Effective management decisions are crucial for increasing the availability and quality of desired plant resources. The causes of plant species destruction vary across ecological and cultural contexts, involving different management approaches, degrees of specialization, and complexities of practices. To understand the motivations behind plant management and domestication, it is helpful to analyze the cultural and economic values of plant resources in relation to their spatial availability, as well as how these factors relate to the complexity and intensity of management.

Historically, hunter-gatherers and shifting cultivators collected many types of plants and hunted animals for food, as most environments could only support small populations.²⁴ However, hunting practices, as noted by Geremew et al., have also led to the extinction of many large animals, including black lions, elephants, deer, crocodiles, fish, and other wild animals.²⁵ Consider the following letter on 9 February 1962 E.C:

Figure 2: A letter about the pastoralist societies that lived in Sätit Humära Woräda

File Number- 1928/49

Date- 09/06/1970

Bägemedder and Semén Governorate-General Agriculture Office Gondar

Remembering the copy recorded when we wrote to the Minister of Agriculture of the King of Ethiopia in No. 1133/218/62, dated 30/4/62, about the nomads living in the area of Sätit Humära district, asking for crocodile and fishing.

First Sheikh Ibrahim Jarma, second Omar Ibrahim, third Abubaker Ibrahim, fourth Muhammad Ali, fifth Ali Abubaker, and sixth Muhammad Ibrahim, who live in the said area, have applied in the letter written on 7/6/62 to allow gleaning honey from the Tekeze River and lowland areas.

24 Dessalegn Rahmato, "Resettlement in Ethiopia." In *The Tragedy of Population Relocation in the 1980s. Forum for Social Studies, Addis Ababa* (2003), 18-19.

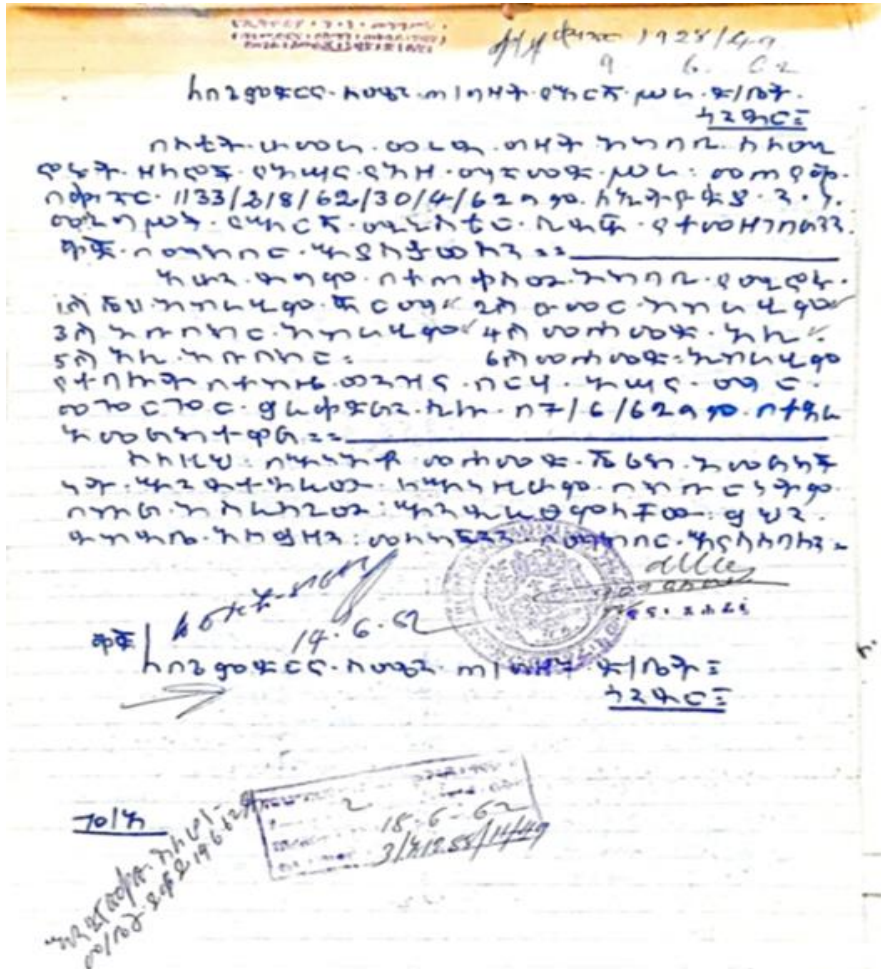
25 Geremew Terefe, et al., "Sesame production manual." *Ethiopia: Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands* (2012), p. 25.

Therefore, as written by the *Sheke* of Mr. Mohammad Sherik, we respectfully urge you to order and send this letter so that the necessary things could done for them.

King of kings Ethiopian Government

Bägémeder and Semén Governorate-General

Wogära *Anraja* Chief Secretary office



Source: CGAZA, Folder No 20/28, File No 1928/49, Dated 9 February 1962 E.C.

Hunting has historically been essential for societies, both for survival and cultural pride. For example, letters show that many nomads living near the Tākazé River in the borderlands of Wogāra Awraja, specifically in Sātīt Humāra Worāda, relied on legally hunting crocodiles and fish in the river lowlands for food.

Another significant factor in environmental destruction is population growth. As societies expand, they put more pressure on the environment, leading to the development and intensification of agricultural practices.²⁶ A larger population needs more resources and creates more waste, directly impacting the environment. Mechanized agriculture fundamentally changes ecosystems. Often, land must be cleared, destroying animal habitats and reducing natural plant diversity. Plowing can damage native soils, decreasing the amount available to the ecosystem. Additionally, the domestication of animals can be harmful, stressing native plants through intensive grazing.

Commercial agriculture and even some traditional farming methods have worsened the socio-cultural impact on environmental destruction. In the first half of the twentieth century, societies were often unaware of the damage their activities caused, dismissed it as minor, or simply believed they had the right to exploit environmental resources. This unchecked exploitation, combined with factors like a minor drought and poor farming practices in the 1970s, significantly harmed the borderland areas.²⁷

26 See for discussion in the Ethiopian situation on this issue Philippa Bevan. Poverty in Ethiopia. A Background Paper: March 1997. (1997): 16.

27 Roy Love, Economic drivers of conflict and cooperation in the Horn of Africa. *Chatham House Briefing Paper. December* (2009): 14. See also Luca Puddu, Border diplomacy and state-building in north-western Ethiopia, c. 1965–1977. *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 11, no. 2 (2017): 238–239.

Figure 3: A letter about the demand of manpower to the Humära Agricultural Development

File Number - 2807/149/59

Date - 16/09/1981

To: The Provincial Production Campaign and Planning Department

Gondar

ሕ28/233/ጠ, written on May 22, 1981, states that the necessary mobilization of the human resources needed for the development of the Humära farm was done and the results were announced before May 30, 1981.

Therefore, if it is considered to be fulfilled according to the notice, since the majority of the people of the district are not engaged in agriculture but are engaged in farming, so far only 20 work forces have been meeting the criteria.

The mission of COPWE will succeed.

Libo Awraja Administration Production Campaign and Planning
Conference
Chairperson

ATC 2807/142/59
(1708)/1219739 .2

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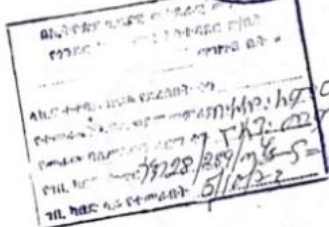
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As the aforementioned letter indicates, Humāra is home to extensive, state-owned commercial farms. These farms spurred a significant

migration into the area, as many people moved there to cultivate large tracts of agricultural land. Consequently, the government issued directives to each Woräda, emphasizing the immense demand for labor. While the government aimed to regulate food consumption for the community, its policy of mobilizing such a large workforce led to unintended consequences. This influx of human resources posed a considerable challenge to the surrounding natural environment, contributing to its decline and loss.²⁸

3. The Effects of Social-cultural Practices on the Environmental Destructions

Environmental destruction manifests through various activities, including soil erosion, reduced vegetation cover, water scarcity, land degradation, loss of biodiversity, and the migration of wild animals. These issues are compounded by extreme climate changes and natural disasters, such as drought and famine, which severely impact local populations. Ultimately, environmental destruction diminishes the quality and quantity of essential ecosystem goods and services that sustain both human and animal life.²⁹

The letter below highlights a severe water shortage at the Public Settlement Authority's site in Sätit Humära Woräda, affecting both people and animals.³⁰ To ensure the well-being of the livestock and the comfort of the residents before the local labor force and equipment are relocated, it is crucial to dig water wells at the Humära settlement stations. This demonstrates how water scarcity, a direct result of environmental destruction, creates significant challenges for social life in the region.

28 See the effect of migration on the environment Cristina Cattaneo, et al. "Human migration in the era of climate change." *Review of Environmental Economics and Policy* (2019): 1-12.

29 See for a similar study Zigiju Yohannes, et al., "Adaptive capacity of mountain community to climate change: case study in the Semien Mountains of Ethiopia." *Environment, Development and Sustainability* 22 (2020): 1-7. See also Lemlem Hagose, "Strategic analysis of sesame (*Sesamum indicum* L.) Market chain in Ethiopia a case of Humera district." *International Journal of Plant & Soil Science* 15, no. 4 (2017), 5.

30 CGAZA, Folder No ንከ127/ጠ, File No 26/ሀ-ጦ1/133, Dated 8 March 1971 E. C.

Figure 4: A letter that demands of Water for the settlers in Sätit Humära Woräda

**THE P. M. G. of SOCIALIST ETHIOPIA
SETELEMENT AUTHORITY**

Addis Ababa

Ref. No. 26/ሀ-መ/133

Date 19/08/1971

To Mr. Bru Yatisa:

General Manager of Water Resources Development

Addis Ababa

The People's Settlement Authority has faced the problem of severe water loss for human and animal use at the settlement station in Humera, Gondar province. On your part, we have heard that, according to your *Balachub* program, the digging of water wells is going on in the area. Our company does not have any well drilling equipment of its own, so we rely on your cooperation. Therefore, in order to protect the health of these oppressed nomadic farmers and make them live comfortably, we are asking for your abiotic cooperation to dig a water well at Humera settlement station and pay the bill before the manpower and equipment you have in the area are moved to another place.

Ethiopia *Tigedem*

Weldesensbet Gudeta

Deputy General Manager

CC:-

- Gondar Provincial Administration Office
- Coordination Office for Ward 6

Gondar

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የልዝበ ግስፈር ባለሥልጣን በጉንደር ክፍለ ሀገር ሀወራ ለይ ለግህነታቸው የወረደ ልቢያ ለሰው ሆነ ለአገሰባት አገልግሎት የጫሰ ክፍተኛ የውሃ ጣጣች ችግር አጋጥቷል። በበኩላችሁ ባላችሁ ፕሮግራም መሠረት በአካባቢው የውሃ ጉዳትዎል ወደፊት ሥራ የግህነታቸው ሆኑ ስም ተናጩ። ወ/ሚካኤል የፊት የሆነ ምገም የደነት የውሃ ጉዳትዎል ወደፊት መሠሪያ ስለሌለው በናገተ ጸብሮ ይተግመናል። ስለሆነም የባህሪ ጭፋኔ ሠራሪ ገበሬያችን ልንነት ተጠባቂ ኑሮቻችን የተደለደለ ለጫራነት፣ በአካባቢው ያላችሁ የሰው ጋራና ወሳሪና ወደ ሌላ ሥፍራ ከወዘደ በፊት፣ በሀገራችን ሠራሪ ልቢያ የውሃ ጉዳትዎል አገንዝቦልንና ጽኑ ትን አገልግሎት በጫራነት አባባታዊ ጸብሮ ስሙን አግባብ ለዘሁ በፊትና አገራችን



"လူတို့၏ နှလုံးကို ဖြည့်စွက်"

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Environmental destruction profoundly impacts society, leading to issues like diseases linked to droughts and famines, poverty from loss of

life, desertification, and the depletion of plant genetic diversity. Conversely, natural resources can also benefit societies; for example, people in these regions developed traditional medicines to prevent diseases. Ultimately, environmental destruction poses serious threats to life and undermines a society's fundamental right to exist. The environment provides essential needs like food, shelter, and clothing, as well as recreational benefits such as fresh air and shade. Therefore, ensuring a sustainable society and protecting the environment for future generations is crucial.³¹

According to a 65-year-old informant, communities in the study areas recognize the importance of integrating societal cultural practices and traditions into natural resource management.³² The Worādas are home to over three different ethnic groups, each with unique traditions and significant systems. While their value systems may differ, these values often act as unifying agents, guiding socio-cultural practices that influence the environment and people's behavior and choices. Values exist in every society, frequently intertwined with religious beliefs. Most communities in the study areas are religiously motivated, which encourages them to care for both their environment and their society. In rural communities, value systems govern relationships, fostering harmony within the community and with the environment.³³

Despite this, a lack of understanding regarding natural resources, particularly concerning cultural practices, beliefs, and attitudes, has led to damage, even when using traditional mediation methods.³⁴ This study assessed how these cultural practices and attitudes affect the utilization and management of environmental resources. Societies, especially those in rural areas, depend entirely and directly on natural resources for their livelihoods, using environmental services for house construction, water, aesthetics, and other basic needs. However, diminishing resources can sometimes lead to equity issues and conflicts. Society-based natural

31 See also Solomon Yared, et al., Risk factors of visceral leishmaniasis: a case control study in north-western Ethiopia. *Parasites and Vectors*, 7, no. 1 (2014), 1-11.

32 Informants: Ato Abebe Mulu

33 Addisu Asefa, 2017, pp. 106-125.

34 Zenebe Bashaw. "Trajectories of women, environmental degradation and scarcity: Examining access to and control over resources in Ethiopia." *Gender, Economics and Entitlements in Africa* (2004), p. 69.

resource management aims to ensure the equitable distribution and allocation of resources.³⁵

A cornerstone of society-based natural resource management is decentralization, which empowers grassroots institutions to make decisions and exert control over their natural resources. This participatory strategy enables communities to actively manage the resources around them. Community-based natural resource management relies on common property resources, customary rights, and local knowledge of resources, striving to protect the community's land and resource use rights.³⁶

Incorporating socio-cultural factors into environmental management is vital for sustainability. This concept seeks to improve the quality of human life without degrading the environment, or rather, to protect the environment while upholding social values, including people's culture. Sustainable development aims for economic advancement while recognizing culture as a crucial societal aspect and ensuring environmental conservation. Achieving sustainability necessitates acknowledging the environmental and cultural diversities of societies. Thus, sustainable development involves utilizing natural resources at local and regional levels while preserving both culture and the environment.³⁷

The study's findings indicate that the decline in biodiversity in the study area stems from a lack of society-based natural resource management and environmental protection, compounded by insufficient expert-supported government education. The study also demonstrates that socio-cultural practices influence environmental sustainability through societal ideas, values, beliefs, culture, and attitudes. Therefore, a society's cultural attitudes reflect its members' perspectives toward nature.

Cultural attitudes, encompassing traditional practices, knowledge, and resources, enhance the adaptability and resilience of individuals and social systems to change. These attitudes are shaped by environmental, social, and cultural factors that permeate all aspects of human life,

35 John W., Bruce, Allan Hoben, and Dessalegn Rahmato. "After the Därg: An assessment of rural land tenure issues in Ethiopia." (1994), p. 35.

36 Leul Kidane, et al., "Human-forest interfaces in Hugumburda-Gratkhasu national forest priority area, north-eastern Ethiopia." *Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine* 14, no. 1 (2018), pp. 1-10.

37 *Ibid*, Informant, Mamo Gonete.

affecting people's relationships with one another and with their environment. Moreover, cultural attitudes influence the relationship between society and the spiritual practices of different areas. The study's results further reveal that most communities in the districts possess traditional ecological knowledge about their local natural resources, passed down through generations via stories and legends. Indigenous knowledge plays a more significant role in environmental protection in rural areas because respecting traditional rituals often requires specific social interactions in a traditional manner, thereby ensuring the preservation of certain animal or plant species.

4. Conclusion

This study has highlighted the profound reliance of societies on natural resources, particularly how their practices influence the sustainability of life within the district's ecological environment. We found that the communities in the study area possess a rich cultural diversity, maintaining values, practices, and attitudes that actively promote environmental protection and management. A crucial aspect of community development is the transmission of cultural values, positive attitudes, and indigenous knowledge from elders to younger generations. This often happens through stories and songs that impart wisdom about the environment. Ultimately, to ensure the preservation of the environment for future generations, it's vital to raise awareness about sustainable nature management practices within the interactions between communities and nature.

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III. List of Informants

| No | Name of informants | Age | Sex | Occupation | Place of interview | Remark |
|----|------------------------------------|-----|-----|---------------------|--|--|
| 1 | Abebe Mulu (<i>Ato</i>) | 64 | M | Merchant | <i>Berkutan</i> (<i>Sätit-Humära</i>) | He gave the researcher detail data on the Sätit-Humära's culture and the natural resource management of the society. He also has deep knowledge of the area's history from previous years. |
| 2 | Azanaw G/micheal (<i>Ato</i>) | 76 | M | Merchant and farmer | <i>Aderemete</i> (<i>Wälqayet</i>) | He has well informed of the causes and effects of environmental destruction by labour force and natural causes in the past. He also has in-depth knowledge of the given areas from previous years. |
| 3 | <i>Alqa</i> Worde Haile | 68 | M | Merchant and Farmer | <i>Mayegaba</i> <i>Wälqayet</i> | He has well informed of the wild animals in the dense forest in the <i>Birketan</i> area of the Sätit-Humära district of Wogära <i>Anraja</i> . Moreover, the researcher would conduct interviews, as he has well aware of the illegal hunting that takes place in the area. |
| 4 | Mamo Gonete (<i>Ato</i>) | 71 | M | Merchant | <i>Embaberkutan</i> | He has good memory of knowledge of Ṭägäde's culture and the natural resource management of the society. He also has in-depth knowledge of the area's history from previous years. |
| 5 | Ademe Berhie (<i>Ato</i>) | 61 | M | Merchant | <i>Kabetya</i> | He has a basic understanding of <i>Wälqayet</i> culture and the natural resource management of the society. He also has in-depth knowledge of the area's history from previous years. |

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