DECLINE, SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT OF CRAFTS: COMPARISONS OF TANNING, IRONWORK, POTTERY, WOODWORK AND WEAVING[1] WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO SOUTHWESTERN ETHIOPIA.[2]

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ABSTRACT: *This article investigates factors that account for the differential decline and survival of five crafts, and the effects of policies and interventions on craft development. The article challenges the stereotypes of "traditional" craft work as ancient and unchanging and explores the roles of prejudices against craftwork, resource depletion and competition in the demise of craftwork.*

The article suggests that the endurance of various crafts can be explained by differing combinations of economic and cultural factors. It maintains that the long-predicted demise of craftwork is neither inevitable nor desirable. It argues in favour of promoting handicrafts as a strategy for employment, import-substitution and income-generation.

INTRODUCTION

The beginnings of the decline of craftwork in Ethiopia can be dated back to the late 19th century when the dual processes of expanding imports into the country and the conquest of the south had detrimental impacts on craftwork. As we shall see, in the early decades of the 20th century the impending demise of craft work was expected by observers, and by the end of the imperial period scholars

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predicted that craft work would not survive the effects of competition from imports. However, at the end of the 20th century certain crafts have survived for reasons that this article explores.

Despite the general decline of craftwork in Ethiopia during the 20th century, not all crafts have been affected at the same time or in the same ways. Certain crafts have survived competition from substitutes and alternatives better than others. This article considers factors that explain the differential decline of crafts and reasons that account for the survival of certain crafts with particular reference to case studies of ten societies and two towns in south-western Ethiopia.[3]

The article begins with a separate discussion of the following five crafts: tanning, ironwork, pottery, woodwork and weaving in terms of their antiquity, gender roles, status of the craftworkers, processes of production and exchange, historical and recent changes, competition from imports, urban craft work, local factory produce, innovation and their prospects for survival. Then the different crafts are compared and contrasted to help understand the dynamics accounting for their differential demise, persistence and transformation.

The second part of this article considers craft work and development policies and interventions by governmental and non-governmental agencies, under successive governments. Attempts to improve the position of artisans in terms of their economic and social status and the link between craftwork and tourism are reviewed.

The article concludes with a discussion of the potential for craft-survival and development and makes a case in favour of support for this sector as an important strategy for future development.

THE DECLINE AND SURVIVAL OF CRAFT WORK

The reasons for decline of craftwork at the end of the 19th century were different in the south from the rest of the country. In areas closer to the trade routes such as Harar, the detrimental effects of imported cloth and tools on local weaving and ironwork were noted already in the 1880s by Paulitschke (1888:213). In southern Ethiopia, the decline in craftwork at the end of the 19th century was due not to competition from imports but to the conquest and demise of the southern kingdoms, which employed court craftworkers. In particular the crafts of gold and silverworks disappeared with the absence of royal commissions and, as we shall see, distinctions between blacksmiths and jewellers faded.

In the course of the 20th century the decline of craftwork gradually continued. Although imported iron and thread, for a while, gave a boost to local production, already during Menelik's period the negative impacts of imports, notably on ironwork and weaving, in the area around the capital, Addis Ababa, were commented on by Mérab, who suggested that local production was unable to compete with metal factory produce "made in Germany" and textiles "from Manchester" (1929: 394, 407).

Competition from imports continued to spread during the 20th century with the development of transport and trade. However, apart from major towns, the effects were not felt in most of the country, especially in the south, until after the Italian Occupation period. Other factors explaining the decline of some crafts were policies and attitudes towards development and resource depletion. The prejudice that wearing leather was a sign of "backwardness" led governors of the imperial regime in southern Ethiopia to seek ways of discouraging and even banning the wearing of leather. Resource depletion increasingly affected woodwork and, to a lesser degree, the fuel sources required for pottery and ironwork. Competition from other crafts was particularly important in the case of leatherwork, since local woven products began to replace the wearing of leather clothing even before imported cloths took their toll.

During the last quarter of this century local urban craft produce and increasingly local factory products also began to have a significant impact alongside the imports of cheaper tools, clothing and domestic products made from metals, glass, ceramics, and especially plastic.

By the early 1970s Karsten (1972:135), in his comparative study of handicrafts in southern Ethiopia noted that the products "...cannot compete with comparable industrially produced commodities neither in price nor in quality". He predicted (1972:141) that "...most of the traditional crafts do not have much future with the present primitive technology employed".

In other parts of Africa too, prophets of doom have expressed the view that craftwork has no place in future development. Thus, more than half a century ago Murray (1943:55) generalised for West Africa that "The indigenous craft of West Africa are so primitive in comparison with the mechanised industries of Europe that they may easily be omitted from schemes of future development".

However, by the end of the 20th century, craftwork was still alive in Ethiopia. Moreover, I would argue that craft work can and should have an important role in development in the 21st century in a context of rapid population increase, declining land-holdings and restricted opportunities for urban migration, as source of non-agricultural rural employment, import substitution and income generation.

Although craft work in general has been in decline during the previous century, not all types of crafts have suffered the same fate or have been affected to the same extent by competition from imports, urban artisan production, local factory produce, other crafts, policies, prejudices and development initiatives. In order to understand variations in the decline and survival of different crafts, we first need to consider each type separately in terms of the following aspects: antiquity of the technology, gender division of labour, raw materials used, processes of production, types of products, forms of exchange, seasonality and specialisation, innovation and changes over time.

TANNERS[4]

Southern Ethiopia is the last remaining area in the world where stone tools are still used in the processing of hides and skins (Gallagher, 1974; Brandt and Weedman, 1997:351), and this area has also some of the most ancient sites of hominid tools used before at least two hundred thousand years and possibly over a million years (Yonas *et al.*, 1997:376). However, the assumption that current day tanning will provide insights into Neolithic culture and evolution of human behaviour (Brandt *et al.*, 1996: 37) needs to be treated with caution for three reasons. Firstly, current production processes involve the use of metal and wooden implements, plant and/or animal products and complex processing techniques. Secondly, there is no convincing evidence that craftworkers as a whole represent an ancient "race" or "layer" ethnically or linguistically separate from the societies among whom they live. In some cases, local oral traditions clearly suggest that they are relatively recent immigrants. Thirdly, craftsmen have lived in close inter-dependence with and in subordination to agriculturalists, kingdoms and state structures such that their social position and way of life have been intimately shaped by these dual processes of integration and subordination (Amborn, 1990; Pankhurst, 1999).

In terms of the gender division of labour, the processing of hides and skins is an activity generally carried out by men, except in Konso, where almost all tanners are women, and in Wolayta where women also scrape hides. In Sidama, women also used to put oil seeds and water on hides meant for clothing, tread them, scrap them with broken pieces of pottery, and smear them with butter (Brandt and Weedman, 1997:354-8). Even where women do not scrape hides, wives of tanners often assist their husbands in production by serving water and other items used to soften skins. Wives of tanners are often involved in related or other crafts or income-generating activities: for instance in Gamo they sew hide rims onto bamboo baskets and sieves, in Kafa they produce pottery, in Gurage they produce *jibba* mats made from *enset* fibres, and in Dawro they have specialised in the production and sale of sprouted grain used to produce beer.

Tanners work near and in their houses, since skins need to be soaked and dried in the sun, and are stretched on a frame either indoors, especially in the rainy season, or outside. There are also regional variations as to whether the tanning is completed inside or outside (Brandt and Weedman, 1997:359).

Tanners are generally looked down upon, often on the grounds that they eat meat of animals that have not been ritually slaughtered and that their work with dead animals makes them unclean. In many societies they are clearly part of the society and cannot be considered different in terms of origins, language and culture. However, in some of the Omotic Kingdoms such as Dawro traditions suggest that they are relatively recent immigrants, who allegedly have come to the area with conquerors who established the kingdoms (Pankhurst, 1999).

PRODUCTION

The raw materials used are hides of cattle, sheep and goats, though wild animal skins are also still occasionally processed. The tools used are generally scrapers with a wooden handle and a blade usually of obsidian but in some areas of quartz or chert, which is kept in place with a mastic made from cactus resin or ficus gum (Brandt and Weedman, 1997:359). These scrapers show cross-cultural variations on the basic design and little internal variation within ethnic groups, which supports the conclusion that tanners do not form a single ethnic group, but rather are part of the various groups among whom they live (Brandt *et al.*, 1996:49-50). A relatively recent innovation is the substitution of broken glass for the obsidian blade. Tanners use knives, hatchets or razor blades to cut off excess meat and unwanted skin, needles or metal pincers to pierce the hide, and wooden pegs to stretch hides on the ground.

Hides are soaked in water for several days often with an extract from *enset*. A great variety of animal and especially vegetable products are used as softening agents, as astringents to transform hides into leather, to remove hair and to colour the hides.[5] The hides are often worked by treating them in water. In order to dry the hides,

they are pierced at the edges and stretched with pegs in the sun for up to a week and then tied with string or hide rope to a vertical frame for the scraping process.

Currently the main products of tanners are sleeping mats and blankets made from cattle hides, and sacks used for storing grain, honey and butter made from sheep and goat skins. There are different qualities of sleeping mats and blankets. In some areas such as Dawro, Gurage and Kafa mats which are provided either as bridewealth by the groom or as a dowry to daughters from parents are decorated with geometric and anthropomorphic designs using a red paint made from a tree root[6] applied with a bamboo quill.

In the past men used to wear tanned shirts called *soro* in Kafa (Huntingford, 1955:130). In Sidama different qualities of women's clothes were worn until the 1970s.[7] In several societies ceremonial clothing was worn by men for special ritual occasions.[8] Other products produced by tanners include pillows, saddles and straps, knife sheaths, belts, pouches and sacks, whips and thongs to connect yokes to ploughs, slings for carrying babies, saddles and reins and seats for chairs or beds. Tanners also make ceremonial musical objects and clothing. In Gamo they make horn trumpets used in rituals, in Oyda drums, and in Kafa they allegedly used to make masks.

EXCHANGE

With increasing monetisation of the economy, hides are nowadays generally paid for in cash. However, in Gamo tanners are still provided food at harvest times, and each tanner has a number of patrons from whom he can request and expect food if hungry. In most areas, tanning is still produced mainly on a commission basis, and tanned hides are seldom taken to market. However, barter for grain, which was common until the 1974 revolution, has disappeared in most areas.

The cost of processed hides varied regionally in 1996 from 10 to 80 *birr* according to the size and quality of the hides, whether decorations are added and whether the

customer provides the hide.[9] A farmer may also provide food in part exchange. For instance, in Kambata when a tanner brings a completed bed-sheet he is given food and asked to bless the mat on which butter is smeared, and would be paid only 10 to 15 *birr*. When farmers provide hides remuneration for the labour involved in processing is extremely low ranging from 0.50 to 4.00 Birr, [10] which shows how little value is given to the craft.

In terms of seasonality, the period of major festivals, notably *Mesqel,* is when hides are readily available for tanners and, in certain areas such as Arsi, migrant tanners are reported to come from the North to obtain and tan hides during this period. The rains are a period where tanning is more difficult due to the difficulty of drying the hides.

CHANGE, COMPETITION AND PROSPECTS FOR SURVIVAL

Tanning has suffered the greatest decline of all craftwork. Hides have increasingly been sought for tanneries and export. The tools and processes of traditional production have hardly changed apart from the tendency to replace obsidian with glass in the scrapers, and the use of metal knives, hatchets and piercing implements.

Even before imports affected other craftwork in the 20th century, hide clothing began to disappear in Northern Ethiopia. However, in parts of the south women continued to wear hide skirts and dresses in many areas until the middle of this century. Even in rituals, nowadays, cotton has replaced tanned clothing, and the tradition of wearing skin dresses has been kept alive only by women in a few groups in the extreme south-west, the most famous of whom are the Hamar and Tsamai.

The decline of leather clothing was due to competition from cloth, negative attitudes and policies of local governors in imperial times, and competition for hides from the modern tanning sector. Initially, locally woven cloth was the main

competitor. Gradually, during this century imported and later local factory-produced textiles, and in more recent years second-hand clothing, have become cheaper and replaced not just the practice of wearing tanned clothing but also, as we shall see, local woven materials.

However, in addition to trade and market forces, concepts of development, and lack of external interest in developing indigenous knowledge have contributed to this decline of traditional hide clothing. Negative attitudes of administrators and missionaries who associated wearing hides with 'primitiveness' played a role in discouraging or attempting to ban the use of leather clothing. In Konso there was even a false claim that there was an edict against wearing leather and women resisted the ban (Karsten, 1972:87, Amborn, 1990:127-30). Competition for the raw materials from the increasing number of tanneries has also been a factor as was noted in Sidama.[11]

Ironically, while leather is one of the country's top foreign exchange earners and the quality and export of Ethiopian leather coats and shoes is increasing, traditional hide garments have almost disappeared. Government and international agencies have not sought to work with traditional tanners unlike with other craftworkers, and all external efforts have focused on developing factory tanning. Even at the height of the attempt to establish craft co-operatives under the Derg, there was not more than a handful of leatherwork co-operatives nation-wide.

Hide sleeping-mats are being replaced by imported and local factory produced blankets, and in peri-urban areas mattresses. Decorated bed covers are no longer the important status symbol they used to be and are now worn only by elderly and wealthy families while the younger generation prefer cotton bed sheets and blankets. Traditional shields made in Konso have also disappeared and traditional leather sandals have succumbed to competition from rubber and factory produced leather shoes (Amborn, 1990:133,145,155).

Even in remote areas skin pouches and containers used for storing grain and honey have rapidly been replaced by sacks and plastic fertiliser bags. Many hide

products such as saddles, leather-covered or strengthened baskets, wallets, belts, knife sheaths, are no longer made by traditional tanners. Moreover, the quality of products is generally crude and the demand and quantities produced are very low.

Prices of hides have certainly increased, at least doubling since before the revolution and possibly increasing fifteen fold or more.[12] However, remuneration for the labour of tanners has hardly increased.[13] This would suggest that the income from tanning has decreased in real terms, which would in part explain the demise of the craft. Tanning has disappeared in some areas of the south such as Oyda and Malo and in others local tanners have been replaced by migrants. Where they exist, tanners are often at or near the bottom of the social formation in terms of income and status. In many areas such as Konso tanners turned to other crafts or remained as butchers (Amborn, 1990:132,156). In Kafa tanners have become full-time farmers, and in Gamo, they were already moving into hide trading in the sixties (Karsten, 1972:87). Successful tanners seem to be a contradiction in terms and the only cases of prosperity noted in this study was due to wholesale trade in skins in the town of Woliso where some former tanners became successful traders, one of whom allegedly became a millionaire.

Tanning has survived in parts of southern Ethiopia till the end of the 20th century maintaining traditions of using stone tools. However, I have argued that we must be cautious about the assumption that this represents a continuous ancient tradition. Nonetheless, there has been little innovation on the part of tanners, and competition from cloth, negative attitudes towards wearing leather and competition from the modern tanning sector led to its gradual demise. While hides and factory leather products are vital foreign exchange earners and expanding in quantity, quality and economic importance, traditional tanning is on the verge of extinction. Even the cultural value of decorated mats is not sufficient to keep the craft alive. The quality of hide craft products such as wallets, knife sheaths, belts produced by individuals mainly in urban areas is unlikely to stand up to competition from superior quality factory produced alternatives.

IRONWORK

The practice of smelting iron ore has a long history in Ethiopia, dating back several centuries. Although little is known about the origins of ironwork in Ethiopia (Todd, 1985; Amborn, 1990), several centres of smelting were known in the south-west, the best documented being Dime (Haberland, 1961) where the technology of iron-smelting was still actively pursued in 1973 (Todd, 1985:90-1). The technology of agricultural production has depended on the work of smiths for the production of tools for centuries. Digging sticks with iron tips, and two pronged hoes have existed for a long time in southern Ethiopia and the plough share has been produced in Northern Ethiopia by local smiths, possibly since the first Millennium BC, and constituted a revolution in technology which provided substantial savings in labour time, higher yields and larger areas cultivated (McCann, 1995:39-47).

In terms of division of labour, smithing is performed almost exclusively by men, except in Malo and Konso where women may assist by blowing bellows and in Konso where women even make some jewellery themselves. In some areas smiths' wives are involved in other craftwork: In Kafa and Dime they make pottery, and in the Woliso area they make *jibba* mats from *enset* fibres.

Smiths work in a well ventilated little hut or shelter, known as *bach'a* in many Omotic languages, with some sides left open or plenty of space between poles to let air in and heat out. This hut is generally built close to the smith's house. In Gurage and Sidama they also work in shelters at the edges of market places, by main roads or at the entrance of towns, especially on market days, when customers come to them mainly to sharpen or repair tools.

Smiths are generally considered to be part of the society and ideas of their having separate origins or culture are rare. However, in some Omotic kingdoms they are believed to have immigrated with conquerors. Although smiths are generally looked down upon in most societies, they currently have a higher status than other artisans and may interact to a greater degree with farmers though intermarriage is still unthinkable. However, in a southern belt from Gofa to Ari including Oyda,

Malo and Male, smiths have a lower status than the potters. They are considered to be dangerous and greater social distance is maintained between them and farmers (Pankhurst, 1999).

PRODUCTION

The raw materials used by smiths are scrap iron and charcoal. In the past smiths used to mine iron ore and separate it from the earth by smelting it in clay furnaces (Pankhurst, 1964:236-7; Todd, 1985:91-2). However, since the demise of smelting traditions the main source of iron has been from vehicle parts, the most conducive of which are leaf springs. However, recently in urban areas such as Shashemene and Woliso, all kinds of scrap iron is recycled, including broken or used tools, electric poles, water pipes, and mortars of shells which became readily available towards the end of the Derg period. Charcoal is produced by the smiths themselves or bought from farmers.

The basic tools are bellows, usually made from goat skins fitted with wooden battens and finger straps, and fixed to horn connections and metal tubes with clay funnels as well as hammers, tongs, pincers, files and chisels. The bellows and some types of hammers and tongs are made by the smiths themselves, while files, chisels and anvils are generally purchased. Anvils are rare in rural areas and stones are used instead, but can easily break leading to dangerous splintering. Other tools are punches and nails to make holes. The quality and quantity of tools varies according to the wealth and skill of the smith.

Smiths generally work in pairs; one smith blows the bellows or holds the iron bar with tongs while the other uses a hammer to beat the metal on an anvil. The only place where more than two smiths were observed working together was around Woliso where wealthy smiths employ others as wage-labourers to work in a team of up to six persons, one blowing the bellows, another holding the iron and the rest beating it rhythmically into shape with hammers.

The process of production involves heating the iron by blowing on the coal with the bellows; one smith then holds the iron with tongs while the other beats it into the desired shape on the anvil. If the piece is too long a chisel and hammers are used to cut or trim it. The blades or cutting edges of objects are then filed to make them sharp.

The main items produced are agricultural and domestic tools. The former include digging implements of different sizes, such as two-pronged hoes and ploughshares,[14] land clearing and wood chopping implements such as machetes, axes and adzes, and harvesting implements, notably sickles and scythes. Domestic products are chiefly different sizes of knives, notably large two-sided knives for cutting *enset*, and pans for roasting meat or coffee, or baking bread. Other implements include weapons such as daggers and spears, and in the past metal shields, and objects with ceremonial or ritual value such as sticks and staffs with metal ends or rings like those used by *halaka* initiates in Gamo, *kalacha* metal 'phalluses' worn on the forehead by ritual leaders in several southern Ethiopian societies, tools for producing ornaments on gourds, needles for sewing rims on baskets, and tools for extracting teeth and removing seeds from cotton.

EXCHANGE

Remuneration for ironwork has become increasingly monetised. However, if farmers bring the metal to produce the implements, various arrangements are made. In Kambata, smiths take two thirds of the iron in exchange for providing the farmer with the finished product, whereas in Shekacho the smith keeps half. Objects are either commissioned by farmers who come to the smith's workplace or produced by smiths for sale in the markets. In the former case the farmer will often bring the wooden haft or shaft for the implement.

Prices for implements vary by region and according to the type of implement.[15] Demand for iron products and especially the repair and sharpening of tools has a clear seasonal dimension, related to agricultural and social calendars.[16]

One of the distinguishing aspects of ironwork is that smiths are needed for sharpening and repairing implements. Indeed this is one of the main reasons for the survival of ironwork; in some areas such as Shakacho, smiths are involved more in repairs than in the production of new items. Smiths not only sharpen agricultural and domestic implements but also repair items they have not produced such as ladles, trays and even beds. Whereas payment for the production of new items is generally in cash, in some rural areas such as in Wolayta and Sidama smiths do not charge for repairs but receive payment in kind in the form of gifts of grain at the harvest time. In Shekacho smiths may receive unreciprocated labour from villagers at work parties, or a farmer may work on the smith's field while repairs to his implements are made. However, in urban and some rural areas smiths do charge for repairs. Prices vary from 0.25 to 3.00 *birr* by region and size of the object and amount of repair needed.[17] Although prices for repairs are generally low, at peak agricultural and festive seasons and market days smiths may derive a significant income from repairwork.

CHANGE, COMPETITION AND PROSPECTS FOR SURVIVAL

Until the end of the 19th century in many parts of the country iron ore was smelted. Competition from imported iron began to be felt in the Harar area in the 1880s, and at the beginning of the century imports were beginning to replace local production in Addis Ababa (Mérab, 1929:394). In the southwest the traditions of smelting iron ore began to decline during the second part of the 20th century. In Wellega, one report claimed that the indigenous production process was banned in 1955 (Hasida, 1974:13). The smelting tradition survived until the early 1970s only in Dime (Todd, 1985:90).

Since the demise of smelting traditions, the production process has not changed significantly in most rural areas. However, more prosperous smiths have been able to purchase stronger tools, and a greater range. In particular the replacement of stone anvils with iron ones has been significant. In contrast, in urban areas smiths

have been able to increase the scale of production and employ labourers, as was noted in Woliso, and have even made the transition to modern technology in Shashemene, where Gurage smiths from the late 1950s raised the capital and gained the experience to purchase electric welding and cutting machines.

There have also been changes in the types of products used. Many of the weapons and ceremonial objects are less in demand. In the past smiths in southern kingdoms such as Kafa, Wolayta and Dawro produced jewellery from silver and gold and these smiths were differentiated in status and production techniques from the blacksmiths, but since the conquest these distinctions have faded and the making of jewellery is generally restricted to urban smiths. Weapons such as swords, lances, arrows and shields are hardly produced and the demand for spears and daggers is much reduced.

Smiths in rural areas have copied or adapted imports, and have learnt to transform swords into machetes, to make curved sickles instead of the traditional straighter ones, and three-pronged digging sticks instead of two pronged ones. However, most innovation and imitation of imported or local factory-produced implements has occurred in urban areas. In Woliso town smiths from at least the 1960s have been innovative in producing traps for animals, weighing-scales for fruit and vegetables and larger ones for grain and coffee, water pipes for mills, and even repairing and making simple guns (Berhanu, 1972:51). Likewise, smiths in Shashemene have been inventive in copying factory-produced objects, including weighing-scales, and wheelbarrows made entirely from metal, which became popular when the town experienced water shortages.

The terms of exchange have changed during this century since most transactions are now through the medium of money. Prices of iron products have increased significantly, more than doubling in a decade from 1985 to 1995,[18] and increasing since before the revolution at least threefold and possibly as much as tenfold.[19] However, the income of smiths in real terms has probably not improved. This is in part because of increases in the price of iron,[20] and in the cost of production due to rises in the price of charcoal resulting from deforestation.

In rural areas smiths have been facing competition not only from imports and local factory produced items[21] but also from increases of production in towns where smiths use better tools, hired labour and improved technology. Thus, smiths in Shekacho and rural areas of Kafa have been suffering from competition from smiths in Jimma town and those in Sidama from smiths in Shashemene. In some rural areas shortages and in others increases in prices of scrap iron have resulted in a decrease in production of new items, and ironwork is able to survive mainly due to the need of the rural population for sharpening and repair of tools. Smiths in some areas such as Konso have been turning to other crafts such as weaving or trade and their numbers have decreased dramatically.[22] However, certain products such as large knives, and some traditional agricultural tools have stood up fairly well to competition.

In contrast to rural areas, ironwork in urban centres seems to be doing relatively well compared to other crafts due to better availability of scrap iron, greater demand for products, adaptation to improved technology, imitation of factory produced goods, and the ability of urban smiths to produce greater quantities for sale in rural areas. Networks of migrant Gurage smiths have been particularly successful in urban centres. However, the most important reason why ironwork is likely to survive in rural areas in the 21st century is the need for repairs and sharpening agricultural and household tools especially during peak production seasons and for social occasions.

POTTERY

Very little is known about the ancient pottery traditions of southern Ethiopia compared to a wealth of data on Northern Ethiopia, notably the Aksum area. Pottery artefacts found in tombs near stone stelae in Tiya were dated to around the 12th century AD (Joussaume, 1994). Despite the lack of archaeological evidence so far it can be assumed that pottery is probably the only craft with ancient continuous traditions with minimal changes in technology. Of the crafts under consideration,

pottery is also the only one, which is generally performed by women.[23] In many groups men may be involved in bringing fuel wood, straw or grass for firing, and in some areas such as Kambata, they may help with digging clay. Men are also often involved in transporting objects to market[24] and selling them. In some societies men may make certain items; for instance in Dawro they make local water pipes and incense burners, and in Konso pipes and rooftops are made exclusively by men (Amborn, 1990:120). Potters' husbands in some societies are tanners, and in Malo they make some jewellery.

Potters generally have a lower status than other artisans, no doubt in part due to gender biases and the fact that their products are primarily for domestic consumption. They are often feared due to an alleged association with the evil eye. In the former kingdoms, potters' husbands often had special roles in the courts as jesters, entertainers, guards and executioners (Haberland, 1978; Chiatti, 1984; Tsehai, 1991, 1994). In several societies they still are the musicians expected to perform at social events. Only around the Gofa area do the potters have a higher status than the smiths, perhaps due to their important roles in rituals related to birth (Pankhurst, 1999).

PRODUCTION

The raw materials used in pottery production are different kinds of earth and sources of fuel for firing. The clay is generally dug from the ground with a hoe and transported in a sack or a basket. Combinations of different kinds of clay are usually distinguished by colour (red, white, brown, and black), and sometimes by consistency, notably whether the earth is sandy or not. Potters may also add finely ground and sifted pottery sherds (Tsehai, 1999:231). Potters in some areas had to pay landlords rent to use the clay. Although this practice was halted after the 1974 revolution, in some areas it has resumed.[25]

The earth is beaten into a powder with a large thick stick and then sieved with a woven basket to remove lumps before water is added. In some areas sand is added

to the clay while kneading. Objets are fashioned by hand. Excess clay is scraped off using bamboo splinters, bones, broken gourds, old knifes, or thin iron sheets. The surface and especially the "mouths' of objects are smoothed using sheep skins, cattle hides or cloth rags. After objects have been left to dry for a few days, at first in the shade then in the sun, the surface is burnished with a rounded river pebble, or with plastic sack threads or jars in urban areas to make the pottery shiny. Sticks, knives, and sheep teeth attached to sticks are sometimes used to decorate artefacts. In a number of societies *enset* dough and/or dung is used, apparently to strengthen the pottery.

Burning dung may be placed in pots after a few days' drying in the sun. To blacken artefacts potters paint them before burning with wet clay mixed with butter, oil, kerosene or resin from acacia to make red clay turn black and shiny. Firing is usually performed at nightfall and pots are covered with firewood, grass, straw (especially of *teff)* and dung. In several societies the sap of *enset* or acacia is smeared on the pots to provide a lustre and strength after firing (Tsehai, 1999:236), and sometimes a coating of cow dung is added as protection against cracking (Arthur, 1997:285-8). In some societies such as Gamo and Yem, firing is said to be done in secret, allegedly to avoid the threat from the evil eye of jealous people, and in Kafa men are not supposed to watch pottery production. Though in most places the process is nowadays entirely secular, in Yem prayers are conducted to ensure successful production, and potters conduct special annual rituals. Potters use wood, charcoal, straw, and *enset* leaves for firing. In the past potters collected their own fuel or received unwanted straw or thatch with minimal or no payment. However, with deforestation and the increasing need to keep crop residues for livestock feed, potters nowadays have to purchase fuel.[26]

Pottery differs from other crafts in that the products are almost exclusively for domestic purposes. The range of products include jars of different sizes for various purposes including carrying water, brewing beer, churning milk, storing liquids, distilling liquor; pots and dishes for baking, serving and storing food; pans for baking dough and roasting coffee; pots for boiling milk and coffee; cups

for serving coffee and alcoholic beverages, cooking hearth tripods and stoves. Other items produced less commonly are ornamental domes which also protect the central pole above the roof top from rain, clay containers for urinating at night, clay trumpets used for weddings and funerals, and clay parts of water pipes.

Some specialisation in pot making is fairly common. Generally larger pots, especially those used for brewing beer requiring more skill, are made by older and more experienced potters. Where the wives of different types of craftworkers produce pottery we sometimes find differences in products and specialisation.[27]

EXCHANGE

Market exchange has become increasingly the norm in most areas, but exchange in kind in return for grain, meat, vegetables, or *enset* still exists in some areas. This may take two forms, either immediate exchange at the time of production, or delayed exchange after the harvest. For instance in Kambata, potters may exchange products for cooked food brought by farmers' wives to the place where the pottery is fired. Delayed exchange is becoming quite rare and seems to be still common only in Gamo where patrons provide their potter clients with grain after harvest and in times of need. However, in the highlands of Dawro, potters are still not allowed to sell their own produce in markets, and intermediaries buy products from the potters and sell them at a small profit in the markets (Data, 1997:32). Production on commission is still common in some rural areas such as Yem, where products are sold at 15 to 30 percent cheaper than the market place.[28] Exchange in kind is more common for commissioned products.[29] Generally, larger items such as brewing pots are produced on commission even in towns like Shashemene.

Pottery production and especially sales are affected by seasonal factors to do with climate and demand. During the rains pottery dries less easily and prices are reported to be lower, since pots are of inferior quality, and farmers have less income before the harvest.[30] Prices of certain types of pots vary seasonally. For instance, in Shashemene prices for pots used to boil meat fall at times of the lent fast. Prices

rise in the dry season since this is the time of work parties, house construction and social activities such as weddings. Prices peak around the time of the *Mesqel* festival when demand is highest.

In the southwest there are clearly distinct styles and cultural uses of pottery, some of which is even exported out of the production areas by lorry despite transport difficulties. Thus, Wolayta and Gurage coffee pots and bowls are famous, notably in urban areas, and the production of pottery is sufficiently lucrative for 'ordinary' Gurage women to engage in it, so that it is no longer the preserve of an ostracised minority group.

CHANGE, COMPETITION AND PROSPECTS FOR SURVIVAL

The raw materials, production techniques and tools used in pottery have probably not changed for centuries if not millennia. The main change has been the increasing cost of fuel. The basic products have not changed. However, certain items such as coffee-pots, water pipes and large baking pans were probably introduced to southern Ethiopia with the spread of new consumption patterns, as may be suggested from linguistic evidence.[31] Recent innovations have been limited. Improved stoves and wheels introduced by some agencies have not been popular. However, pottery production has been able to attract a tourist market, though this is mainly limited to large cities.

Pottery has suffered mainly due to competition from imports made mainly from plastic, but also various metals such as tin, aluminium and enamel, china and glass. Competition from local factory produce has also been increasing recently. The penetration of alternatives to pottery has been gradually and steadily increasing, with improved roads, declining prices of imports and local factory-produced substitutes. A particularly important time in the dissemination of alternatives to pottery was the 1985 famine when edible oil came in plastic and tin containers. There are clear practical advantages of the alternatives to pottery, the most important of which are that they are generally lighter, stronger, less fragile

and more durable. Plastic jerrycans are increasingly replacing water-carrying jars, and their flat shape makes them easier to load with a wooden frame on donkeys. Likewise, metal pots and pans are increasingly becoming part of the household equipment for cooking as well as serving food. In some areas migrants returning from towns play a role in bringing goods such as tin tray to rural areas and advocating their use (Worku, 1995)

Prices of pottery items have increased about five-fold from the late imperial times to the end of the Derg period and have doubled since then.[32] Nonetheless, these increases are minor in comparison with increases in the cost of food and other basic necessities.

However, there are two main reasons why pottery remains in relatively high demand and why potters are the most numerous kind of all craftworkers.[33] Firstly, there are cultural artefacts, which cannot be substituted by imports. Thus for instance, cooking tripods, roof tops, and incense burners are not easily replaceable. Size and shape are also important factors. Thus *metad* baking pans for *injera* are larger than imported pans, which are, however, increasingly used for roasting coffee. Already in the early 1970s Karsten (1972:62) noted that a few households in Wolayta were using iron pans. Beer brewing and liquor distilling jars are often very large and not easily substituted since sufficiently large alternatives are not available. Similarly, coffee-pots have become traditional items, even though there have been recent attempts in towns at recycling tins to make metal ones. It is also argued that people prefer the taste of food cooked in clay pots. The water carrying *insira* are also still prevalent despite their weight, although recently a local plastic factory has taken to promoting[34] plastic imitation ones. Secondly, earthenware is still extremely cheap, so that a 'use and throw' attitude is common. Items break easily and can be purchased at very low cost, whereas metal or plastic substitutes are expensive for poor rural households.

However, it can be expected that if prices of imports and transport costs decrease, and the price of fuel for firing increases, products with less cultural value and items which can more easily be substituted will be replaced. Among the urban

population and the more prosperous rural peasants seemingly contradictory processes are happening. On the one hand, since they can afford the alternatives they are abandoning pottery for daily use; however, they appreciate the cultural value of pottery artefacts, notably for serving food and their use for ceremonial occasions. The famous Gurage pottery serving bowls are also becoming fashionable in urban centres. Pottery objects and their alternatives can therefore play different and complementary purposes. This could result in a general decline in demand for pottery among the well-off, but may simultaneously generate a demand for better quality pottery products.

WOODWORK

Woodwork probably has fairly old traditions, although production relies on metal tools and thus woodwork was largely associated with the production of iron and the demand from the rulers of the southern kingdoms. Woodwork is mainly a male activity, but the chiselling of designs on woodwork carried out mainly in marketplaces in Gurage is also performed by women and even older girls.

Woodwork is different from other crafts in the south-west in that, apart from in Gurage, it is not practised by specialised groups. However, in the pre-conquest period woodworkers were generally groups that were formerly mainly hunters in Jimma (Lewis, 1965:98); and they were called *Manjo* in Kafa, Dawro and Shekacho and *Fuga* in Gurage and Kambata. These groups had the lowest status among craftworkers and were considered almost sub-human (Lange, 1982:161; 264). To this day, *Fuga* and *Manjo* are looked down upon more than other craftworkers, and are ostracised and live apart from the rest of society at the forest edge (Pankhurst, 1999).

PRODUCTION

In Gurage and Woliso, *Fuga* woodworkers, who are also known for their bamboowork, use a variety of kinds of trees but generally prefer hard woods.[35] The tools used in production are axes, adzes, saws, and hatchets of different sizes and sometimes hoes (Ambaye, 1997b: 59-60). According to one informant, ideally the wood should be cut on a moonless night when there are few insects and should be left for a couple of weeks before being roughly hewn. Then it should be left to dry for another fortnight before the final carving. Production is often carried out in slack agricultural periods since all woodworkers are primarily farmers (Pankhurst and Worku, 1999:125).

In the past leaders of the southern kingdoms commissioned large wooden artefacts. The most famous are the ornate "Jimma" chairs with back-rests made from a single piece of wood (Shack, 1974:112). However, all manner and sizes of containers were produced for a variety of purposes.

Many objects produced nowadays by *Fuga* are decorated with paint and incisions with geometric designs. The main technique consists of painting stripes or sections of different colours, and then chiselling lines to form rectangular or triangular designs which stand out as white against the colours until these fade.

The main household objects[36] produced include three types of seats: a three-legged stool, a two-legged bench-like seat, and a legless rounded sitting board. *Fuga* also make small low tables, used to place cups or food, stands for individual coffee or liquor cups, and trays for several coffee cups. Other items include bowls for washing hands and feet, bowls with a division in the middle used for chopping raw meat, and large wooden trays used mainly on special occasions. *Fuga* also make dug out salt-lick troughs for animals. Personal items include combs and headrests. Three sizes of mortars are produced; the smallest for coffee, a medium sized one for pounding pepper, and a large one for grinding grain (Pankhurst and Worku, 1999:123-6). *Fuga* also are involved in house

building producing central poles, beams, rafters, doors and doorframes (Shack, 1966:11).

EXCHANGE

In the past *Fuga* in Gurage and Kambata, and *Manjo* in Kafa, Shekacho and Dawro used to produce wooden objects mainly for their patrons, and they used to obtain food in exchange. In Gurage, they also made objects as offerings for shrines (Shack, 1974:112). Fuga were apparently forbidden to sell their wares in markets, where Gurage sold them at a profit (Shack, 1966:10). In the past products were also exchanged for food or other goods (Ambaye, 1997b: 61).

Nowadays, *Fuga* produce goods both on commission and for sale in markets. Production in exchange for food is becoming much less common and *Fuga* no longer give free gifts to patrons (Ambaye, 1997b: 62). Larger objects, such as beds and cupboards, are often commissioned and carved at clients' houses. There has been an increase in the price of artefacts, particularly since the 1970s, and prices have more than tripled since the late imperial times.[37] This is no doubt in part due to shortages of wood and, for more finely worked items, due to interest of collectors and foreign markets.

CHANGE, COMPETITION AND PROSPECTS FOR SURVIVAL

Unlike other crafts, the demise of woodwork traditions was not a result of competition from imports but rather reduced demand from the elite after the conquest, the gradual deforestation during the course of the past century with the result that the larger items were more difficult to produce, and regulations restricting use of forests.

Production techniques have not changed significantly except that in some areas, such as Jimma, rope-turned lathes were introduced (Lewis, 1965:54). Shortage of hardwoods has meant that the famous seats with backrests and openwork designs are no longer produced and are becoming extremely rare, since they fetch high

prices due to interest mainly from foreign collectors. Regulations introduced seeking to reduce the production and sale of these items have not been very successful. In the past wooden-soled shoes were apparently made though these have long given way to substitutes and wooden combs are also being replaced by imported ones.

Fuga have been and are still constantly innovating. During the Italian occupation they learnt to make beds, chairs, cupboards and shelves.[38] Large beds, made without a single nail, are often intricately decorated. Other innovations include coffee-pot stands out of wood, and oil lamp stands. Some items follow traditional designs, while others display new forms. For instance, the traditional coffee cup trays had a single leg, while the recent ones have three or four legs. Likewise, there are both traditional and modern designs for headrests, and new fashions are observable in the markets. There have even been changes in the preferred colours.[39] Although *Fuga* have been involved in building houses, they apparently gained the status of master builders in recent times, probably only during the present generation (Pankhurst and Worku, 1999:123).

There are cultural as well as practical reasons why some woodwork is likely to survive. Decorated wooden bowls retain their cultural value and are still sold. Moreover, some items cannot be easily substituted; for instance the foot-washing bowls with a central footrest and the bowls with a partition in the middle for chopping meat are inimitable. Household items such as stools, and agricultural and domestic tools remain vital for rural livelihoods. Furthermore, the external interest from collectors and museums is also an incentive despite official restrictions. In urban areas demand for better quality wood and bamboo work and the lifting of taxes on imported wood are providing a stimulus for the development of this sector.

WEAVING

Weaving is different from other crafts in that its origins in Ethiopia are much more recent and probably do not go back even one millennium. Although certain species of cotton seem to be indigenous, and the introduction of cotton cultivation and weaving by Arabs probably took place in Northern Ethiopia around the 12th century AD (Gervers, 1988:219), weaving traditions probably did not spread to southern Ethiopia till several centuries later. However, weaving existed prior to the late 19th century conquest of the south (Amborn, 1990:158-9; 180-2). Weaving is characteristically a male occupation, whereas spinning is defined as a female activity. Weavers set up their looms outside their homes and work on their own.

Weavers in southern Ethiopia are different from other craftworkers in that they are not generally considered a separate group and are not despised, unlike in Northern Ethiopia. Farmers in many areas can become weavers without opprobrium. However, in some of the ancient Kingdoms such as Kafa, they did form separate groups working for the elite. In urban centres weavers who are full-time craftsmen are despised. Weavers from Gamo and in particular the Dorze have dominated this occupational niche.

PRODUCTION

Locally grown cotton and weaving traditions in southern Ethiopia go back to before the late 19th century conquest of the south. However, gradually factory made yarn, first imported and more recently from local factory production, has replaced locally spun thread for the warp and coloured borders, which in the past used to be made from natural dyes, and only the weft thread is produced from locally grown and spun cotton. The basic pit loom consists of four upright posts connected by two horizontal poles; two harnesses made from wood with a long rope made from *enset* form the treadles of the loom, in front of which is the reed, which rests inside the wooden frame of the beater. The reed is composed of

vertical bamboo pieces with a space between each and holds up to 600 threads. At the front of the loom is a breast beam around which the finished cloth is wound. These days the weft thread is wound on a bobbin using a winder, and is placed in the shuttle (Zelinsky-Cartledge and Cartledge, 1999:246-249)

In terms of products in the past shorts used to be made in Kafa and Konso but these have disappeared. Trousers were replaced more rapidly than other items, and *shemma* shawls have been the most lasting. Shawls known as *fot'a* entirely made from coloured thread, most commonly using two colours resulting in a chequered pattern, have become increasingly popular. These have been made by weavers in some parts of the south only in the past twenty years and are preferred on the grounds of being stronger, more colourful and requiring less washing (Zelinsky-Cartledge and Cartledge, 1999:252).

Weavers nowadays produce a range of artefacts, from thick blankets, *gabi* and *bulluko,* to thin shawls, *net'ela,* and dresses, *qemis.* Shawls and dresses have coloured *t'ilet* borders, which traditionally had a single colour made using natural dyes. The colour of the border and the way the shawl was worn was in some cases an indication of status (Messing, 1960). Particularly in urban areas, the borders of shawls and dresses have intricate geometrical designs often using several colours, and sometimes silver or golden thread.

EXCHANGE

Unlike other crafts, payment is always on the basis of money. Weavers have therefore been more closely tied much longer to market exchange than other craftworkers. Items are not just produced and sold in the market but also made on commission according to the requirements of customers, even in towns such as Shashemene and Woliso. However, price differences between items produced on commission and sold in the market were said not to exist at least in Yem.

There is some seasonality in demand since the thick *bullukos* and *gabi*s are sought in the cold rainy season, and new clothes are bought at the time of the New Year and *Mesqel* festival. Moreover, prices are apparently higher after the harvest, when farmers can afford to buy new clothes. Prices of some items seem to have trebled since imperial times.[40] Prices of large items such as *bulluko,* very thick blankets, seem to have increased tenfold or more, since they are time-consuming and not produced frequently. However, the price for *gabi,* blankets, even decreased slightly in recent years in Yem owing to competition from factory-produced alternatives.[41]

CHANGE, COMPETITION AND PROSPECTS FOR SURVIVAL

The weaving traditions in the pre-conquest period presumably suffered with the loss of demand for "luxury goods" from the elite in southern Ethiopia. As we have seen, a decline in weaving also resulted from competition from cheaper imports in parts of the country along trade routes already in the 1880s. However, the demand for cloth increased in the 20th century as woven products gradually substituted hide clothing throughout most of the south. Moreover, the imports of thread in the early part of the century actually encouraged local production (Pankhurst, 1964:225). However, just as this process was gaining ground imported textiles and sewing machines began to take over in more accessible areas. By the early 1970s, Lange (1982:263) noted that: 'The few weavers who have survived the impact of tailors and sewing machines are found in the remoter regions of the Kafa highlands'. During the past two decades, locally-produced factory blankets and textiles have also threatened weaving and in the 90s bulk second-hand clothes[42] have become extremely cheap in comparison with even local factory-produced cloth sewn by tailors.

The basic loom has remained unchanged for more than a century. However, the use of factory yarn not just for the warp but also for the weft has been increasing. Likewise, there has been an increasing trend of introducing a greater variety of coloured threads for the borders. The cost of yarn produced in local factories was

lower during the Derg when service co-operatives provided thread, though supply was irregular. Currently, availability of yarn from traders has improved though prices have increased.[43]

In addition to producing items such as *fot'a* entirely from factory-produced thread, weavers especially in towns such as Shashemene, have also recently improved their techniques so that the border designs on *net'ela* shawls are visible on both sides and the patterns have become more intricate, elaborate and wide.

Despite competition from imports and local factory produce, woven cloth is unlikely to disappear, even though its use for blankets is becoming more common than for clothing. Gender and generation are important factors, since the elderly and women are more attached to locally woven clothes. The famous thick *bulluko* woven blankets and the less thick *gabis* are also being replaced by cheaper factory-produced blankets.

There are also cultural reasons why local weaving is likely to survive. Throughout Ethiopia at the end of the 20th century *netala* shawls are still worn by women for social occasions, notably for funerals, where the custom of *madegdeg*, reversing the border and wearing it at the top as a sign of mourning, still retains a strong symbolic value. In some towns one can also notice a resurgence of Ethiopian men wearing 'national dress' with a woven shawl during public holidays as a sign of cultural pride. The designs of the borders on clothes have also been elaborated. In addition to geometric designs, the border represent objects from the natural world such as plants, stars, flowers and palm trees; from the animal world such as fishes, ducks, and lions; objects from daily and religious life such as *mesob* eating baskets, locks and crosses. Symbols of modernity such as the television, traffic lights, airlines, buses and roads have also been added to the repertoire.[44]

There has also been a fashion of making the borders increasingly wide, status increasing with width and cost, to the extent that dresses consisting mainly or even entirely of the border are produced. This is a case of the influence of fashion

and competition for ostentatious displays of wealth. However, in general, apart from some conservative elders, men have almost ceased wearing traditional woven clothing except for special occasions, and younger women seldom wear dresses made from locally woven materials, although they may retain a *net'ela* shawl especially for funerals.

Weaving in towns has been dominated by the Dorze, who have become one of the most successful ethnic groups virtually monopolising this occupational niche. Whereas weaving is carried out without opprobrium in most of the south, in the urban centres, where the northern cultural views predominate, weavers are looked down upon. In parts of Gamo and Konso, weaving has also been an important source of additional income such that farmers who had not been artisans have increasingly taken up weaving as a part-time activity.

COMPARISON OF CRAFTWORK TRADITIONS

In reviewing the five crafts under consideration: tanning, ironwork, pottery, woodwork and weaving, it is clear that we cannot consider all crafts to have the same history, forms of production and exchange, relations to competition, ability to innovate and likelihood of survival. We can now discuss the salient similarities and contrasts between them.

In terms of their antiquity, despite the paucity of archaeological studies it seems that pottery is the only craft which has probably fairly ancient traditions, using more or less the same technology for hundreds if not thousands of years. Tanning includes Stone Age tools known thousands and even hundreds of thousands of years ago in southern Ethiopia. However, it would be naïve to assume a continuous Neolithic tradition, since the technology and processes used today involve iron bars, and wooden handles and frames and plant and animal products. Moreover, there is no evidence of tanners having ancient origins separate from the societies among whom they live, and some tanners groups are relatively recent migrants. Woodwork also apparently has ancient origins. Similarities between headrests found in southern

Ethiopia and those depicted in drawings in ancient Egyptian pyramids have been noted. However, most woodwork requires iron tools for cutting, shaping, and decorating artefacts, and even in the past fifty years changes in design in part due to imitation of foreign wooden artefacts such as beds and cupboards, and the use of artificial colours have altered production techniques and designs. Although ironwork and weaving existed in southern Ethiopia for several centuries before the 19th century conquest, they are certainly not ancient and probably do not go back even one millennium. Thus the view which was prevalent among scholars earlier in the century that craftworkers are remnants of a single ancient population (Cerulli, 1922:200-2; Jensen, 1959:63-6) has little evidence to support it since where differences in ethnicity, language or culture exist these can be attributed to relatively recent migrations.

In terms of gender organisation of production and exchange, only pottery has been primarily a female occupation, although women in some societies, notably in Sidama and Konso, are involved in tanning and producing some metal objects. However, women assist craftsmen: smiths' wives sometimes work bellows, tanners' wives provide items needed in the production process, woodworkers' wives decorate artefacts, and weavers' wives perform the vital role of spinning cotton.

Production of all the crafts considered is performed near the homestead, and is generally carried out by one or two people. Woodworkers, potters, and weavers tend to work on their own, whereas smiths and tanners will often work in pairs as certain stages of the production process cannot be done by a single person. Only in towns among smiths do we find group wage labour.

The most numerous craftworkers have always been potters, followed by smiths. Some societies do not have tanners and they no longer exist in others. Weavers exist in many societies but in most they do not form particular groups. Likewise, professional woodworkers do not exist in most societies.

THE STATUS OF CRAFTWORKERS

Despite the crucial role of craftwork, artisans have generally been looked down upon and marginalised politically, economically, socially and culturally (Pankhurst, 1997; 1999). Politically, they have been excluded from traditional institutions and have not been involved in decision-making. Economically, they were often prevented from owning land and in some areas were not allowed to own livestock, cultivate crops or sell their produce. To this day in Dawro potters cannot sell their products in markets but must rely on intermediaries. Craftworkers were thus reduced to a state of dependence on the elite of the kingdoms or on farmer patrons. Socially, they were not allowed to take part in local institutions such as religious, credit and burial associations or had particular roles and a clearly inferior status. Thus, they did not participate in farmers' weddings, funerals etc. except as musicians and entertainers; they were not allowed to eat alongside farmers and had to sit apart, usually in a lower area, and were given unwanted types of food or leftovers. They would not be served in the same containers, and implements they used would be broken rather than re-used. Culturally, artisans were considered to be polluting, inferior, even dangerous, and in some cases, such as the former hunters, almost sub-human. They were assigned work considered unclean such as burial, circumcision, initiation etc. However, some had important roles as entertainers, guards, executioners, and medical experts, bone-setters, dentists, etc. The most important exclusion that set them apart was and still remains prohibition on intermarriage.

The reasons for the marginalisation of artisans are complex and controversial, are not of direct relevance to this presentation, and have been discussed elsewhere (Amborn, 1990, Pankhurst, 1999). Suffice to say that the notions of "race", "caste" or "class" are inadequate in explaining this phenomenon, which is generally culturally justified on the grounds that artisans consume unclean meat.

However, not all artisan groups have been treated in similar ways. Although there are regional variations, generally the former hunting groups now involved in woodwork tend to have the lowest position, while the weavers are generally not

treated as a separate marginalised group and are not despised except in urban areas. In most areas, smiths have a higher status than tanners, and potters have the lowest status, apart from areas west of the Omo and in Gurage where former hunting groups still exist. The main exception to this pattern is a southern belt from Gofa to Ari, where smiths are treated with more contempt and fear than potters (Pankhurst, 1999) are.

PRODUCTION COMPARED

In terms of raw materials, weavers and smiths have become increasingly dependent on the market to obtain yarn and metal, while tanners still rely on obtaining hides from customers. Potters obtain clay more easily, although they often had to pay rent to landowners and in some areas still do. Woodworkers obtain raw materials from forests, which are rapidly dwindling and the exploitation of which is subject to restrictions.

In terms of cost of production, prices of raw materials have increased significantly in the case of iron and to some degree hides, owing to external interests. Decrease of availability of sources of fuelwood and rises in cost and labour time to produce charcoal have affected pottery and smithing, and deforestation has restricted the scope of woodwork.

The production process in all traditional crafts has remained similar for decades if not centuries: tanning, pottery, and woodwork have changed least in terms of production techniques. Ironwork has seen the most change, with the disappearance of indigenous smelting traditions in the southwest during this century, and recent innovation in towns. Some urban smiths, notably Gurage migrants, have been able to adopt modern technology and imitate and adapt factory-produced instruments. Weaving has also undergone some changes especially in towns, due to the introduction of factory thread for the weft as well as the warp, and the development of fashions using coloured designs with increasingly sophisticated patterns for

borders. The Gamo and especially Dorze weavers have migrated to towns and almost monopolised the occupational niche of weaving.

EXCHANGE COMPARED

Delayed transactions in kind after the harvest, which used to be the norm, have almost disappeared except in Gamo, and immediate exchange in kind at the workplace of artisans is becoming rarer, and is only mentioned in the case of potters. Tanning seems to have been the last craft to become monetised and weaving was probably the first. In the case of tanners and smiths farmers may bring skins and metal and/or wooden shafts and pay only for the labour.

All crafts are affected by seasonal dimensions relating to climatic, economic and social factors. During the rains clay and hides cannot dry as easily and iron supplies may be cut off, and farmers' income is lowest just before the harvest. Demand and production increases from September with the end of the rains, the major festival of *Mesqel,* and, from November, during the harvest and wedding seasons. Seasonality is most crucial in the case of smiths since the repair and sharpening of tools is required for agricultural work during digging, weeding and harvesting seasons.

The price of craft produce in southern Ethiopia has increased at least ten-fold since the early 70s when Karsten conducted his study. However, the increases have not resulted in much benefit for the craftworkers since the price of raw materials has increased dramatically in the case of iron, hides and yarn, and the availability of wood has declined. Remuneration for artisan labour is relatively minor compared to the efforts involved, and has hardly increased, as can be seen from the case of payments for tanning or repairing metal implements. Moreover, price increases for craft products have not kept pace with rises in the cost of living in general and grain and consumer goods in particular. Artisans cannot survive from their craftwork alone in rural areas, and are only full-time craftworkers in urban areas.

CHANGE, COMPETITION AND PROSPECTS FOR SURVIVAL

Some craftwork already suffered a decline as a result of the conquest of the south at the end of the 19th century since craftworkers, notably weavers and smiths, had been tied in with the southern states working for the kings. In particular the separate status of gold and silver smiths, who used to form separate groups in states such as Kafa and Dawro disappeared and the demand for their products in rural areas has become negligible.

If we compare changes in production processes of different crafts in the second part of the twentieth century we see important variations. In terms of raw materials, ironwork and weaving were most affected by imports. The readier availability of scrap iron led to the demise of local iron smelting, but created opportunities for easier production of stronger tools. Imported thread also at first stimulated weaving. Resource depletion affected woodwork most as a result of deforestation. However, smithing and pottery were also affected by shortages of fuel. Tanning was increasingly affected by national and export requirements for hides.

In terms of tools some changes may be noted. After the demise of local smelting, smiths have increasingly been able to gain access to some better tools and a greater range. Some tanners have been using glass instead of obsidian blades, although this is a function of availability not improved quality. Weavers have been using bobbin winders. In a few areas woodworkers have learnt to use lathes. However, generally production techniques for all crafts have not changed except in urban areas among migrant smiths.

Competition from imports probably did not significantly affect craftworkers in the southwest until the post-war period. In the first part of the century, imports actually encouraged weaving since thread rather than cloth was brought in.[45] The change to "western" dress was gradual and did not become widespread even in the capital Addis Ababa until after the occupation.[46] Although mule caravan routes had existed to the south, the only major pre-war road to the south was to

Jimma, and the road to Gambella had not been completed by 1935. The occupation period gave an impetus to road-building, but imports of cars and lorries only increased significantly in the 1950s and 1960s.[47] Therefore the availability of scrap iron could only have had an effect gradually in the post-war period. Although sewing machines were imported in the pre-war period, they were limited to major towns such as Gore in the southwest (Pankhurst, 1964:261-266).

It is a commonplace assumption that competition from imports is the most important factor responsible for the decline of craftwork. However, this does not apply for all crafts, or to various crafts to the same extent and during the same time periods. Moreover, at times imported raw materials may even stimulate local production as was noted in the case of ironwork and weaving. In addition to competition from imports, local factory produce and intensified urban craft production, other factors which account for the decline in craftwork include: 1) attitudes towards crafts 2) resource depletion; and 3) competition from other crafts.

Attitudes towards craftwork have clearly played a part in the decline in the case of leatherwork where administrators in the south sought to ban the wearing of leather in the name of progress on the grounds that this practice was "primitive". Traditional smelting was apparently also discouraged. Moreover, the stress in policy on modern small-scale industries rather than handicrafts meant that competition from local factory produce has contributed to the decline of local traditions of handicrafts. The view that local crafts were contributing to deforestation has been a factor discouraging woodwork.

Resource depletion has had the biggest impact on woodwork since hardwoods are less easily found and conservation policies restrict their usage. Deforestation and alternative uses for crop residues also affected pottery and ironwork since these crafts require fuel for firing. The distances and effort involved in obtaining wood or producing charcoal have increased resulting in rising costs, and crop residues

are increasingly in demand for alternative uses notably as livestock feed and thatching.

Competition from other crafts has affected tanning most severely since locally produced woven material had largely replaced leather clothing even before factory textiles took their toll.

Although other factors have played a role in the decline of craftwork, competition can be considered the most significant factor in the context of the globalisation of the world economy. However, three types of competition should be distinguished: 1) external import competition; 2) internal factory produce, and 3) urban intensified craftwork.

Crafts were affected from imports already in the late 19th century in urbanised areas along trade routes. However, in the early part of this century improved availability of imported raw materials also stimulated weaving and ironwork. Nonetheless, imported finished products soon began to affect local production. Leatherwork was the first craft to be affected by competition, but this was mainly from competition from local weaving in the first half of this century leading to the disappearance of leatherwork in most parts of the north, and in the second half of the century also in the south. Weaving was also affected early on. Although "western" dress did not take root until after the occupation, the dissemination of sewing machines had a dramatic impact even before the spread of imported clothing. By the end of the Imperial period imported cloths and sewing machines had affected all but the most remote areas in the southwest. During the Derg period, local factory textiles and blankets had a significant impact, and, in the last decade of the 20th century, imported second-hand clothes played a major role in replacing woven materials. Ironwork and pottery were also increasingly affected by imported metal, glass and plastic alternatives, increasingly disseminated from urban centres and along the trade routes in the post- war period. During the Derg period, a salient moment was the 1984 famine when plastic and metal containers with food aid spread rapidly. The liberalisation of the economy in the last years of the Derg, and especially the opening of markets and easing of transport under

the present government has also given a tremendous boost to competition from cheaper imports in the 1990s.

Competition from urban artisan ventures has affected rural ironwork most severely since urban-based smiths, with greater capital and better access to raw materials, have been able to employ wage-labourers and produce larger quantities of tools cheaper. Networks of urban-based artisan migrants have been particularly successful. The near monopoly of occupational niches by specific ethnic groups has been most noticeable in the case of the Gamo and more specifically the Dorze weavers and the Gurage smiths, who have even been able to imitate factory products and make the transition to "modern" technology.

Competition from local factory produce affected several crafts especially since the Derg period: leatherwork with the development of more than a dozen tanneries; weaving with several textile factories; ironwork with local tools factories; woodwork with large numbers of saw mills and urban furniture factories; and pottery with the development of metal, glass and plastic factories. Competition from factory-produced alternatives has affected all crafts but to differing degrees. Tanning was the hardest hit. Hide clothing has almost disappeared, few leather products are still produced by traditional tanners, and the quality of and demand for their products is low. Pottery is also being affected increasingly severely by competition from stronger, lighter and more durable plastic, metal, china and glass alternatives. However, prices of earthenware are still much cheaper, and the cultural value of certain artefacts may ensure their survival. Woven products are being replaced increasingly by factory-produced textiles and second-hand clothing. However, the cultural value of clothing, the symbolism of the *net'ela* border used in mourning, fashion in design and nationalism have resulted in a resurgence of interest in locally produced clothing. Although factory-produced implements have replaced certain tools produced by smiths, the need for repairs and sharpening for agricultural and domestic purposes has meant that ironwork is the craft that has stood up best to competition from factory products.

Although the price of all craftwork has increased, this has not resulted in craftworkers becoming prosperous. This is because most of the price increases are accounted for by increases in the cost of raw materials and tools, especially in the case of iron and hides owing to external demand, and increases in the cost of fuel in the case of pottery and ironwork. The increases in the remuneration for labour have been insignificant as can be seen from the labour payment for tanning and repairing tools. Moreover, the income from craftwork has not kept pace with general increases in basic commodities and rural craftworkers can only be part-time artisans.

In conclusion we can assume that the decline in crafts is likely to continue in the 21st century, unless external interventions on the part of government, international organisations, urban demand and tourism make a difference by promoting handicrafts. Tanning has already disappeared in some areas and may well die out since the cultural value of decorated hides is unlikely to ensure the survival of hide sleeping blankets and the production of other artefacts is often much cruder than factory-produced alternatives. Pottery will no doubt also suffer a decline; however, as long as the costs of production remain fairly low it seems likely that poor rural households will continue to purchase pottery instead of more expensive alternatives. Moreover, certain objects due to their size, shape or specific uses will continue to be in demand. Iron products will continue to be replaced by factory-produced ones. However, the need for repairs and sharpening of tools should ensure the continuity of ironwork for some time to come. Woodwork will continue to be affected by deforestation, unless significant efforts at plantation are undertaken. However, at least in Gurage, certain culturally desired artefacts will continue to be produced. Locally produced woven materials may not be able to compete with factory-produced clothing; however, the cultural symbolism of clothing, fashion and nationalism could ensure the survival of weaving catering in particular for urban elite.

CRAFTWORKERS AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

In imperial times the development of craftwork was related to the needs of rulers. Emperors often sponsored craftworkers and had a close relationship with them (Pankhurst, 1964:221;1995). However, during the 20th century little was done to promote the development of craftwork prior to the 1974 revolution. In terms of training the first initiative was a handicraft school set up in the name of the Emperor Haile Sellassie I in 1941 in the Kolfe area of Addis Ababa which trained craftworkers for six years. Much better known was the Empress Menen Handicraft School established in 1949, which continued to function until 1977, and was renamed the Ethiopian Handicraft Centre from 1977 to 1994.

However, Government policy did not give much consideration to the expansion of crafts. Development planning focused on agriculture and industrialisation. The investment policy of 1966 (Proclamation 242/1959) was only concerned with large-scale investment of over 200,000 *Birr*. The Third Five Year Development Plan (1960-65) gave some consideration to the need for loans for handicrafts training, design development and marketing but did not lead to concrete action.

After the 1974 revolution the main focus of government policy was to develop co-operatives. The first initiative was a workshop held in 1975 by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on small-scale cottage industries and handicrafts. The lack of development of crafts was seen as in part resulting from "cultural oppression". Craftsmen were considered to have been looked down upon since the "feudal class" needed to propagate such ideas for its own interests (Ministry of Commerce and Industry, 1976:6). This seminar led to the drafting of a memorandum to the Council of Ministers in 1976, including a proposed government declaration and plan of operations. In 1977 a new institution named the Handicrafts and Small Scale Industries Development Agency (HASIDA) was set up by Proclamation 124/1969. From the start the institution was more interested in small-scale industries than in handicrafts as is indicative in the Amharic version of the name *Anestegna industriwochinna ide t'ibebat masfafya dirijit,* which reverses the order of the English translation.

HASIDA very rapidly became concerned primarily with cooperativisation. In 1978, a year after HASIDA was established, a co-operatives decree provided legislation in support of cooperativisation (Proclamation 138/1970). The number of co-operatives established became the primary index of success. By the time of its fifth anniversary in 1982, HASIDA reported that there were about 800 co-operatives with over 50,000 member throughout the country. However, 762 of these were Service Co-operatives and only 55 Producers Co-operatives. Moreover, traditional craft co-operatives represented less than half. Weaving was the only important traditional craft, with 296 service co-operatives, whereas ironwork, woodwork and pottery had between 20 and 10 producers' co-operatives, and leatherwork only three throughout the country. Figures for Producers' Co-operatives were even lower, with traditional crafts representing less than a fifth of the total. There were only 10 producers co-operatives, five of which were for woodwork, three weaving, and two ironwork (HASIDA, 1981). Cooperativisation was not popular and despite HASIDA's attempts the rate of cooperativisation did not increase much. By its tenth anniversary in 1987 HASIDA reported only 852 co-operatives nation-wide.

Since the change in government, in the early 1990s there has not been much government concern with handicrafts. However, in December 1995 a new institution was set up to replace the former HASIDA. The Development Agency for Handicrafts and Small-Scale Industries (DAHSI) under the Ministry of Trade and Industry was approved at the end of 1994 to promote training, demonstration, research, marketing and import substitution (DAHSI, 1997). However, like HASIDA its predecessor, DAHSI has been primarily concerned with small-scale industries, and its Amharic name *Anestegna industriwochinna ide tibebat limat masfafya dirijit,* also places small-scale industries first. However, the previous bias towards co-operatives has been abandoned.

The most recent developments suggest that the current policy emphasis is on considering craftwork as part of the informal, distributive and service sectors to be stimulated by the newly Micro and Small-Scale Enterprises Development

Agency which gained legal approval in 1998. It seems therefore that distinct and specific initiatives directed at craftwork are not currently considered a national priority.

GOVERNMENT INTERVENTIONS

Successive governments in Ethiopia have been primarily concerned with the agricultural sector and little emphasis has been placed on handicrafts. This is in part due to the prevalent image of the country as composed of peasants. Unacknowledged or even unconscious prejudices against craft activities may have also played a part. The concern with improving technology has tended therefore to privilege agricultural technologies, and technological development has generally been based on the premise of importing foreign technologies instead of building on local knowledge, and adapting local technologies. The result is that government initiatives have tended to bypass local artisans, or to promote technology, which is too costly or too sophisticated for their use. Local traditions of craftwork, whether in metalwork, pottery, woodwork have generally been neglected. In the case of leatherwork, despite Government interest in promoting leather as a foreign exchange earner, there has not been any linkage between local hide-workers and factory tanning, and traditional hide-working is rapidly disappearing.

Nonetheless, three aspects of policy and intervention in favour of the artisan minorities may be distinguished.: 1) access to land, 2) improving artisan production, 3) political representation and social status.

The land issue came to the fore under the Derg in the context of the land reform. In general the access of marginalised artisans to land improved. In some areas they gained access to land for the first time, in others they were able to confirm land claims. However, there often remained a bias against them in land distribution, since they were assumed to have alternative sources of income and were generally not represented in administration.

Improving artisan production under the Derg was understood in terms of the ideology of co-operative production (Ethiopian Tourism Commission, 1996:15). It was assumed that artisans would produce more and better if they were brought together in collectives and introduced to improved technology. Craft training centres were set up by the Ministries of Agriculture and Education as artisan production and youth training centres. However, these centres showed poor results mainly due to imposed collectivisation. Artisans preferred working at home in their own time, which enabled them to combine craftwork with agriculture and to maintain social activities. They also valued direct contact with customers. They resented the attempt at turning them into wage labourers. There was also a feeling on the part of the more skilled or hard-working artisans that they were subsidising less industrious colleagues. Most attempts at introducing improved technology to artisans were too sophisticated or considered inappropriate by them.

Social injustices towards minorities were recognised by the Derg. Attempts at changing their status included: 1) villagising them with the rest of population; 2) including them in PA administration, 3) enforcing their rights to participate in associations, partake in social events and enter bars; 4) forbidding the use of derogatory terms on pain of fines. Such measures were, however, often counterproductive, were ignored, contravened or reversed, and few had any lasting impact. Recently, there have been some cases of loss of land obtained by artisans, a return to separate settlement and a resurgence of discrimination and the use of derogatory terms.

Under the present Government, ethnic representation has been the central issue just as land had been under the Derg. However, since the marginalised minorities of artisans are dispersed in small numbers they have not been considered to have separate rights and are not represented within the ethnic associations.

In economic terms there have been some attempts at improving production. These avoided the pitfall of the co-operative model, under the Derg. In some cases, such as in Yem, there have been attempts to revive former craft training

centres. Work is carried out on a contract basis by individuals rather than on a co-operative basis. Peasant Associations were reportedly reluctant to contribute to expenses and send trainees, and the attempts to revive craft centres do not seem to have been successful.

INTERVENTIONS BY INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION AND NGOS

The only international organisation involved with artisans in the study region was the Food and Agriculture Organisation which carried out training programmes to improve the skills of smiths and especially potters through visits and provision of wheels. At least in Oyda these interventions proved to be pointless since there was no local demand for improved quality, design or speed of production, and potters disliked the wheels, which were taken back.

Several Non-Governmental Agencies have been involved in projects working with artisans. Within the study areas SOS Sahel began to work with smiths in Wolayta by providing them with improved tools. The smiths adapted imported pick-axes and spades into local hoes. In neighbouring Boroda, Agri-service Ethiopia also tried to work with smiths by reforming a co-operative started under the Derg, providing tools, capital and raw material. However, the agency came across much resistance to collective work and the scheme failed to be sustainable. In the town of Woliso, smiths were able to organise themselves into an association that succeeded in obtaining loans from the Bank of Industrial and Agricultural Development. Attempts to work with smiths in other areas include a project by SOS Sahel in Lasta, which has been successful in organising blacksmiths into an association that has gained legal recognition. The Meqet blacksmiths' Association has obtained contracts to make clamps for leaf springs for European Union lorries and displayed their products at a Trade Fair at the regional capital Bahr Dar in 1999.

As an outcome of this research the NGO Accord initiated a project with potters in Shashemene. The project has provided the potters with some equipment, such as barrels for water containers, sieves for sorting clay and canvas to protect pottery from the rain. The NGO plans to support the potters by assisting their association to become a shareholder of the planned Shashemene micro credit association and thereby helping them to obtain credit, training in skills, management and improved technology. SOS-Sahel also provided some training for potters in Wolayta in producing "improved" stoves. However, demand was reportedly low and the stoves are not popular.[48]

The recent initiatives in seeking to strengthen local institutions of craftworkers may provide a more viable model of development than the co-operative model imposed during the Derg. However, forming or strengthening craftworkers associations is not without problems as was noted in Hakemulder's study (1980).

TOURISM AND CRAFT DEVELOPMENT

One of the major potential areas of development of craftwork is catering for the tourist market. There has been a debate about the positive and negative effects of tourism on local handicrafts. Where tourism is on a massive scale it is sometimes suggested that it can have a negative effect on crafts leading to "the 'trinketization' of aesthetics created by the curio shop marketing of cheap goods of non-native manufacture" (Smith, 1989:8). Moreover, craftworkers may often benefit much less than "the alien manufacturer, or local entrepreneurs who have the capital to buy, inventory and sell this 'airport art'" (Smith, 1989:8). However, a number of studies suggest that tourism can have a beneficial effect in regenerating traditional handicrafts by providing an enlarged market for local products. For instance, discussing the impact of tourism on arts and crafts among the "Indians" of the Southwestern United States, Deitch (1989) argued against the view that tourism is necessarily disruptive and instead suggests that it can be a major source of income and lead to the revival of handicrafts. He concluded

(1989:235) that tourism "...offered extended markets that served to heighten artistic productivity and to revive old traditions." and that "...the revival of Southwestern handwork has served to strengthen Indian identity, pride in heritage, and perhaps more importantly, local income as an alternative to out-migration to jobs or joblessness in an urban setting"

The danger of dependence on Western Influence that could erode cultural identity is often mentioned as a danger of tourism. It is therefore important to find ways in which "the production of handicraft articles can be adapted to the needs and tastes of the foreign customers, while retaining the essential character inherent in the indigenous crafts" (Ethiopian Tourism Commission, 1986:27).

In Ethiopia craftwork, notably jewellery, basketwork, woven materials, pottery, and woodwork have for a long time attracted tourist consumers. However, the tourist market has been limited and is mainly in urban areas. The Ethiopian Tourist Trading Enterprise, formerly Corporation, has played an important role in developing crafts for the tourist market (Ethiopian Tourism Commission, 1996:19, and Annex 3).

Spontaneous efforts by craftworkers in adapting to tourist interests have also been significant, notably potters designing figurines in areas around Addis Ababa (Hakemulder, 1980:20). There has also been an increase in improved design and quality of products notably in urban centres, for instance in bamboowork. However, much of the tourist craft can be considered *airport* craft without much originality, is urban-based, and has not so far resulted in the development of sustainable tourism, offering employment and expansion of craftwork (Ethiopian Tourism Commission, 1996:25-6).

The potential of linking craft with tourism has still a long way to go although some attempts have been made by NGOs[49] and a proposal submitted by the Ethiopian Tourism Commission to the World Bank makes useful suggestions for developing craftwork (Ethiopian Tourism Commission, 1996).

CONCLUSIONS

Craftwork in Ethiopia has seemingly ancient origins. Some contemporary craftwork, notably leatherwork, woodwork and pottery, shows similarities in tools and products with examples dating back to thousands if not hundreds of thousands of years. However, to assume that craftwork at the end of the 20th century represents an age-old unbroken Neolithic tradition would be misleading since the technology, processes of production, subordination to and integration within kingdoms and states, and lack of evidence of ancient separate origins all militate against such an interpretation. It may well be then that only pottery has truly ancient traditions, and ironwork and weaving may have less than a millennium's history in southern Ethiopia.

At first sight the technology of craftwork seems not to have changed much till the late 20th century and the tools, equipment and techniques used have remained basically the same. However, this statement needs to be qualified. In the case of ironwork local techniques of smelting were replaced in the 20th century by imported iron from vehicle parts. Tanners and woodworkers have also increasingly been using metal tools, and woodwork in certain areas is produced using lathes. Weavers nowadays often use bobbin winders and sophisticated techniques for producing multi-coloured borders. Moreover, significant changes in terms of type, availability and cost of raw materials have occurred during the 20th century. Ironwork has benefited from the availability of imported iron, notably in more accessible areas and stronger and wider variety of tools. Weaving has seen a transformation from a situation where both the weft and waft were produced from locally grown cotton to one where the warp is produced from factory yarn and only the weft is locally spun, and recently certain products have been produced entirely from factory yarn.

The cost of raw materials has increased considerably. The price of hides has escalated, due in part to demand from factories, and the cost of fuel used by potters and smiths for firing has increased owing to deforestation and alternative uses of crop residues. Woodwork has suffered from a decrease in the availability

of hardwoods. However, the cost of the labour for craftwork has not increased significantly and undoubtedly this is part of the reason for its decline.

The differential survival of craftwork can be explained by a combination of cultural values and practical economic factors. Thus certain artefacts cannot be easily replaced by substitutes owing to their shape, size or cultural function. Traditional tanning is disappearing, despite the importance of hides and leather for exports, and the cultural value of sleeping mats as marriage gifts cannot ensure the craft's survival. The main reason why smiths in rural areas have survived better than other craftworkers is the need for repair and sharpening of tools for agricultural and domestic purposes. Pottery has survived because the terms of trade still result in pottery being cheaper than substitutes. Although alternatives are stronger, lighter and more durable, quality traditional earthenware such as Gurage serving bowls are becoming popular in urban areas. Thus, pottery may retain some cultural and ceremonial roles. Woodwork is on the decline owing to resource depletion and protection policies, but certain functional as well as aesthetic wooden objects retain their uses in rural areas. Weaving has survived largely due to the symbolism of the *net'ela* in mourning, urban fashion, nationalism and cultural pride.

This article has shown that in terms of policy and interventions by government and non-government organisations craftwork was neglected and has received little support. Moreover, some interventions were misguided, notably the attempts to ban the wearing of leather in imperial times and the attempts at cooperativisation under the Derg.

Without external interventions, the decline of craftwork is likely to continue in the 21st century for several reasons. These include increasing penetration of imports and local factory produced substitutes, improved communications and access to remote areas, increases in the cost of fuel for firing in the case of ironwork and pottery, and deforestation in the case of woodwork.

Already in the early 1970s Karsten (1972:144) had argued that "the destruction of traditional crafts under the impact of mass manufactured articles seems to be adverse to economic growth." The decline of craftwork or even its disappearance can be considered detrimental to the country's future for several reasons. Firstly, as the population increases and agricultural resources decline and the options for urban migration become restricted, the importance of non-agricultural sources of rural income will become even more important. Craftwork can absorb some of the rural population and provide employment and income, and complementary or alternative sources of livelihoods. Secondly, efforts to build on local technology and develop cottage industries can reduce reliance on imports for basic and simple products, which can be produced by local craftworkers and thereby save foreign exchange. Thirdly, craftwork can provide income and employment if linked with the expanding tourist market as well as local demand for both aesthetic as well as functional artefacts, especially if efforts are made to improve quality of products, technology and design. However, unless a consciousness of these possibilities develops and attitudes towards craftwork and its potential significance change, such opportunities may be missed.

NOTES

1. This paper is based in part on a research project concerning the status of marginalised craftworkers organised by the author with graduates and students of the MA programme in social anthropology of the Department of Sociology and Social Administration, Addis Ababa University, among ten groups in the Southern Peoples' Region of Ethiopia and in two adjacent towns. Each researcher spent one month's fieldwork in July and August 1996 in areas in which they had already carried out fieldwork or with which they were familiar. The researchers and areas were (in alphabetical order): Ambaye Degefa in Woliso, Behailu Abebe in Dawro, Berhanu Bibisso in Wolayta, Dereje Feyissa in Oyda, Getachew Fulle in Yem, Gezahegn Petros in Kafa, Haileyesus Seba in Sidamo, Lakew Regassa in Konso, Mengistu Seyoum in Shekacho, Mesfin Getahun in Shashemene, Nahu Senay in Gurage, Wolde Sellassie Abbute in Kambata. At a workshop held in Awassa the team was joined by two foreign researchers: Dena Freeman from the London School of Economics who presented a paper on Gamo artisans and Takeshi Fujimoto from Kyoto University who presented on Malo artisans. Additional papers were also presented by Dr Getachew Kassa from the Institute of Ethiopian Studies on Afar craftworkers, and Ato Ahmed Zekaria, Director of the Museum of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, on craftworkers in Harar (Pankhurst, 1997). I wish to thank all the researchers and to acknowledge the support of OXFAM (UK) and NOVIB (Holland) who financed the project. However, the research did not focus on the issues raised in this article, which is based on a wider review of the literature and consideration of different aspects of craftwork. Preliminary drafts of parts of this article were presented on three occasions: 1) at the German Cultural Institute at a symposium on *Innovation and Tradition* held on 13 October 1999 under the title: "Dinosaurs and dynamism: culture and innovation in the survival of crafts", 2) at the Department of Sociology and Social Administration Seminar Series under the title: "Culture and practical reasons in craftwork" held on 28 October 1999, and 3) at the Agricultural Economics Society of Ethiopia's Annual Seminar on 24 November 1999, under the title: "The contribution of local technology to rural livelihoods: the case of craftwork with examples from southern Ethiopia". I wish to thank the participants at these seminars for their useful comments.

2. The southwest was selected not because the issue of marginalised minorities of craftworkers is not prevalent nation-wide; indeed Levine (1974: 56) argued that it was a "pan-Ethiopian social phenomenon", and it is common in many parts of Africa and elsewhere (Amborn, 1990). However, the marginalisation of artisans was more institutionalised in the southwest and it was possible to compare the status of artisans across numerous ethnic groups within a Region (Pankhurst, 1999).

3. In order to avoid repetition and not to encumber the article with references, data from the research project reports, which will be presented in a forthcoming book, is not referred to separately each time within the text.

4. Several writers refer to traditional tanners as hideworkers on the grounds that they do not use chemicals (Hallpike, 1968:263; Karsten, 1972:77; Brandt *et al.* (1996:35). However, as we shall see, tanners do use various plants and leaves as natural chemicals to soften hides. Simoons (1960:176) noted that astringent plant products and cattle urine are used as tannin to produce leather in Northern Ethiopia, and Amborn (1990:139-40) notes that whereas animal products and certain plants preserve the skins without transforming them into leather proper, certain plants used in many parts of Africa and Ethiopia do result in chemical transformations.

5. There is much confusion in the literature of travellers and scholars as to which products are used for what purposes and as to what processes can be truly described as tanning. These include various combinations of animal and vegetable products. The former includes butter, milk, marrow, and urine. Apart from urine, other animal products have a softening effect but seemingly do not transform hides into leather proper. Vegetable matter includes, beans, oily seeds, leaves, fruit, sap, flowers and bark of trees. A remarkable variety of vegetable products are used for removing hair, softening skins, dyeing and tanning. Only certain seeds, fruit, and especially barks and sap have astringent tannin properties required to produce leather proper. (For a discussion see Pankhurst, 2000).

6. Called *worrallo* in Kafa and *werara* in Dawro. In parts of the south decorations are made by using a metal scraper to make incisions (Jensen, 1959: drawing 23).

7. Ordinary women wore a skirt called *tuba*, and more famous women wore higher quality clothes called *gorfa* and a cloak called *wodare.* Commenting on the recent decline of leather clothing, Haileyesus (1997) noted: "I recall that in the early 1970s

only non Sidama women and a few Catholic and Protestant converts did not wear *tuba* in this area. When I went to school in Aleta Town in 1977 youngsters, knowing that I came from Yonase, asked me: 'Is it true that people there wear *tuba*? What does it look like?'. Nowadays children in Yonase, such as my sister's son, born in 1977, do not know what a *tuba* is."

8. For instance in Sidama celebrants in the *luwa* generation classes rituals wore calves' skins over their shoulders, and in Gamo initiates to the position of *halaka* used to wear black sheep skins over their shoulders.

9. In Gurage a processed hide fetches 10 *Birr*, in Kafa a well made one costs 30 *Birr*, in Dawro a decorated hide is sold for 40 *Birr*, and in Kambata a high quality decorated one from 50 to 80 *Birr*.

10. In Konso the payment is between 0.50 *Birr* and 2 *Birr*; in Yem the charge is 1.50 *Birr* for a goat, three *Birr* for a heifer, and four for a bull.

11. Haileyesus (1997) noted that at one point during the Derg period farmers were ordered to provide hides of animals slaughtered during the *Mesqel* feast to the Government without payment.

12. In the early 70s Karsten (1972: 79-84) noted that a sleeping hide in Wolayta and Konso cost 4.50 *Birr* and in Sidama and Gamo 4.50 to 5.00 *Birr;* nowadays prices range between 10 and 80 Birr.

13. In the early 70s the price for processing hides varied between 0.50 *Birr* in Sidama and 1.50 *Birr* in Konso and Gamo (Karsten, 1972:86). In 1996 remuneration was between 0.50 *Birr* and 4 *Birr* in Konso and Sidama.

14. The general use in southern Ethiopia of the term *maresha* used in the north is indicative of the recent introduction of ploughing in many areas of the south.

15. For instance in 1996 a ploughshare cost between 10 and 15 *Birr* and an axe between 5 and 13 *Birr*. The price for ploughshares was 10 *Birr* in Oyda, 13 *Birr* in Yem, 15 *Birr* in Wolayta; the price for axes was 10 Birr in Yem, five *Birr* in Oyda and six to thirteen *Birr* in Woliso.

16. Digging and ploughing implements require sharpening before and at the beginning of the rains from April to June, whereas sickles and scythes require sharpening during the

harvesting season from November to January. Knives and axes require sharpening at the time of the *Mesqel* festival in September and during the house construction and wedding seasons from November to January.

17. In Gurage, smiths charge 0.25 to 0.50 *Birr*, in Sidama 0.10 *Birr* to 1.00 *Birr*, and in Yem 0.50 *Birr* to 3.00 *Birr*.

18. In Yem a plough, which used to cost five *Birr* in 1985, cost 13 *Birr* in 1995; a sickle, which cost 3 *Birr*, cost 7 *Birr;* and a large knife, which cost 3 *Birr*, increased to 8 *Birr*.

19. For instance in Sidama a ploughshare which now costs 10 to 15 *Birr* according to informants used to cost 3 *Birr* prior to the revolution, and Karsten (1972:41) reports that a ploughshare cost 1.50 to 2.00 *Birr* in Sidama. In Woliso a ploughshare that cost 10 to 15 *Birr* in 1996, used to cost 2 to 4 Birr before the revolution and an axe, that cost 6 to 12 *Birr* in 1996, used to cost 2 to 3 *Birr* before the revolution. In Wolayta ploughshares that cost 5 to 6 *Birr* before revolution now cost 15 *Birr*.

20. In Woliso it was reported that the leaf spring of a lorry, which now costs 60 to 80 *Birr*, used to cost 15 to 20 *Birr* prior to the revolution.

21. Amborn (1990:59) noted that in 1974 an industrially produced ploughshare cost only 2 *Birr* whereas that produced by smiths cost 3.50 *Birr* or more.

22. Amborn (1990:59-60) estimated that in Konso there were four times as many smiths at the end of the 19th century as there are nowadays.

23. Other crafts not discussed in this article such as basket making, spinning, gourd decoration, are also generally undertaken by women. Amborn (1990:120) suggests that in Konso men were more involved in pottery in the past and that the shift to women was in part due to the prejudices of the conquerors.

24. Women carry pots on their backs and men generally on their heads. More prosperous potters use donkeys for transport, and, in Shashemene town, wheelbarrows.

25. Tsehai (1999:227-9) describes how, after the revolution, free access to clay was one of the major benefits for potters, which however, came to an end after the change of government since landowners regained their land and reimposed a rent of one *Birr* per week. In Kafa potters pay an annual fee of ten *Birr* to landowners.

26. In Sidama potters used to be given the thatch of old houses free, but the price has been rising steadily from two *Birr* to as much as 30 *Birr* for the thatch of an average house.

27. In Woliso smiths' wives make pots, water storage jars and cooking tripods while wives of woodworkers make bowls and small black pots. The only object both groups make are coffee pots.

28. For instance a coffee pot costing 0.75 *Birr* in the market would be sold for 0.50 *Birr* when commissioned; a water jar, which sold for 1.00 *Birr* in the market, would cost 0.75 *Birr* on commission; a large baking pan sold for 5 *Birr* in the market would cost 4.00 *Birr* on commission.

29. In Yem a coffee pot worth 0.50 *Birr* on commission may be exchanged for 3 or 4 cups of barley or enough *enset* for a household's meal; and a large brewing jar, worth 25 *Birr*, may be exchanged for 4 or 5 *enset* plants or a *feresula* (17 kg) of grain.

30. For instance in Kafa a baking pan, which costs 3 *Birr* in the rainy season, will cost 4 *Birr* in the dry season, and a pot, which costs 1 *Birr*, will cost 1.50 *Birr*.

31. The fact that in all the languages in the southwest, which are predominantly Omotic and Cushitic, coffee pots are termed *jebena*, water pipes *gaya*, and baking pans *mit'ad* suggests a fairly recent origin of the practice of boiling coffee, using tobacco water pipes and baking *injera*.

32. A coffee pot costing 0.10 to 0.15 *Birr* in Yem prior to the 1974 revolution cost 0.50 to 0.75 *Birr* during the Derg period and 1 *Birr* in 1996. Likewise, the cost of a cooking pot increased from 0.30 to 1.50 *Birr* and recently 2.00 *Birr*. Prices of pottery recorded by Karsten (1972:60-3) ranged between 0.15 to 0.30 *Birr* for cooking pots as compared with 0.75 to 1.00 *Birr* today in several societies: 0.20 and 0.50 *Birr* for water pots, as compared with 1.00 to 2.00 *Birr* today, 0.15 to 0.30 *Birr* for coffee pots as compared to 1.00 to 1.50 *Birr* nowadays. In Yem large jars costing 0.25 to 0.35 *Birr* prior to the revolution now cost as much as 20 to 26 *Birr*.

33. Karsten estimated that whereas the proportion of blacksmith families ranged between 0.2 and 0.85 percent of households, and tanner between 0.4 and 0.8 percent of households, potters ranged between 0.5 and 1.25 percent of households (1972:52,71,86).

34. An Ethiopian television advertisement portrayed a woman carrying a water pot having her pot broken by a man trying to flirt with her and the same woman smiling when he is unable to break the plastic pot.

35. Mainly *zegba*, (*Podocarpus gracilior*) *wanza* (*Cordia africana), shola (Ficus sycomorus*), *kosso* (*Hagenia abyssinica*), *werer (Clausena anisata)*, and eucalyptus.

36. Gabreyesus (1991:64) mentions that Fuga woodworkers made: "doors of *tukuls (*the *Wezgheb),* local umbrellas, bamboo mats, baskets of all types, corn silos, stools, and benches and other wood handicrafts".

37. For instance a stool, which used to cost 2 to 3 *Birr,* now costs 7 to 10 *Birr* (Ambaye, 1997b: 62).

38. This is clear from the use of borrowed words such as the Italian *komodino* and *sofa.* (Pankhurst and Worku, 1999:125).

39. Shack (1974:112) noted that the principal colours were red, green and purple, whereas nowadays preferred colours are pink and purple.

40. Thus in Yem a thick blanket, which used to cost 100 *Birr* prior to the revolution, cost 240 *Birr* in 1996, and a dress that used to cost 10 *Birr* fetches 30 *Birr.* A *gabi* blanket, which cost 8 to 11 *Birr* in the early 1970s, (Karsten, 1972:104-8), cost 40 to 50 *birr* in Yem in 1996.

41. A *bulluko* that used to cost 15 to 20 *birr* in the early 1070s (Karsten, 1972:104-9) cost as much as 240 *birr* in Yem in 1996. However, the price of *gabi* blankets went down from 80 *birr* in 1991 to 50 *birr* in 1996.

42. These known as *salvaj* have taken towns by storm, with large sections in markets and ambulant street vendors.

43. In Shashemene town the yarn costs 8 to 10 *Birr* for a roll.

44. The "airline" design has a step-like feature that is supposed to be reminiscent of the steps up to an aeroplane. The one called "Churchill Road", has lines representing this largest road in the capital city.

45. Despite the existence of local dying techniques, the practice of unravelling imported cloths to use the thread made from colour fast dyes to make the coloured borders of

shemmas was already known in the 18th century and was common in the early 19th century (Pankhurst, 1968:260)

46. Merab (1929) estimated that no more than 100 Ethiopians wore European dress in 1909.

47. The first car did not reach Addis Ababa until 1907, and, though there were several hundred by the 1930s, they were mainly confined to the capital and its environs (Pankhurst, 1968:290-1). By 1955 there were over 15,000 vehicles (Zawde GabreSellassie, 1958:392) and by 1960 there were over 30,000, of which 13% were trucks and buses (Imperial Highway Authority, 1961:112).

48. For an insightful discussion of the problems with improved stoves see Crewe and Harrison (1998:91-125).

49. For a discussion of the existing and potential role of NGOs in craft development see Ethiopian Tourism Commission (1996:23-4).

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