Battles over State Making on a Frontier

Dilemmas of Schooling, Young People and Agro-Pastoralism in Hamar, Southwest Ethiopia

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Dedicated to

the Struggles and Pride of First-Generation Students

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Abbreviations

ABE – Alternative Basic Education

E.C. – Ethiopian Calendar

EFA – Education for All

EPRDF – Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front

G.C. – Gregorian Calender

GER – Gross School Enrollment Ratio

ILO – International Labour Organization

INGO – International Non-governmental Organization

MDG – Millennium Development Goals

NGO – Non-governmental Organization

SDG – Sustainable Development Goals

SNNPR – Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region

SORC – South Omo Research Center and Museum

TPLF – Tigray People's Liberation Front

USAID – United States Agency for International Development

Notes on the Writing of Words in Amharic and Hamar Language

The spelling of Amharic words uses the transliteration and transcription guidelines for *Ge'ez* provided by the journal *ITYOṖIS - Northeast African Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (NEAJ);* URL: http://www.ityopis.org/Guidelines_files/ITYOPIS-I-Transliteration.pdf [last accessed: 26.04.2018].

The spelling of Hamar words follows Petrollino (2016) "A Grammar of Hamar: A South Omotic Language", if the words are listed in the enclosed dictionary. If words are not included in this linguistic collection, they are written according to the use that I heard mostly. The writing of Hamar words is as dynamic as the language itself. Regional variations and no standardized written form of Hamar, Banna and Bashada lead to different spellings in academic publications and in texts about the area, such as policy documents written in Amharic or English.

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1 “Where Shall We Go?” – An Introduction

During the last days of my fieldwork in July 2015, military and special police forces patrolled the dusty streets of the small town of Dimeka in the lowlands of the Omo valley in Ethiopia. The violent events of the last months had cut off many ways into and out of town. Few people left town to visit agro-pastoralist homesteads, and few people walked from their rural homesteads to the formerly crowded market in the town. I discussed the situation with some boys who were staying in the students’ hostel and who described how they had become stuck in town since movement was impeded on two sides:

> If we [students] stay in town, we might be shot. If we go to the village, we might be beaten and told to stop schooling and herd cattle. But we want to go to school. We are students. We have changed. But not all Hamar like change. So where shall we go? (fieldnotes 2015).

Neither the town nor their homesteads appeared as secure places to the students, since the police forces and Hamar fighters were involved in a conflict in which both targeted students and created a paradoxical situation for students. Some students had been beaten by young men who wanted them to leave school and attacked the town, while the government wanted to enroll all children in school and the police maltreated some students in town, accusing them of collaborating with Hamar fighters. Thus, Hamar students in town were caught between two stools, which induced me to look at their dilemmas.

Towards the end of 2014 and during the first half of 2015, a violent conflict developed in Hamar district. The main conflict parties were the Ethiopian state, aiming to expand its control over the southwestern frontier of the country, and the agro-pastoralists in Hamar who tried to resist these efforts. Hamar students were caught in the middle of the conflict, since the government wanted to implement compulsory schooling and enroll every child in school, but opinions about this universal education program were diverse. Some parents in Hamar followed the government’s path and advocated schooling, trying to get more children into school, while some young people left their agro-pastoralist homesteads against the will of their parents and moved to town to live in student hostels in order to go to school. Most agro-pastoralists rejected the forceful enrollment of all of their children, preferring to send only one or two sons per household to school. This conflict, which caused a number of casualties on both sides, shows that young people’s education is a burning social and political issue that affects societies at large.

My study of conflicts over compulsory schooling in Hamar district reveals local and global ideals in connection with young people’s education and the future of children and society. Through my ethnographic fieldwork, I learned to see the disjunctures and tensions between local, national and global ideas and practices in respect of young

people's educational trajectories. In this thesis I look at those who are most affected by these disjunctures and tensions: students who, as my initial example shows, get caught between the fronts of the conflict. However, the conflict is not only about them, since young people and students also take an active part in the conflict.

The situation referred to above is a dilemma in which students in Dimeka are at a crossroads. They are trapped in town, searching for a safe place to live, and asking where they can go. Typical of a dilemma, each option appears to a certain extent undesirable. The threats on both paths are realistic and it is difficult for them to decide whether to stay in school in the town, or to leave school and return to their parents' agro-pastoralist homestead. This is not just an individual decision, for young people's lives are entangled with society and decisions about education form part of a social, economic and political field that affects households, societies, states and the global community. The implementation of compulsory schooling and the resistance to schooling triggers fundamental questions about the future of social, cultural, economic, and political life.

I understand schooling as one way to help young people to walk into the future, but, in opposition to hegemonic ideas, my research shows that schooling is not the only way to educate young people. The situation in Hamar district demonstrates that an alternative form of education exists in agro-pastoralist households. These two types of education are imagined as leading young people on different life paths into different futures. These different educational paths relate to each other and create junctions at which people can decide on which path they will continue. Taking the path of schooling does not mean that students walk down a straight highway that leads directly out of poverty and into "modernity". Neither does education in agro-pastoralist households, where children learn to raise cattle and goats and cultivate fields, lead young people to a dead end and into poverty, which is often argued by state officials in Ethiopia. In practice, only a few students from Hamar district stay in school until graduation and proceed to higher education, since many students leave the path of schooling to learn and work in agro-pastoralist homesteads. Conversely, young people also leave their agro-pastoralist homesteads to learn in school. The educational pathways of young people are part of one landscape; they meet and create junctions at which young people have to decide which path they will continue to follow. This thesis identifies and analyzes young people's dilemmas at different junctions on the path of schooling.

Conducting research during the violent conflict in 2014/15, I witnessed an "open moment" in the political arena of Hamar district. Christian Lund describes *open moments* as

> occasions when the social rules and structures are suddenly challenged and the prerogatives and legitimacy of politico-legal institutions cease to be taken for granted. In such circumstances the stakes rise considerably for these institutions because such an 'open moment' offers a double-edged possibility of reassertion or erosion of power (Lund, 1998:2).

The conflict in Hamar created a "double-edged possibility", where neither public schooling nor education in agro-pastoralist households were taken for granted any longer as ways of educating the young generation. In this limbo, young people's decisions for or against schooling were seen as decisions to take sides either with the government or with the Hamar, both being constructed as enemies struggling over the "reassertion or erosion of power". In this struggle, young people find themselves in a dilemma.

In most parts of the world, whether children go to school or not is no longer an open question, but has been decided by law. Schooling has become not only a universal right, but an obligation. This was not always the case in human history. In the 18th century the absolutist rulers Frederick the Great of Prussia and Maria Theresa of Austria introduced compulsory schooling, against the will of the people, in order to strengthen their authority (Melton, 1988). Through missions and colonialism, the institution of "Western"-type schooling has become a traveling model that was dispersed across Africa.[1] While church schools have existed in Ethiopia since the 4th century A.D. (Mazrui & Wagaw, 1981:219), the first school considered "formal" and "modern" was the Menelik II school opened in 1908 in Addis Ababa (Zewde, 2001:108–109). At the end of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st century, schooling was promoted worldwide and legitimized through the United Nations' declaration of human rights and international development policies, such as "Education for All" (EFA), Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

In this dissertation, I analyze how the implementation of compulsory schooling is violently contested in Hamar district in southwest Ethiopia. Associated with development, compulsory schooling raises high hopes for positive transformations, and at the same time impinges on the social, economic, cultural and political life of households. The ultimate goal of universal schooling – the reduction of poverty – is experienced and debated paradoxically in Hamar district. For the majority of students from agro-pastoralist households in South Omo Zone, schooling is a new experience, since their parents and siblings have not been to school. Although the first school was built in Hamar district in the late 1960s (Balisky, 2009:296), most students dropped out of school and few students from agro-pastoralist households made it to college or university. Since the early 2000s, a rush for Ethiopia's frontier has brought an infrastructure boom into the Omo valley. In the guise of bringing "development" and "civilization", new schools have been built as part of larger state projects of villagization and sedentarization. In this phase, the Ethiopian government, international non-

[1] On the concept of traveling models in the context of conflict management, see Behrends, Park, and Rottenburg (2014). Although the concept has not yet been explicitly related to schooling, it appears fitting to look at schooling as a traveling model that is dispersed and constantly translated and adapted. Regarding world culture theory, Anderson-Levitt (2003) and the contributors to her anthology analyze the global presence in local schooling and local transformations of the global model.

governmental organizations (INGOs) and churches have built more schools than ever before in the periphery of southwest Ethiopia.

Although schools do not charge fees, many schools in rural areas of Hamar district do not utilize their full capacity. Many seats on school benches and teacher positions remain empty. The school enrollment ratio was 34.7% in 2013/14 (Zonal Education Office, Jinka, 2014), which is among the lowest in Ethiopia. During the conflict in 2014/15, some recently built schools were closed and some school buildings destroyed. At the same time, many schools in other parts of Ethiopia were overcrowded and parents and students demanded more schools from the government.[2] Thus, the school situation in Hamar district and in other agro-pastoralist areas in South Omo Zone, where some new schools were abandoned within a few years and where only a minority of school-age children enroll in school, does not represent the general situation in Ethiopia.

In accordance with the United Nation's "Education for All" policy, the Ethiopian government wanted to enroll every child in school by 2015. In practice, the changes that compulsory schooling sought to bring to the lives of agro-pastoralists diverged not only from its promises, but also cut across the interests of agro-pastoralists. Rather than sending all their children to school, most parents prefer to send only some of their sons to school, and to educate most of their children as herders and farmers in their subsistence-oriented households. This educational aim that locates learning outside school resonates neither with universal education policies, nor with the development plan of the Ethiopian government. While international actors and the Ethiopian state, represented by local government employees, advocate the schooling of all children, many Hamar resist the type of schooling that is provided in Hamar district. These different educational interests clash not only on the discursive level but also in practice.

Although the Hamar and the federal Ethiopian government were often described to me as two distinct groups, framing the conflict as a dispute between the "Hamar" and the "government" falls short of the truth, since they are related. Hamar children who have been to school often become local government workers and act at the interface between the federal government and the local population. Thus, schoolchildren become intermediaries between agro-pastoralists and the government, to whom they are related through kinship and employment respectively. In this power constellation, students and local government workers do not belong clearly to one side, nor are they passive objects over which the state and their parents decide. Instead, in this thesis I argue that young people are maneuvering actors in times of political tension over different kinds of education.

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[2] Tekeste (2006:25–26) reports class sizes of up to 65 students per teacher in primary schools and 53 students per teacher in secondary schools.

No matter whether schooling is promoted in an authoritarian or a democratic system, its universality is not questioned by international and state actors. Education is narrowed to schooling and based on the idea that "schooling is perceived as a 'social good', and as a universal project in which all should share, and from which all would gain" (Krätli & Dyer, 2006:8). The United Nation's "Education for All" policy (1990-2015) describes education as

> a fundamental human right. It is the key to sustainable development and peace and stability within and among countries, and thus an indispensable means for effective participation in the societies and economies of the twenty-first century, which are affected by rapid globalization (UNESCO, 2000:8).

Like other countries, Ethiopia was committed to implementing primary education for all by 2015. However, the coercive attempt to get all children in Hamar district into schools by the end of the "Education for All" period in 2015 has not led to peace and improved living conditions, but just the opposite. At a point in time where the model of "Western"-type schooling has become an almost universally legitimated way of educating children, the violent conflict over compulsory schooling in Hamar district constitutes an exceptional example of contemporary resistance to compulsory schooling. Nevertheless, this case study disentangles dilemmas relating to the claim that schooling is of universal benefit which exist – in less violent forms – in other parts of the world, too. The benefits of primary and secondary schooling for all children are questioned when learning practical skills and contributing labor outside school are required to support the household economy, be it for farming and the care of the elderly in northern Benin (Alber, 2012), in the rural cash economy of Ethiopia's south (Abebe, 2007), in an agro-pastoralist economy in southwest Ethiopia (Abbink, 1996), in weavers' workshops and the informal sector in India (Thangaraj, 2016), or among the Amish in the US (Knudsen, 1974).

With the mass expansion of schooling since the 1990s, more people than ever before have been enrolled in school on a global level. However, the quality of education has suffered and the increased number of students leads to high competition for government jobs, leaving many secondary school leavers without jobs (Ansell, 2017b:294–346). This phenomenon has led to a series of studies that analyze the situation of "educated unemployed" youth, for example in India (Jeffrey, Jeffery, & Jeffery, 2008), and the struggles of school leavers to find jobs and become adults in various parts of the world (Durham & Cole, 2007; Durham & Solway, 2017; Honwana, 2012; Stambach & Hall, 2017; Steuer, Engeler, & Macamo, 2017). For urban Ethiopia, Daniel Mains (2011) describes the struggles of unemployed young people with secondary education whose hope for a bright future has been "cut", since they cannot find the jobs they aspire to. Although the reality after school does not meet their expectations, the young men hold on to the idea that education will bring a bright future. If they cannot realize their aspirations in Ethiopia, they dream of fulfilling their hopes through migration abroad. Despite the high unemployment rates among young people with a school certificate, the ideal of

schooling as a way out of poverty paradoxically persists, and the belief in schooling as a "global good" (Maurus 2019) does not require proof of its validity to be continuously nurtured worldwide (Ansell, 2017a:115).[3]

Unemployed young people with school certificates have started to blame political systems for their joblessness. In recent years, young people in Ethiopia, as well as in Tunisia, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Spain, have gone on the streets to demand better education and job opportunities from their governments (Honwana, 2019). In contrast to these youth protests, students in Hamar district assured me during my fieldwork that it would not be difficult for them to find a job, since few people from Hamar had finished school and were qualified to work for the district government. The students in my study worried not so much about jobs as about finishing school – the prerequisite for government employment. However, harsh conditions in schools and hostels make many students leave school prematurely, so that only a small elite has gained access to government positions. Nevertheless, people in Hamar district notice the national unemployment crisis, since the district receives people who cannot find jobs in their home areas and who migrate southwards into the frontier zone in search of land, business opportunities and government employment.

Not only in the center of Ethiopia, but also in the southwestern region, the space for farming and agro-pastoralism is diminishing due to population growth, large-scale industrial farming and a changing environment that is often associated with climate change. In her book "Land's End", Tania Li (2014) shows how indigenous highlanders in Indonesia experience the end of the frontier when land is no longer available for making a living. Through her study of capitalist relations on the frontier, Li deromanticizes indigenous life. Joanna Davidson (2015) describes a similar scenario for rice farmers in Guinea-Bissau, who no longer see a future in the hard work of rice farming in times of unpredictable rains. Although they previously refused schooling for their children, they have changed their minds and have started making sacrifices to enable their children to go to school, arguing that "schooling is the path now" (Davidson, 2015:166–175). The experience of changing environments and of "land's end" has also spread across Ethiopia. In areas north of Hamar, such as Aari, Konso, and Gidole, farm land can no longer be inherited in big enough plots to feed an increasing population. In Hamar district, the situation is slightly different. During my research, people were not preoccupied with the availability of land for slash-and-burn cultivation, but they were worried about unpredictable rainfall, and above all about the shrinking space for grazing their cattle, due to bush encroachment, national park demarcation, and the beginning of large-scale industrial farming. Hence, in this thesis, I investigate the dilemmas of young people and

[3] For a criticism of schooling as a panacea, see Vavrus (2003).

their agro-pastoralist kin in securing a livelihood between the two poles of the "jobless city" (Ferguson, 2016) and "land's end" in the present and for the future.

In the following sections of this introductory chapter, I situate the history of schooling in southwest Ethiopia within the history of state making in Ethiopia. This approach results in a new reading of the existing literature on the Hamar. Instead of describing the Hamar as living almost independently and "outside" the state, my study of schooling demonstrates how schooling has interlinked the Hamar with the Ethiopian state since the late 1960s. Against this background, I develop the theoretical framework of my analysis, which conceptualizes (1) schooling as a politically contested "arena", (2) dilemmas, and (3) students as intermediaries. Finally, I describe the geography and construction of my field, the research process and its dilemmas. This prepares the ground for five consecutive empirical chapters, which identify dilemmas of schooling in five fields with regard to children's learning and work in agro-pastoralist households (chapter 2), their struggles of learning in schools (chapter 3), student's distinctive habitus and lifestyle (chapter 4), student's initiation and marriage practices (chapter 5), and finally competing claims in respect of children's belonging and power (chapter 6). These empirical chapters reveal how young people's education is entwined with the local economy and contested relations in respect of gender, generations and politics.

When I use the term Hamar here, I refer to a combination of people, language and locality. Most of my study applies to Hamar district and its residents in the area around Dimeka, where most people identify as Hamar, and some as Bashada or Banna. Kara and Arbore, which are ethnic groups that are officially present in the district, are not explicitly part of my study, apart from short visits and some interviews. To make reading easier, I mostly use the generic term Hamar, which often includes people who identify as Bashada or Banna since ethnic identifications are flexible and may change with marriage, intermarriage being common among Hamar, Banna and Bashada. Hamar as a generic term for the area and its inhabitants is used not only by the administration but also in everyday language throughout the zone. Some dilemmas of schooling that I describe for Hamar also apply to Kara and Arbore, and may also preoccupy people in other parts of southwest Ethiopia. However, cultural particularities such as marriage, initiation and gender norms, and a conflict that took place in the Hamar mountains and its administrative center Dimeka, shape Hamar students' dilemmas and make it necessary not to generalize their experiences for all agro-pastoralists in South Omo or Ethiopia. Many of my empirical examples stem from the violent conflict that particularly affected the area around Dimeka and the region east of Dimeka in the mountains, where the two ritual leaders of the Hamar live, and from where the conflict spread across the district. For this reason, the term Hamar appears appropriate despite its diverse ethnic configuration and its closeness to Bashada and Banna. In particular cases where an ethnic distinction between Hamar, Banna and Bashada and their relation to other ethnic groups was pointed out to me, I will specify this. The creation of the "Hamar" as an ethnic group will be

discussed throughout the following chapters in relation to the creation of boundaries between "Hamar" and students (*temara*).

In Hamar, the collective term for people who are at school or who have been to school is *temari*. This Amharic loan word ተማሪ (*temari*) does not differentiate between schoolchildren, high school and university students, or graduates, and is simply translated as "student" in English. I mostly follow this Ethiopian use of the term student (*temari)* and only sometimes specify its meaning according to school type and age.[4] Following first-generation students from agro-pastoralist homesteads in Hamar district to schools and government jobs in town, my thesis analyzes not only the creation of a new social group of students with their dilemmas and struggles, but also a process of ongoing state making and resistance on Ethiopia's southwestern frontier.

1.1 State Making and Schooling on Ethiopia's Southwestern Frontier

The history of schooling is tied to a history of nation building. In his classical reading, Ernest Gellner ([1983] 2008) looks at the role of education in the formation of nation states and in the transformation of agricultural societies into industrial societies, where young people are no longer educated in productive units on the job, but taught by full-time specialists outside the community. Outlining the history of Ethiopian state making and its effects on southwest Ethiopia, this section locates the conflict over compulsory schooling in Hamar district historically. Ethiopia holds a special place on the African continent, since it was not colonized by European powers. In his book "Ethiopia: The Last Two Frontiers", John Markakis argues that the nation building process in Ethiopia "has made much progress, yet it is nowhere near an end" (Markakis, 2011:1).

The Ethiopian state expands from a center in the highlands outwards into the "geographical periphery, and then weaves an administrative network to incorporate them and capture their resources" (Markakis, 2011:7). This state expansion reached southwest Ethiopia at the end of the 19th century. After Emperor Menelik II defeated the Italian army at the battle of Adwa in 1896, he turned his troops southwards to conquer the territories in the South and incorporate them into his empire (Donham & James, [1986] 2002; Zewde, 2001). This conquest by the imperial regime constitutes a form of internal colonialism, which the power center does not frame as such:

> Although it called Ethiopia an 'empire', the imperial regime did not regard the expansion as an imperialist venture. On the contrary, it saw it as the restoration of the *status quo ante*, the legitimate recovery of territories that Ethiopia had allegedly lost in times past. When decolonisation was redrawing the political map of Africa,

[4] In Amharic, the plural of ተማሪ *(temari)* is ተማሪዎች *(temariwoch)*. In Hamar, the plural of *temari* is *temara*. The transcription of Amharic in English follows the guidelines of the journal ITYOṖIS – Northeast African Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities.

> Ethiopia's rulers were leisurely pursuing the integration of the 'recovered' territories into what they hoped would become a modern nation-state (Markakis, 2011:6) [emphasis in the original].

The conquest of southern territories during the process of state building, which in the dominant national discourse is legitimated as "recovery", is part of Ethiopia's highland-lowland divide.

Relations between highlands and lowlands have been discussed by Edmund Leach ([1954] 1964) for highland Burma and by James Scott (2009) for hill and valley people in South-East Asia. While Scott locates state centers in valleys and fugitives of the state in mountain areas around the world (Scott, 2009:8), this model has to be turned on its head in Ethiopia (Girke, 2016:16). In Ethiopian history, the Christian kingdoms and the empires were located in the northern highlands and expanded into the southern lowlands, which constitutes "a centuries-long process of expansion that had seen the Christian kingdom's frontiers shift steadily southwards" (Markakis, 2011:3). People in the lowlands challenged the expanding power of the highland state and constructed a shatter zone for fugitive people:

> In Ethiopia, […] to escape imperial control (or any other attempts at centralization) meant to move downhill, away from the high plateaus so very useful for grain agriculture and into the inhospitable savannahs, the desert, marsh, and swamp regions. It is no surprise either that many of these groups still today resort to pastoralism or swidden cultivation, both forms of subsistence production qualifying as 'escape' practices (see Strecker 1976 on the Hamar example) (Girke, 2015:171).

The highland-lowland divide is marked not only by geographical differences, but also by power relations and cultural differences. People in the Ethiopian highlands associate themselves with culture, history, "civilization" and religion, and regard lowlanders as "uncivilized", "backward" and "without culture".[5] Conversely, lowlanders describe the highlands, and towns in the lowlands, where highlanders have settled, as unattractive, "dirty, violent, immoral" places (Girke, 2015:185). However, history shows that highlands and lowlands exist only in relation to each other:

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5 Cf. Scott (2009:3): "The encounter between expansionary states and self-governing peoples is hardly confined to Southeast Asia. It is echoed in the cultural and administrative process of 'internal colonialism' that characterizes the formation of most modern Western nation-states; in the imperial projects of the Romans, the Hapsburgs, the Ottomans, the Han, and the British; in the subjugation of indigenous peoples in 'white-settler' colonies such as the United States, Canada, South Africa, Australia, and Algeria; in the dialectic between sedentary, town-dwelling Arabs and nomadic pastoralists that have characterized much of Middle Eastern history. The precise shape of the encounters is, to be sure, unique to each case. Nevertheless, the ubiquity of the encounter between self-governing and state-governed peoples—variously styled as the raw and the cooked, the wild and the tamed, the hill/forest people and the valley/cleared-land people, upstream and downstream, the barbarian and the civilized, the backward and the modern, the free and the bound, the people without history and the people with history — provides us with many possibilities for comparative triangulation."

> The history of early nineteenth-century Ethiopia would not be complete without a description of the peoples and principalities of the southern half of the country. It was the unification of these two parts in the second half of the nineteenth century that gave birth to modern Ethiopia. The peoples of southern Ethiopia had attained varying degrees of social and political organization. The term 'southern' is used here not in the strictly geographical sense, but as a convenient category embracing those states and peoples which did not directly engage in or were peripheral to the imperial politics of Gondar. Their organizations ranged from communal societies to states with powerful kings and elaborate mechanisms for the exercise of authority (Zewde, 2001:16).

Bahru Zewde (2001) describes how the imperial regime "unified" what he calls "modern" Ethiopia by expanding from Gondar in Amhara southwards to make Addis Ababa the capital of the empire in 1886 and conquer southern kingdoms, like Kafa, Wolaita and Janjaro.[6] However, he excludes the far southwest, such as Konso and the Omo Valley from this Ethiopian historiography.

Donald Donham and Wendy James ([1986] 2002) tried to fill this gap with their anthology "The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia". On the basis of his research in Maale in southwest Ethiopia, Donham (1985:2) shows that not only the images of an "uncolonized and free" Ethiopia, but also those of "archaic and traditional people" who are supposedly living independently from the world in southwest Ethiopia do not hold true.[7] The expansion of the empire went along with a process of cultural assimilation, which in Ethiopia is described as Amharization.[8]

> Amhara increasingly filled the offices of the imperial state during the twentieth century, their language becoming the national language of school (even foreign mission schools), as well as that of newspapers, courts, and offices. This set up strong pressures on the non-Semitic-speaking population of the empire (more than half of the total by the mid-twentieth century) to become modern by changing their ethnic and religious identity. Not only this, but ethnic groups […] were placed in an implicit hierarchy by the Amhara and situated in linear time as ahead or behind one another (Donham, 1992:40).

The ranking of people in imperial Ethiopia puts the Semitic-speaking Amhara at the upper end of the sociocultural hierarchy, and so-called *shankilla*, people of the subjugated southern territories, at the lower end (Donham, [1986] 2002:12–13). Before the revolution

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[6] For an analysis of the imperial conquest of an Oromo kingdom in Jimma, see Lewis (2001).

[7] On the integration of the Aari into the imperial state and the consequences of this on the political culture of the Aari, see Naty (1992). On the conquest of the Hamar and their coping strategies at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, see Strecker (2013a).

[8] Cf. Scott (2009:12–13) who points out that the expansion of nation-states goes along with "a massive reduction of vernaculars of all kinds: of vernacular languages, minority peoples, vernacular cultivation techniques, vernacular land tenure systems, vernacular hunting, gathering, and forestry techniques, vernacular religion, and so on".

in 1974, *shankilla* was a commonly used, offensive term for people in the south. *Shankilla* means "black" people, who were seen as "pagans" living in the southern "wilderness". They were constructed as different from the "red skinned" Amhara and were captured as slaves for the ruling class at the beginning of the 20th century (Amborn, 2005). The term Amhara thus not only refers to an ethnic group and a regional state in Ethiopia, but is associated with political power (Markakis, 2011:4). Strictly speaking, the political power center cannot be located exclusively in the highlands and attributed to the Amhara, since an administrative network creates outposts in the periphery of the state for an auxiliary elite that shares state power. Furthermore, some of the ruling elite have become Amhara in the process, but not all people in the highlands, and not all Amhara people, have access to political power (Markakis, 2011:8). Thus, state making is an ongoing process at the periphery of the state in southwest Ethiopia, where police posts, administrative centers and schools are expanding and weaving a network of state power centers that increasingly includes school-educated locals.

Despite changes of government in recent decades, in southwest Ethiopia the state has continued to be associated with Amhara and with the highlands, which try to rule the south in a top-down fashion. After the socialist regime, the Derg, which led Ethiopia between 1974 and 1991, was replaced by Ethnic Federalism and the political power shifted from Amhara to Tigray. The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) formed the strongest group in the ruling coalition party of Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) from the 1990s until 2018, when an Oromo politician became Prime Minister.

In the national discourse, the implementation of compulsory schooling is framed as a way to "civilize" and "develop" "backward" people in southwest Ethiopia. In a speech to celebrate the annual pastoralists' day in Jinka, the capital of South Omo Zone, the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi described the national development agenda for pastoralists in South Omo as follows:

> Even though poverty and backwardness are a concern for the whole country, it is worse for the pastoralists. […] I promise you that, even though this area is known as backward in terms of civilization, it will become an example of rapid development. I also want to assure you that the work we have started in this area on infrastructure and social development will continue stronger than ever. […] the friends of backwardness and poverty, whatever they say or do, can't stop us from the path of development we are taking (Zenawi, 2011).

This speech ascribes a low status to pastoralists in Ethiopia ("backward in terms of civilization") but sees a potential for the area to become an "example of rapid development" for the whole country. Ethiopia is pursuing the goal of becoming a middle-income country by 2025 (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2016ix). This development agenda justifies the government's authoritarian rule which is typical of a developmental state (Prunier, 2015). Ethiopia's Growth and Transformation Plans have

turned formerly peripheral areas, such as South Omo Zone which borders on northern Kenya and South Sudan, into hotspots of national development.

Around the year 2010, the government and private investors started to construct large-scale infrastructure projects, such as hydroelectric dams, sugar and cotton plantations along the Omo river. The ideology behind these large-scale projects is what James Scott (1998) calls "high modernism". While some government officials and local elites support such large projects and benefit from them, the hegemonic planning of authoritarian leadership excludes local knowledge and know-how, which provokes local resistance (Regassa & Korf, 2018; Scott, 1998:4–6). The determination in Meles Zenawi's speech that no one can stop his "path of development" shows an authoritarian ruling style typical of a developmentalist state, which determined the political climate beyond his death in 2012.

Ethnicity continues to be a politically contested issue in Ethiopia, where formal ethnic federalism gives ethnic groups distinctive rights, but where in fact an authoritarian government rules (Aalen, 2011; Bach, 2016; Bassi, 2014; Turton, 2006). The May 2015 election, in which the ruling EPRDF won the last remaining opposition seat in parliament (Agence France Presse in Addis Ababa, June 22, 2015), was characterized by the repression of political opposition groups in the run up to the election (Home, 2015), during which my fieldwork took place. Since the end of 2015, protests have been shaking Ethiopia, particularly the Oromo and Amhara regions, and have led to the declaration of several states of emergency (Johnson, 2018; Schadomsky, 2016; Scheen, 2016). Protestors are demanding a more equal share of the country's economic wealth. With a growth rate of around eight percent, Ethiopia has the fastest growing economy in Africa (Gray, 2018). Due to the protests, Zenawi's successor, Hailemariam Desalegn, resigned from his office as Prime Minister in February 2018 (Wadla, 2018) and was followed by Abiy Ahmed, the first Prime Minister from Oromia region, who has started reforms and invited opposition parties back from exile (Dörries, 2018). Nevertheless, ethnicity plays a crucial role in contemporary politics in Ethiopia, as ongoing conflicts over ethnic rights, displacements, fighting and killings show. In the simmering political tensions in the years before and shortly after the elections in May 2015, I conducted my fieldwork on conflicts over compulsory schooling, which at the same time speaks about the relationship between ethnic minorities and the federal state.

In Hamar, the term *gal* is used synonymously to refer to the Amhara and to an enemy (Petrollino, 2016:303), and is applied to government representatives and the urban population in the south – irrespective of whether they consider themselves Amhara or whether the ruling people in the federal government are actually Amhara, which they mostly no longer are. The twofold meaning of *gal* captures the ambiguous and hostile relationship of the Hamar with the state, its rulers and urbanization. Although after 1994 the cultural rights of ethnic groups were strengthened and cultural forms reinvented to strengthen group rights (Watson, 2009), Amharic has remained the national language.

Unlike the small ethnic groups in South Omo, larger, politically influential groups have been able to establish the use of their vernacular languages in schools and administration (Guidi, 2015). While many ethnic groups in SNNPR and other regions have started primary schooling in their mother tongues, in South Omo Zone Amharic has remained the language of instruction in agro-pastoralist districts, and continues to be associated with the state and its rulers, despite the shift in power from Amhara to Tigray and to Oromo.

Unlike schooling in most African countries, which looks back on a history of European mission education that dates at least back to the 19th century, the history of schooling in Hamar started in the mid 20th century with Haile Selassie's boarding school. The children who went to this boarding school in Addis Ababa are often called "Haile Selassie's students" and in Hamar, Banna and Arbore these students are still remembered as the first students of their ethnic group. The construction of schools in the southwestern frontier area, what is nowadays South Omo Zone, started with a Protestant mission school in Aari in the mid 1950s (Balisky, 2009:256). Mission schools in Hamar and Banna were built in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Balisky, 2009:294). In the 1980s, the socialist regime built some schools near homesteads in Hamar, but in 2003 only two kindergartens and nine primary schools existed in Hamar district (*woreda*), of which only one school covered grades 1- 8 (Beyene, 2004:31).[9] A high school opened in Hamar district in 2002 E.C. (2009/2010 G.C.).[10]

The year 2010 marked the beginning of Ethiopia's Growth and Transformation Plan (2010-2015) which launched large infrastructure projects in South Omo Zone. In the rush for land and resources on Ethiopia's southwestern frontier, schooling is depicted as a "service" that the government provides for its people in order to "civilize" and "modernize" them "even against their own will" (Regassa, Hizekiel, & Korf, 2018:9).

Whenever I talked about my research on education in South Omo to academics and non-academics in Addis Ababa, or in international academic circles, I was repeatedly told that the area was neglected by the previous socialist regime, but that the EPRDF government is giving attention to these people, resettling them and giving them schools. The anticipated benefits of schooling were also used by leaders of the Kuraz Sugar Development Project, who printed brochures in 2013 in which they advertised the sugar plantation with photos of Mursi and Bodi children wearing blankets while sitting on school benches in classrooms. The other side of the story, which is not depicted in this

[9] In the case of the Amharic terms *woreda* (district) and *kebele* (subdistrict) I do not follow the transliteration of the journal ITYOṖIS but use the most common transcription as shown here.

[10] E.C. stands for Ethiopian Calendar, which differs between seven to eight years from the Gregorian calendar (G.C.) which is indicated in brackets.

image, is forced resettlement that leads to hunger and death.[11] Thus, the construction of schools as a global good is used to legitimize forced resettlement and land grabbing.

Education plays a prominent role in the government's "civilizing" and "developing" mission and is envisaged as a tool for achieving the overall goal of national "development". The "thickening of the state" through an increased presence of police and military forces, which Asebe Regassa and colleagues (2018:2) describe in connection with the rush for the frontier, is also experienced in the increased presence of schools and forced school enrollment. In this political context, a study of schooling is a study of struggles over power and authority. The struggles between the state and the targeted population seem to be most prominent along the frontiers of the state, but similar – although less violent – processes shape schooling in multiethnic contexts around the world. However, schooling has so far received little attention in research on infrastructure and on southwest Ethiopia.

1.2 Hamar in the Literature

Public representations of people in the Omo valley of southwest Ethiopia oscillate between depictions of "noble savages" who are "threatened by extinction", and representations of "backward" people who need be "developed", "modernized" and "civilized". Idyllic descriptions of rural life have been widely criticized by anthropologists for depicting the writer's or photographer's exotic and romantic fantasies of "virgin natives living in perfect harmony with nature" rather than giving an account of people's actual lives (Kohl, 1981). Scott (2009) analyses discourses on "barbarians" and "civilized" people in connection with state making. Historical examples, like the Roman empire, show that the world of so-called "barbarians" starts where the state's territory ends (Scott, 2009xi). These dualistic discourses can be found in many frontier situations throughout history in which states and empires try to expand their territory, where the local population attempts to resist subjugation, and where intermediaries play a crucial role. The political situation at the frontier of the state influences anthropological research. I will therefore give a brief overview of the research perspectives that preceded my fieldwork in South Omo and in Hamar, and then show how my study of schooling tries to bring these different strands together to relate the people living in Hamar district with the Ethiopian state.

In the anthropological literature on Ethiopia, ethnicity plays a central role. Since the first half of the 20th century, Ethiopia has been described as "*un museo di popoli*", a

[11] According to Kamski (2016), the Kuraz Sugar Factory aims at establishing five factories covering 175,000 hectares of land in South Omo and wants to create up to 700,000 jobs. On the detrimental impacts on local livelihoods of this and other large-scale projects in the Omo valley, see Fong (2015); Human Rights Watch (2012a); Human Rights Watch (2012b); Hurd (2013); International Rivers (2013); Mousseau and Martin-Prével (2016); Pertaub and Stevenson (2019); Stevenson and Buffavand (2018).

term which highlights the country's social, cultural and linguistic diversity (Levine, [1974] 2000:19–20; Markakis, 2011:10–11). This conceptualization of Ethiopia as an "ethnic museum" has consequences for anthropological research:

> The chief assumptions associated with this view are (1) that Ethiopia is a country of extraordinary ethnic diversity, and (2) that each of its diverse peoples deserves to be studied intensively, on its own terms, as bearer of a bounded system and a unique culture. Whereas proponents of the first perspective were largely products of the German universities of the late nineteenth century, those of the second sprang mainly from Anglo-American universities of the mid-twentieth. The geographical focus of the latter has been mainly on peoples in the southern parts of the country, and their substantive focus has been mostly on the social organization of discrete tribes. Their contribution has been to provide basic ethnographies of the relatively unknown peoples of these areas (Levine, [1974] 2000:19–20).

Following the paradigms of cultural relativism, anthropological research in Ethiopia tends to "look for self-sufficient, bounded systems" and "relationships with other groups outside the system are considered peripherally, if at all" (Levine, [1974] 2000:21). This research focus on the "cultural autonomy and uniqueness" of people has created a "rich library of ethnographic monographs" (Levine, [1974] 2000:21), but it has its shortcomings:

> To see Ethiopia as a mosaic of distinct peoples is to overlook the many features they have in common and the existence of discernable culture areas, and to ignore numerous relationships these groups have had with one another. In particular, it leads to the erroneous view that before the conquests of Menelik II in the late nineteenth century the other peoples of Ethiopia had lived independent and self-sufficient lives […]. In sum, the image of Ethiopia as a collection of distinct peoples neglects what these peoples have in common, how they interact, and the nature of Ethiopian society as a whole (Levine, [1974] 2000:21).

Although Donald Levine's critique of studying "single ethnic groups" stems from 1974, and although much research has been done since then, the practice of studying "culturally distinct ethnic groups" is very persistent in Ethiopian anthropology. The constitution of 1994 made Ethnic Federalism a national policy, in which the right of political representation and access to resources are formally attributed to ethnic groups (Aalen, 2011). This political situation influences the tendency to focus research on the particularities of ethnic groups, which compete for state power.

Furthermore, anthropological research in Ethiopia is shaped by the highland-lowland divide. While northern Ethiopia has attracted historical research on its imperial centers, societies in southern Ethiopia have been studied by anthropologists without reference to these centers (Donham, [1986] 2002:4). Nevertheless, Donham, who conducted research among the Maale in South Omo during the revolution in 1974, observed "that almost any topic in Maale economics or politics would have to include a consideration of Maale's involvement in the encompassing social system of Ethiopia"

(Donham, 1985:4). He argues that southern Ethiopia can only be understood in relation to the political center in Addis Ababa, and hence he conducted research not only in Maale but also in Addis Ababa (Donham, 1999). However, this multi-sited approach and interest in the entanglements of southwest Ethiopia with the Ethiopian state is restricted to research on the Aari (Naty, 1992; Naty, 2005) and the Maale (Donham, 1985; Donham, 1999; Thubauville, 2010), who live in the highlands of South Omo Zone. These highland communities experienced the imperial conquest, integration into the state, and the advent of missionaries more profoundly than the agro-pastoralists in the lowlands of South Omo. Thus, a highland-lowland divide exists not only between the national center and its periphery, but also between the highlands and lowlands within the southwestern periphery of Ethiopia. While the highlands of South Omo have been studied with regard to influence of the state and of missionaries on cultural life, we get to know only little about these influences on societies in the lowlands of South Omo, which are mostly inhabited by agro-pastoralists.

Beside the imperial conquest, the state is often excluded in ethnographies of agro-pastoralists in South Omo. Instead, the great cultural and linguistic diversity of South Omo leads to a focus on interethnic relations, which are analyzed using concepts such as "cultural contact and self-esteem" (Strecker & Lydall, 2006), "cultural neighborhood" (Gabbert & Thubauville, 2010), "dynamics of social categorization" (Epple, 2014) and "images of self and other" (Girke, 2014). These studies of ethnicity, which also reach beyond ethnic groups in South Omo, often focus on rural life, customary institutions and recent changes in cultural life.

Studies of emergent political powers in Africa distinguish between "old fellows" and "new guys" (Bellagamba & Klute, 2008b). While "old fellows" like agro-pastoralists and farmers are studied intensively, the perspectives of "newcomers", such as government employees, traders, resettled farmers, missionaries, development agents, tourists and town dwellers, do not have a comparable place in anthropological research and writing. Rather, the "new guys" are studied through the perspective of the "old fellows". This distinction comes along with an implicit separation into "inside" and "outside" ethnic groups. While Christina Gabbert (2012) shows for Arbore that making peace is a process that comes from "inside", change is often depicted as being imposed upon pastoralists from "outside", as in the case of formal education (Epple, 2012b), missionary work (Epple, 2005), or "the demise of cherished traditions" (Lydall, 2010). The boom in foreign investments and infrastructure in the early 2010s has made researchers look more closely into the relations between "old fellows" and "new guys", and initiatives in applied anthropology have tried to mediate these encounters (Abbink, Askew, Dori, & et. al., 2014; Berhe, 2014).

After outlining general trends in anthropological studies of ethnicity in Ethiopia and in southwest Ethiopia, I will now briefly review research on the Hamar to identify central themes, before proceeding with my study of schooling in Hamar. Some 19th

century explorers briefly refer to the Hamar, such as Ludwig von Höhnel (1890) who carried out an expedition from Zanzibar to Lake Rudolf and Lake Stephanie (1887-88) and mentions the "Amárr" and "Batschada" people. Since a drought had affected Hamar territory, he met some "Amárr" who came to exchange animals for grain on the northern shore of Lake Rudolf where von Höhnel was staying (Höhnel, 1890:40–41). In 1950/52, an expedition of the Frobenius Institute in Frankfurt brought Adolf E. Jensen with Eike Haberland, Elisabeth Pauli and Willy Schulz-Weidner to South Omo. Their research was published in the book "Altvölker Südäthiopiens" (Jensen, 1959a). While staying in the administrative center of Bako in the mountains of Ari, the researchers talked to a leader of the southern Hamar, called Berinas, who was imprisoned there. From June 9 to 25, 1951, Jensen stayed in an administrative center in the Hamar mountains, called "Hammar katama" (Jensen, 1959c:337), which is probably the place that is today called Buska. Jensen mentions two Hamar leaders, Galli and Berinas, who were installed by the Amhara and received the honorary titles of *grasmadj* and *kanjasmatsch* (Jensen, 1959c:339). Galli was responsible for 90 tax payers, which Jensen estimates as representing around 400 to 500 people, while Berinas collected taxes from 50 payers, representing around 200 to 300 people (Jensen, 1959c:337). Jensen also writes about the Banna, whom he describes as little controlled by the Amhara, and estimates their population at 5000 to 10,000 people (Jensen, 1959b:315). Overall, Jensen complains about the difficulty of finding communicative and Amharic-speaking people among the Banna (Jensen, 1959b:316).[12]

Long-term anthropological research in Hamar started in 1970 with the anthropologist couple Ivo Strecker and Jean Lydall, who studied Hamar society through ritual, symbolization and rhetoric.[13] Their field data collected in Hamar during the reign of Haile Selassie between 1970 and 1974 (Lydall & Strecker, 1979a), before the Ethiopian revolution took place in 1974, constitutes the main pillar of their writing. In his work, Strecker concentrates mostly on rhetoric culture and speeches of Hamar men (Strecker, 1988a; Strecker, 2010). Among other things, he analyzed interethnic warfare (Strecker, 1979; Strecker, 1999; Strecker, 2012) and made ethnographic films of male initiation (Strecker, [1975/76] 1998), the life of herdsmen (Strecker, [1986] 1996), divination and sacrifices (Strecker, [1984] 1996), and a peace ceremony (Strecker & Pankhurst, 2004). Lydall's work concentrates mostly on women (Lydall, 2005b) and on the Hamar language (Lydall, 1976; Lydall, 1988; Lydall, 1999; Lydall, 2002; Lydall, 2005a). Complementary to Strecker, Lydall films coming of age rituals of girls and young women. In the "Hamar trilogy" filmed with Joanna Head for the BBC, Lydall accompanies girls through the process of marriage and as young brides (Lydall & Head, 1990; Lydall & Head, 1991;

[12] Jensen (1959c:339) describes how Galli tried to organize a cattle-jumping ceremony for the researchers to take photographs. Hamar elders were at first reluctant to do the ceremony but Galli engaged the help of the Ethiopian police to arrange it for the researchers. Today, the ceremony attracts many (inter)national tourists.

[13] This led to the rhetoric culture project of Strecker and Tyler (2009).

Lydall & Head, 1994), and her film "Duka's Dilemma", made with her daughter Kaira Strecker (2001), revisits one of these women in later life when she get's a co-wife. Childhood in Hamar is the topic of the film "Sweet Sorghum. An Ethnographer's Daughter Remembers Life in Hamar, Southern Ethiopia" (Strecker, Lydall, & Strecker, 1994). Conducting research with her children, Lydall (1993; 1995) describes and reflects on childhood and education in Hamar, concentrating on education in agro-pastoralist homesteads outside the realm of schools.

Prominent in the writings and films of Strecker and Lydall is Aike Berinas, called Baldambe (c. 1920 – 1995), an elder in whose homestead Dambaiti the anthropologists conducted most of their research (Lydall, 2003), and who became their main interlocutor, teacher and friend (Strecker, 1998). The anthropologists recorded and translated many of Baldambe's accounts of Hamar life and history. Particularly, the book "Baldambe Explains" (Lydall & Strecker, 1979b), which was recorded in 1971 and translated in 1972, became a classic source of Hamar history and cultural life, to which Strecker and Lydall often refer in their later films and writing. In 1975, Baldambe told Strecker the history of his father Berimba, the Hamar leader whom Jensen met imprisoned in 1951. From this account of "Berimba's Resistance" (Strecker, 2013a), we learn about the relationship between the Hamar and the Ethiopian state during the period from the end of the 19th century to the mid 20th century. Following the imperial conquest by Menelik II's troops at the end of the 19th century, the Hamar were decimated, enslaved and suffered the loss of fertile land and animals. They left the mountain areas between the Omo river and Lake Stephanie and sought refuge among their agro-pastoral neighbors in the lowlands along the Omo river and further south, until they slowly recovered and returned to the Hamar mountains. During the Italian occupation of Abyssinia (1935-41), Hamar leaders helped fleeing Amhara to escape to Kenya and were later rewarded by Emperor Haile Selassie. There is little information in the literature on how the Ethiopian revolution in 1974, the following socialist regime and ethnic federalism affected life in Hamar.

The striving for autonomy which Girke (2018) describes for the Kara, who live along the Omo river in Hamar district, also holds true in general for the Hamar. The Kara "claim that they could live happily and autonomously in the land of their forefathers" (Girke, 2015:185) and that what the central government offers holds little appeal for them (Girke, 2016:17).[14] Lydall's (2000) article on the HIV epidemic shows a tendency in Hamar to attribute sickness and unwanted change to "outsiders".

My study on the conflicts over schooling in Hamar adopts this argumentative threat as one perspective, but not as the only one. Although pastoralists and town dwellers often draw discursive boundaries between each other, in practice they are related and do not form homogeneous groups. Students are the best proof of these cross-cutting ties.

[14] On this narrative of an unattractive power center, see also Scott (2009:7).

They show the dilemmas which are created through the construction of boundaries between "old fellows" and "new guys". Thus, students demonstrate "that the school is an institution through and around which collective notions of modernity and tradition emerge" and "that 'the modern' is made in no small part from within" (Stambach, 2000:164). Furthermore, a study of schooling can shed light on recent and historic relations between the periphery and the Ethiopian state.

Boundaries are created not only between "old fellows" and "new guys", but also between different pastoralist groups, such as the Hamar, the Banna, the Bashada and the Kara. Strecker and Lydall mostly write about the "Hamar" and describe them as being part of a cluster with the Banna and the Bashada, who basically speak the same language with minor dialect differences, and have many rituals and cultural features in common (Lydall, 2005a). Despite their intermarriage, common language and shared initiation and funeral rituals, men who claim to be Bashada are initiated into age-sets whose names are often similar to Kara and Nyangatom age-sets (Epple, 2010a:61; Epple, 2010b:187). While nowadays less functioning age-grades are reported for the Banna (Masuda, 2009b:58), the Hamar stopped initiating new age-sets after the imperial conquest; however, men of the same age still form groups of age-mates (*anamo*) which play an important role in daily life (Strecker, 1988b:82–83). The Hamar and the Banna each acknowledge two ritual leaders (*bitta*), who both come from the *gata* clan, which originates from Aari (Lydall & Strecker, 1979b:16–17; Masuda, 2003:466; Masuda, 2009b:50). The Bashada rely on another *bitta* (Epple, 2010b:63). The institution of ritual leaders, an inherited position, unites the history of these three groups who all claim origins in Aari, from where their ancestors moved further south. Thus, the Hamar, the Banna, and the Bashada share a South Omotic language, patrilineal and patrilocal organization, and agro-pastoralism as a livelihood practice and political organization that stresses polycephaly and rejects central leaders.[15] While the relationship between the Kara and the Ethiopian state has been analyzed in ethnographic research conducted before 2012 (Girke, 2015; Girke, 2016; Girke, 2018), no studies on the similar situation in Hamar, Banna and Bashada had been published at the time of my fieldwork. Today, Hamar district administers the Hamar, Bashada, Kara and some Banna, as well as the Kushitic-speaking Arbore and a multilingual and ethnically diverse population that lives mostly in towns and at times in rural school compounds.

The existing articles on education in South Omo can be divided into two strands: one looks at education and socialization outside school and describes how children become adults who belong to a certain ethnic group (Brüderlin, 2012; Epple, 2010c; Epple, 2012a; Lydall, 1993; Lydall, 1995). The other strand looks at struggles over

[15] Strecker (2010:123–156) describes Hamar society as egalitarian and anarchic due to the absence of central political leaders. Amborn (2019) also analyzes law and anarchy among the Konso and the Burji in southern Ethiopia, which he describes as polycephalous societies in contrast to the hierarchic social organization of the Amhara.

schooling among the agro-pastoralist Suri (Abbink, 1996), Mursi schoolgirls (LaTosky & Zehle, 2016), and schooling in Hamar (Niebling, 2010) and Bashada (Epple, 2012b). Hana Getachew Amare's (2012) dissertation on education in Maale is the first case of long-term anthropological fieldwork on education in South Omo. By looking at "flows of traditional knowledge and formal education", she considers education both outside school and in school. Besides this anthropological literature, there are also some assessment reports on schooling in Hamar *woreda* (Beyene, 2004; Bono, 2019; Zeleke & Zeleke, 2012). My study of conflicts and dilemmas in respect of compulsory schooling in Hamar district shows connections and disconnections with the Ethiopian state which are mediated by and through students. In the following section, I will introduce the concepts I have developed to grasp this interrelationship.

1.3 Schooling: A Politically Contested Arena

In the special issue *"Faire l'École"*, Hélène Charton and Sarah Fichtner (2015) define schools as political spaces, which are historically constructed and where various social, economic and political logics intersect:

> Espace historiquement construit, l'école apparaît comme un lieu où s'entrecroisent les logiques sociales, économiques et politiques portées par la diversité des acteurs et des agents qui sont au cœur de sa fabrique. C'est ce qui en fait également une arène, un champ de bataille politique, où s'affrontent différents référentiels et systèmes de valeurs et où s'expriment à tous les niveaux des rapports de pouvoir (Charton, 2015:21).

According to Charton, schools constitute an arena and a political battle field in which different frames of reference and value systems clash, and where various levels of power relations are expressed. This clash of political powers literally holds true for the arena of schooling in Hamar district.

The concept of "arena" as an analytical framework has earlier been formulated for the analysis of development projects. Thomas Bierschenk (1988) looks at the negotiations of strategic groups who "act according to their own interests, using very different frames of reference for social interaction, rationalization of action and cultural views of the world" (Bierschenk, 1988:146). Like Charton, Bierschenk conceptualizes the arena as a point of social interaction between different world views. He analyses these interactions in the realm of development projects in a local arena. Since "Western"-style schooling is a traveling institution that transgresses the local village and national boundaries, I use arena as a concept that goes beyond the local sphere and serves as an analytical entry point for the study of contested social transformation.

Schooling in Africa constitutes an arena where local epistemologies meet with different actors, for instance in the realm of development cooperation, religious organizations and the nation state. The history of schooling in Africa links education to

missionary and religious activities, which have played an important part in the educational landscape of African countries (Dilger & Schulz, 2013; Stambach, 2006; Stambach, 2010a; Stambach, 2010b). Bierschenk (2007) describes basic education in francophone West Africa as a *"bien privé, bien public, bien global"*, which frames schooling as the property of private, public and global actors. Fichtner (2012) looks at education in Africa as a process of NGOization, showing that schooling is not the realm of the state alone, but that international NGOs provide educational services in Africa and work to promote certain norms. Thus, education in Africa constitutes an arena for various international actors and agendas.

The links between schooling and state governments form an entry point for political anthropology. In the project "States at Work", Bierschenk and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan (2014a) frame primary schooling as the biggest state apparatus in most African countries, with up to 50% of public employees being primary school teachers. Consequently, "if an African citizen in a rural area comes into contact with the state, statistically speaking, this is most likely to happen in the school environment" (Bierschenk & Olivier de Sardan 2014b:24). Thus, schools constitute an ideal arena for studying the relationship between citizens and the state in rural Africa.

A number of anthropological studies look at the formation of nation states through national schooling. Cati Coe (2005) analyzes the Ghanaian state's efforts to promote a national culture through schools, in which the state "seeks to transform the minds and bodies of its young citizens through the widespread institution of schooling and with the emotional pull of culture" (Coe, 2005:8). Looking at cultural programming in schools, Coe explores paradoxical interactions between the state and its citizens:

> Education, as one of the state's obligations to its citizens, is also a means by which citizens critique and put pressure on the state to provide for them. Schools thus become places where the relationship between a state and its citizens is negotiated, with each side seeking to influence the other (Coe, 2005:5).

Her analysis of culture in schools, reveals that the state, elders and churches hold different ideas of culture, which Coe describes as "dilemmas of culture in African schools", and which lead to elders and religious organizations challenging the state's power to form a uniform national culture. These struggles over culture and power become manifest in the arena of schooling, where the state and the citizens negotiate their relationship. State-citizen relations have also been analyzed by Jennifer Riggan (2016) with a focus on education, nationalism and teachers in Eritrea. Riggan pictures a struggling Eritrean state that enforces mass militarization on its citizens, and turns schools into encampments that force students and teachers to become soldiers. Looking at the state through education, these studies reveal some paradoxical effects of schooling: the state promotes national unification through schooling and tries to shape its citizens uniformly in schools, but at the same time schools open up spaces to criticize the state and may refute its authority. I will disentangle these fights over political power by looking at schooling as an arena.

Schools have been described as a "lens" for the study of the state (Coe, 2005:17) and a "lens" through which social discord can be examined, revealing ideas about "tradition" and "modernity", and constituting a "window into the complexities and contradictions of cultural change" (Stambach, 2000:2). I also use schooling as a lens to study the state, its expansion into the frontier and contested transformations. Since this process has involved violence in Hamar district, Charton's metaphor of schooling as an arena and political battlefield, cited above, proves to be literally true for schooling in Hamar district, where compulsory schooling turns into a literal battlefield. I approach this arena by looking at students and their dilemmas in navigating the divergent interests of various stakeholders.

The United Nations General Assembly in Paris in 1948 declared that education is a human right. Article 26 states:

> (1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
>
> (2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
>
> (3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children (United Nations, 1948).

While the United Nations tries to implement free and compulsory elementary education around the world, based on the principle that education – mostly understood as "Western"-style schooling – is a basic human right, Saverio Krätli and Caroline Dyer's (2006) study shows that nomadic groups around the world do not share this global view:

> We argue that the mainstream view of education, created and sustained with reference to apparently universal values, is fundamentally antagonistic to the values and interest of nomadic groups (Krätli & Dyer, 2006:25).

While paragraph three of the declaration gives parents the right to decide about their children's education, this right stands in opposition to schooling being made compulsory and coercively implemented by nation states and children's right to have a say in decisions concerning their education. Thus, the concept of arena helps to grasp contested ideas of schooling and diverse meanings of educational rights.

Without theorizing the term arena further, Arturo Escobar uses it for describing contestations of development and suggests looking at "the ways in which development operates as an arena of cultural contestation and identity construction" (Escobar, [1995]

2011:15). Conflicts over secondary education have been analyzed by Amy Stambach (2000) with regard to culture, generation and gender on Mount Kilimanjaro. In Hamar, the conflicts over compulsory schooling address not only aspects of culture, generation and gender, but also ethnic identifications, economic livelihoods and claims to power. Understanding schooling as a literal arena opens up the possibility to capture the complex entanglements of various actors and their conflicts based on different world views, where diverse interests create dilemmas.

1.4 Dilemmas: Crossroads on Different Life Paths

The question: "Where shall we go?" that I cited at the beginning of this thesis symbolizes a crossroads and an open moment of social transformation. At this crossroads, students reflect on education and corresponding life paths. Neither the option to stay in a threatened town with little means in hand to make a living while constantly facing the danger of being shot, nor the option to return to an agro-pastoralist homestead, where they will be beaten for going away to school and forced to herd cattle instead, seem desirable to them. Deciding between these two alternatives constitutes a dilemma. In their language, Hamar speakers use the metaphor of a path (*goití)* to talk about different ways of doing things, different life paths and cultural differences. This led me to reflect on the relations between dilemmas and paths. Before I turn to dilemmas, which are prominent in anthropological works but have not been conceptualized, I will first look at education as a path.

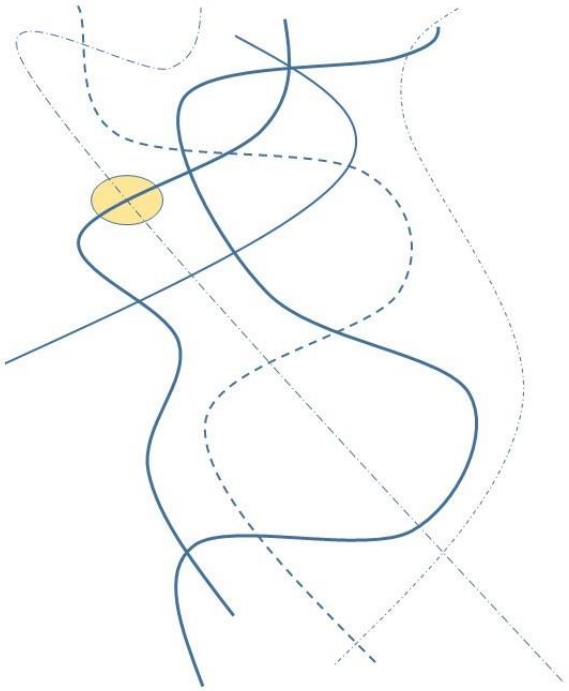

Figure 1 Dilemma as crossroad

Education is often pictured as a path into a better future. Since the colonial period, the classroom has been seen as a "gateway to modernity" (Comaroff, 1996:21). Schooling is linked with ideas of "modernity" and "development", which are pictured as a way to "civilize" and "develop" societies, enabling them to walk on a unidirectional path into a "modern" future that is different from the past and the present. This development is imagined as a linear, straight, upward movement leading to "modernity". However, besides the "development path", which Meles Zenawi also pictures (cf. chapter 1.1), there

coexist many ways, paths and trails in the world which people use to make a living. When Jola rice farmers in Guinea Bissau say that "school is the path now" (Davidson, 2015:166–175), this school path crosses the ways which people previously followed to move through their lives and through the world. It is the intersection of these myriad ways of living with the hegemonic way of schooling that causes students in Hamar to experience dilemmas and conflicts. During my research, I heard Hamar government officials talk about the door which schooling opens for the development of the Hamar, while older Hamar blamed students for blocking the ways of the ancestors.

Paths on which people move through the world can transgress boundaries between "human life" and "nature", so that various ontologies and normative ideas cause dilemmas. In his book "Being Alive", Tim Ingold (2011) uses the metaphor of trails to capture life as it unfolds in a constant movement. Looking at beings in an animic ontology, Ingold transgresses the boundaries between an environment "out there" and organisms "in here".

> The animic world is in perpetual flux, as the beings that participate in it go their various ways. These beings do not exist at locations, they occur along paths (Ingold, 2011:72).

Since distinctions between what is alive and what is not differ, beings such as the sun, winds and stars can "lay their trails through the earth" (Ingold, 2011:74). These trails on which life unfolds, and the entanglements of beings, such as humans, animals and spirits of the deceased can be seen in Hamar daily practice and rituals which try to influence the course of such beings.

Jêrome Dubosson's (2014) research on human-cattle relations in Hamar district shows how intimately human lives are tied to cattle, as is the case in many pastoralist societies in East Africa (Herskovits, 1926). The Hamar consider themselves as *waakí éedi* or "cattle people" who live not only *by* but *with* cattle. In the relationships between people and cattle, particularly men's close relations with a favorite ox (*erra waak, waakí kamer*) which they praise in songs (Strecker, [1986] 1996), "the boundaries between human and animal, and thus between culture and nature, are perceived as dynamic" (Dubosson, 2014:87). The well-being of cattle and of people are ultimately tied together in Hamar. If the rain stops falling and sickness and war trouble people and animals, most people in Hamar consult ritual specialists, who throw sandals and read the intestines of animals and the position of stars to find the causes and ways to get back on the track of well-being (Strecker, [1984] 1996; Strecker, 2010:289–345). The interpretation of thrown sandals, intestines and the movements of clouds and stars is under constant negotiation, for people hold different opinions about how to read them (Strecker, 2010:289–314). Nevertheless, shared understandings of the existence of evil spirits or spirits of the deceased (*méeshi*), which must be pleased by gifts and sacrifices to prevent harm to the community, often

bring renegades back onto a path considered to be *barjó*, which describes a state of well-being and good fortune (Strecker, 2010:315–322).

Christian ideas of the "right" way of living have been broadly rejected in rural Hamar district by adults, but students increasingly attend Protestant churches. There are Christian and Islamic congregations in the towns and in some outposts of Hamar district, which are mostly run by people from other parts of Ethiopia. Membership of Protestant, Catholic or Orthodox churches is much higher in the districts of Banna, Maale and Aari (Epple, 2005).

In Hamar, Banna and Bashada epistemology, the life of a newborn is prepared before its conception, when parents marry in the way of the ancestors and when the mother-in-law performs preconception rituals for her daughter-in-law before each pregnancy (cf. chapter 5). These rituals are believed to ensure that a child becomes a person *(éedi)* and prevent it from being abnormal (*míngi*). *Míngi* beings, whether children or animals, are often killed or driven away to prevent harm to the community such as drought or sickness (Brüderlin, 2012; Lydall & Strecker, 1979b:179). Thus, ideas of good ways of living in Hamar are entangled with perceptions of moving through a world in conjunction with ancestors and animals. The well-being (*barjó*) of the people is intimately linked to the well-being of their cattle, goats and fields, which is daily invoked in blessings (*barjó älа*) (Strecker, 1988a). Most people in Hamar grow up by learning to walk and work with cattle and goats, and only a few people have taken the path of schooling that may lead to government jobs in town. Unlike in most places of the world, schooling has not become a well-worn trail for agro-pastoralists in southwest Ethiopia. First generation students struggle to find their way into the national school system, and many drop-out on the way. In this dissertation, I follow the life paths of students and look at moments of dilemma, when their lives are at junctions between different ways of living.

The concept of dilemma has been used in anthropological studies of education, development, and rapid social change. Coe (2005) entitles her book on education and nationalism in Ghana "Dilemmas of Culture in African Schools", in which culture is negotiated as property of the Ghanaian state, elders and churches. Instead of using the term dilemma, Tatek Abebe (2007) refers to rural children in Ethiopia as "trapped between disparate worlds" and describes a dissonance and tension between the aims of the state and children's ideas of a good life embedded in the local environment. Disjunctures between (inter)national child policies and the local embeddedness of children are also addressed in other studies of how children learn and work (Abebe & Kjørholt, 2013; Abebe & Ofosu-Kusi, 2016; Abebe & Waters, 2017; Spittler & Bourdillon, 2012).

Children's education is often debated in times of social change, when the society as a whole faces dilemmas. Sharon Hutchinson (1996) identifies "Nuer Dilemmas" in South Sudan, over "coping with money, war and the state". Among these dilemmas in times of commodification and war, she describes the emergence of school-educated

youth, who rejected initiation and were therefore called "bull-boys" among the Nuer, since they "straddled the categories of 'boyhood' and 'manhood'" and corresponding ideas of social status (Hutchinson, 1996:270). Dilemmas in times of rapid change in rural areas are also described by Tania Li (2014) for indigenous societies in Indonesia:

> For billions of rural people, the promise that modernization would provide a pathway from country to city, and from farm to factory, has proven to be a mirage. Lacking an exit path, they stay where they are, but all too often the old set of relations that enabled them to live and work in the countryside has disappeared, and the new ones – increasingly capitalist in form – do not provide a viable livelihood (Li, 2014:3).

"Pathways" to the city that do not provide enough means to make a living and lack of an "exit path" constitute a dilemma not only for rural people in Indonesia, but also in Ethiopia. After forced resettlement, the Bodi in southwest Ethiopia asked "Do our bodies know their ways?" This captures the profound disruption of being that they felt in a situation that was forced upon them and where "development" did not bring a better life, but famine (Stevenson & Buffavand, 2018:127).

Studies on development analyze this process not only as a new path, but as a path that involves dilemmas, which is reflected, for instance in anthologies titled "Development Dilemmas" (Abbink & van Dokkum, 2008; Filer, [1999] 2012) or in an article on "Pathways and Dead Ends of Pastoralist Development among the Afar and Karrayu in Ethiopia" (Müller-Mahn, Rettberg, & Getachew, 2010). Along the path of development, dilemmas are not only created among social groups but also in individual life paths. The concept of "vital conjuncture" captures these moments, when the sense of knowing where life is going becomes disrupted:

> Much of the time, people go through their daily lives with a sense of the future, and a feeling of trajectory. Young people are in school in order to get degrees and jobs; young adults are working to save money for a car or a house or a wedding. We often have the feeling that we know "where we are going" and what the future will be like. Now, this feeling is often completely illusory, but it is nonetheless useful in organizing daily life and helping people make sense of their place in the world.
>
> But sometimes, this illusory clarity breaks down. Something happens that calls that clear road into question, and the future becomes wildly uncertain. Now, the trajectory ahead is murky, with multiple paths appearing possible. Each path may suggest a radically different – even incommensurable – future. In the duration when these multiple potential futures are open, multiple domains of life that – in the ordinary times – could continue along partially independent of each other, all become mutually intertwined. This duration – when multiple potential futures are in play – is the vital conjuncture (Johnson-Hanks, 2016:6–7).

Jennifer Johnson-Hanks describes vital conjunctures "when multiple potential futures are in play" in the lives of female students in Cameroon, whose school path and life trajectory

is shaken when they become pregnant. In moments of vital conjuncture, the concept of dilemma grasps individual moments of difficult decision making, which are embedded in social ideas of morality and "right" life paths. In the film "Duka's Dilemma", Jean Lydall and Kaira Strecker (2001) describe the difficult situation of Duka, a Hamar woman, when her husband married a second wife (Lydall, 2006). Thus, people encounter various dilemmas during their lives in which their possibilities of action often go beyond the controllable sphere.

To analytically grasp "how people move and manage within situations of social flux and change", Henrik Vigh (2009) uses the concept of "social navigation":

> As an analytical concept social navigation is, thus, interesting as it grants us an alternative perspective on practice and the intersection between agency, social forces and change. By highlighting the *interactivity* of practice and the *intermorphology* of motion, it grants us an analytical optic which allows us to focus on how people move and manage within situations of social flux and change" (Vigh, 2009:420).

Stambach (2017) applies Vigh's concept of *social navigation* in her study of student futures, where she argues that the way students deal with multiple potential futures cannot be adequately described as a negotiation of individual agency, but rather as social navigation:

> As such, the concept [of social navigation] fine-tunes the concept of *negotiation*, which is often used in anthropological studies of education to designate the agency and willpower of students as individuals. Where negotiation suggests dialogue between entities, and a winner or loser at any given moment, navigation emphasizes the logic by which change occurs within changing landscapes. It highlights the 'interactivity of practice and the intermorphology of motion', allowing anthropological analysis to focus on that which is emerging (Stambach, 2017:9–10).

Focusing on what is emerging, the concept of social navigation helps to grasp how young people move through the world and through educational settings that go beyond their agency and will-power. Education tries to shape the paths of young people's lives and is thereby inherently political and not as predictable as dominant discourses of education make us believe:

> [E]ducation is entwined with social relations and projects that shape and are shaped by people's visions of the past and future. In this sense, education is a social resource that is inherently political: it structures possibilities for imagining a future within a set of possibilities full of hope and opportunity, and it discursively empowers people with authoritative responsibility but it cannot place them into motion within any stable or predictable horizon. Thus, the dominant discourse of using education to create a more equitable and less degraded world drives many educational projects

> forward, but social realities emerge and are created that differentially enable and preclude the achievement of these ends (Stambach, 2017:13).

While schooling and development try to shape ways of life universally, these policies and projects are appropriated differently on local levels (Anderson-Levitt, 2003) and paradoxically "enable and preclude" participation in a "more equitable and less degraded" world.

In Hamar history, schooling has been experienced as something imposed by *gal* and associated with *katamá* (town). While the state and NGOs bring schools closer to settlements to open the way for schooling, most Hamar try to keep towns and schools at a distance, not only geographically but also socially. Although people distinguish between Hamar and *gal* in daily life, as well as between "modern" and "backward" ways of living, these two spheres do not unfold on parallel tracks but interrelate and are constantly created in distinction to each other. In this dialectic, different values are attributed to various forms of education. While schooling appears to some as a door opener into the future, others see it as the blocking of ways. At the intersection of these paths, dilemmas arise which I identify in five fields: the implementation of compulsory schooling and its effects on agro-pastoralist household economies (chapter 2), practices of teaching and learning in school (chapter 3), habitus and lifestyle (chapter 4), initiation and marriage (chapter 5), and political claims to power (chapter 6). These dilemmas of schooling are mirrored prominently in the lives of students, who try to walk on both the Hamar path and the school path, thereby becoming intermediaries between their kin and the state.

1.5 Living at Intersections: Students as Intermediaries

In political anthropology, the role of intermediaries in the making of colonial rule has been studied, where intermediaries, interpreters and clerks bridged the gap between colonial rulers and local people and thus played an active role in the making of the colonial state (Lawrance, Osborn, & Roberts, 2006; Trotha, 1994). Frederick Bailey ([1969] 2018) characterizes the role of intermediaries which he calls "middlemen" at the interface of two structures as indispensable, since they enable communication in a situation of encapsulation. "The essence of the role is to keep a foot in both camps" and to "keep going a process of bargaining", for middlemen "must persuade the two sides that this is a situation in which compromise can be made" (Bailey, [1969] 2018:167). According to Bailey's definition, a local leader who fights for autonomy, or a bureaucrat who wants to wipe out the local structure, are not middlemen, since middlemen are characterized as being indispensable for communication between two structures, as is the case in situations of "indirect rule, in which the administrators, so to speak, allow the indigenous chieftains to keep their 'fiefs' so long as there is no disorder and so long as the revenue is paid" (Bailey, [1969] 2018:175).

In postcolonial contexts, actors who bridge gaps of communication are for instance development brokers who work at the interface between international donor agencies, the local administration and the population (Bierschenk, Chauveau, & Olivier de Sardan 2002). The literature on intermediaries, middlemen and brokers describes the power which these figures gain from their indispensable position and from their access to different people, who pay them for their services. However, the dilemmas of those people working in positions between competing powers have received little attention in this literature.

The struggles of people at the intersection between political and kin relations are mentioned by Max Gluckman (1949) in his description of the village headman in British Central Africa. Tatjana Thelen and Erdmute Alber describe this position in a study of the entanglements of politics and kinship:

> The 'dilemma of the village headman' arose from his embedding in overlapping power constellations within the village, where he was entangled in local kinship relations while also acting as the political representative vis- à- vis the colonial state. Even if Gluckman saw both positions as principally different, his analysis of their convergence in the figure of the village headman opened up the question of the intersections between the colonial state and the local kin-based structures (Thelen & Alber, 2017:14).

The dilemmas of intermediaries working for the colonial state who are thereby obliged to turn against their kin are also mentioned by Hutchinson for Nuer who worked for the British colonial forces in the 1920s:

> [A]s greater numbers of Nuer began to participate in 'the government' as court officials, chiefs, policemen, prison wardens, soldiers and the like, many of them were forced to confront the possibility – if not actuality – of killing fellow Nuer in 'the line of duty'. Higher-ranking Nuer government chiefs were among the first to face this moral dilemma (Hutchinson, 1998:59).[16]

People who start working for an imposed government that tries to turn them into accomplices, and obliges them to take measures against their kin, face not only moral dilemmas. The training and schooling provided by the government carries the potential to assimilate small ethnic groups into a larger state. To interact with the national government, the Rarámuri in Mexico use various types of intermediaries who act formally and informally to expand their political relations without being incorporated into the nation (Kummels, 1993b). While the Rarámuri's formal and informal arrangements regarding schooling appear to succeed without major conflicts (Kummels, 1993a), public

[16] Hutchinson (1998) analyses how eastern and western Nuer find different ways to explain the increased killing of fellow Nuer and invent rituals to deal with the deaths and purify the killers.

school arrangements in South Omo create many points of conflict and dilemmas for the intermediaries.

Although Ethiopia was not colonized by European powers, the relations between rulers of the northern and central highlands, and the southern lowlands which were conquered by northern troops at the end of the 19th century, have been marked by power inequality and described as internal colonialism (Donham, [1986] 2002). During the imperial regime which ended with the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974, intermediaries were institutionalized in the south through the office of the *balabat*, who have been described as "indigenous landlords" (Zitelmann, 2009:281), "big men" (Amborn, 2005:16), "go-betweens" and "spokesmen" (Strecker, 1976b:34). In a situation of legal pluralism, two systems of governance exist in Hamar district today. One system is based on a polycephalus organization, in which elders claim authority; the other is a state based on a constitution of ethnic federalism, which is in practice described as a developmental state with an authoritarian rule.

In Hamar district, the chiefs of rural administrative units (*kebele*) are mostly elders, who have not been to school and live in agro-pastoralist homesteads, whereas at the district level (*woreda*) young school-educated men who live in town have become administrators and government employees. Until recently most administrative positions on the district level have been occupied by people who moved to the south from other parts of Ethiopia. These settlers are called *gal* (literally: enemy) or "Amhara" in Hamar, reflecting a hostile relationship. Through the expansion of schooling and ethnic federalism, a growing number of children from agro-pastoralist homesteads have entered these government jobs in the district, where they work at the intersection between their kin and the government.

As in the Nuer case, school-educated people in Hamar face dilemmas due to divergences between their employers' and their relatives' interests. This has been described by Lydall:

> Because of their education and their obligation to their employers and/or party leaders, these men promote the ideals and objectives of the Northerners. At the same time, however, they also try to honor their parents and uphold local traditions. Needless to say they often face dilemmas arising from dissonances between northern and local ethics and traditions (Lydall, 2010:329).

These dilemmas of school-educated intermediaries are the focus of my thesis, in which I integrate the study of young people and schooling into a study of politics.

Alber (2017) argues that the study of children and politics requires an inclusive approach that does not treat children as excluded from the political sphere, but integrates them into the study of politics. Similarly, Sharon Stephens (1995a) argues that research on childhood is an important generative site for exploring the role of children in relation

to nation-states, by considering child-focused institutions and compulsory schooling which are sites of negotiation for the politics of culture (Stephens, 1995b:15).

Stambach (2016) conceptualizes children as "adults' brokers", who mediate adult relations and interests. For instance, among the Chagga, children broker relations with the ancestors, missionaries and Chagga chiefs, lineages (through marriage) and even countries (through adoption). Children's brokering of social and economic relations is expressed in the Chagga saying "Take the gift of my child and return something to me", and in the understanding that children "engender trust and trade" (Stambach & Kwayu, 2013). The mobility of children who circulate among kin and friends to create social and economic relations is also prominent in practices of child fostering in West-Africa (Alber, 2018; Alber, Martin, & Notermans, 2013:2). Through my analysis of conflicts over young people's education in Hamar, I will show how relations with the state are brokered by and through children. In Hamar, people talk about "giving" (*ima*) children to school and not about "sending" (*nitta*) children to school. Thus, political relations between local people and the state are mediated through the gift of children for schools (cf. chapter 3.1.1). In this case, children's care-takers alternate between their relatives and state employees in hostels and schools.

In the arena of schooling, not only parents and government officials take decisions about young people's education, but young people also take decisions about their own lives. Childhood studies conceptualize children not as passive objects, but as active subjects and stress the relational aspects of children's agency (Abebe, 2008; Abebe & Ofosu-Kusi, 2016:307; Christiansen, Utas, & Vigh, 2006). Childhood and youth studies have advocated seeing young people as actors and talking *with* them rather than *about* them. This argument draws a parallel to the study of women whose voices used to be excluded in anthropological work (van de Loo & Reinhart, 1993:7). Although advocated since the 1990s, young people's issues have not found a prominent place in anthropological studies. Centers for childhood and youth studies look at childhood and youth on an interdisciplinary basis, but studying young people in their own right has often isolated youth studies from other fields of social study. My study bridges this gap by looking at young people's dilemmas as intermediaries between their kin and the developmentalist state on Ethiopia's southwestern frontier. To grasp these dilemmas, I will briefly describe in the last part of this introduction the geographical and infrastructural landscape of my field, and show how I constructed my field, designed my research and dealt with research dilemmas before I start with the empirical analysis of various dilemmas.

1.6 Landscapes of the Field: South Omo Zone and Hamar District

Southwestern Ethiopia is characterized by a high degree of cultural and linguistic diversity. The Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR) officially counts more than 50 local ethnic groups out of over 80 ethnic groups within Ethiopia. South Omo Zone is situated in the region's southwestern corner, bordering on northern Kenya and South Sudan. The Omo river that runs through the zone to Lake Turkana has led to the name Omo valley. Official descriptions of South Omo Zone mention the existence of 16 local ethnic groups in an area of 22,361 square kilometers (Beyene, 2004:16–17), about the size of the German federal state Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, or the US state New Hampshire. The zone's population was calculated as 683,022 people in 2005 E.C. (2012/2013 G.C.) (Zonal Administration Jinka, 2014).

Besides the national language Amharic, a Semitic language, which is mainly spoken in towns and governmental institutions, many other languages are spoken. The mother tongues of the officially recognized 16 ethnic groups of South Omo Zone belong to three language families: Nilo-Saharan (Bodi, Mursi, Nyangatom), Kushitic (Arbore, Dassanech) and Omotic (Ari, Banna, Bashada, Dime, Hamar, Kara, Maale) (Gascon, 2010:20; Lydall, 1976:393–394). The multi-ethnic composition of town dwellers and migrant workers who speak various Ethiopian and international languages add to the linguistic diversity in the zone, where many people are fluent in several languages.

The population size of the 16 indigenous ethnic groups varies between several hundred (e.g. 873 Dime) to several hundred thousand (e.g. 289,835 Aari) (Central Statistical Agency, 2010:73). Estimated at 46,534 people in the national census of 2007, the Hamar are one of the bigger groups of pastoralists in South Omo, followed by the Banna with 27,018 people, and smaller groups such as the Kara with 1,488 and the Arbore with 7,283 people (Central Statistical Agency, 2010:73).[17]

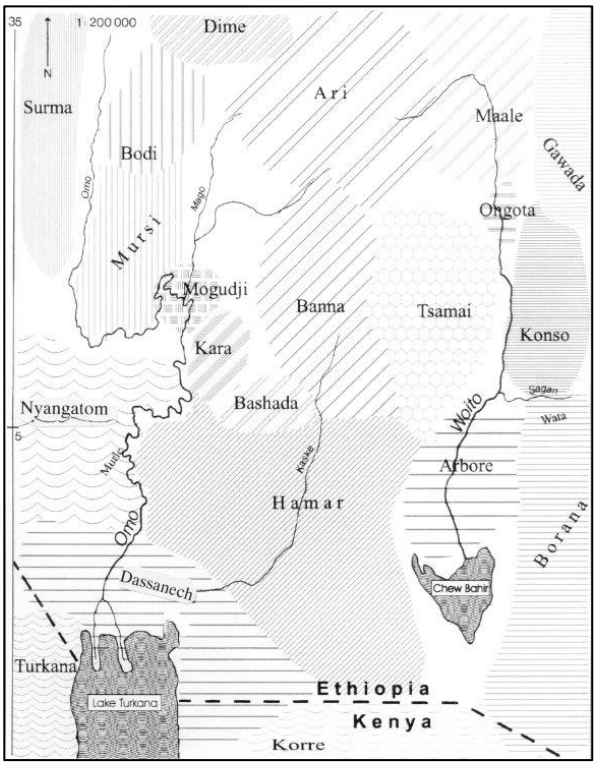

Figure 2 Map of South Omo. South Omo Research Center. URL: http://www.uni-mainz.de/Organisationen/SORC/content/view/63/43/ (last accessed: 11.05.2014)

[17] For a comparison of ethnic group populations, see list in appendix 10.3.

What this census data cannot depict is the dynamic, fluid and situational character of ethnic identity construction, which has been a focus of anthropological research in general (Barth, 1969; Elwert, 1989) and in northeast Africa in particular (Schlee & Watson, 2009). The case of the Bashada is a good example of the dynamic character of ethnic identification, since they sometimes claim to be a distinct group and sometimes also call themselves Hamar (Epple, 2010a:64). In the national census they are subsumed under Hamar, since the official count of 16 ethnic groups does not recognize the Bashada as a distinct group but regards them as a subgroup of the Hamar. Despite the mobility of people, the following map shows areas along rivers and lakes claimed by various ethnic groups.

The capital of South Omo Zone is Jinka, which is situated in the highlands of the zone in a climate suitable for agriculture, and in an area predominantly inhabited by the Aari. Jinka had a population of 12,407 inhabitants in the census of 1998 (Central Statistical Authority 1998:44, cited in Lydall, 2000:42) but has grown rapidly, since it is the last town on the way to the Kuraz Sugar Factory. In 2013, the town had four primary schools (grade 1-8), two high schools (grade 9-10), one preparatory school (grade 11-12) and a private school (fieldnotes 2013). A public student hostel in Jinka for agro-pastoralist students was opened around 1970 E.C. (1977/78 G.C.). In 2014, a total of 98 students from Arbore, Banna, Dassanetch, Hamar, Kara, Maale, Mursi, Nyangatom and Tsamay were registered there, most of whom were attending preparatory school. Five of these registered hostel students were girls (fieldnotes 2014). Until 2013 the only preparatory school in the zone was in Jinka.[18] The countrywide growth in educational institutions led to the construction of a college in Jinka that opened in 2013, and a university which opened in 2018. Other educational institutions, such as colleges and universities that are accessible to people from South Omo are located in Arba Minch, which is one day's drive from Jinka, and in Awasa, the capital of SNNP region, which, like Addis Ababa, is two day's drive from Jinka.

My research was mainly focused on Hamar district which is situated in the semi-arid lowlands southeast of Jinka. The district's capital Dimeka is around 100 kilometers away from Jinka and located on the Kaeske river, which is a sandy river bed for most of the year but turns into a rushing river after rainfall. Most people in Hamar district identify themselves as Hamar, Bashada, Kara, Hor (Arbore) or Banna. The territory claimed by the Banna begins at a river bed around five kilometers north of Dimeka and extends further north until it borders with Ari, Tsamai and Maale. Bashada territory starts some kilometers west of Dimeka and borders with Kara along the Omo river. The Hamar live around Dimeka and their territory expands into the Hamar mountains east of Dimeka and into the south towards the Kenyan border, where Dassanetch (Galeba) and Nyangatom

[18] Another preparatory school openend in Maale in the school year 2014/15.

(Bume) reside.[19] On the eastern side of the Hamar mountains, the territory borders with that of the Arbore (Hor) who live along the Woyeto river and at Lake Stephanie. While the Hamar, Banna, Bashada and Kara are normally allies, their relations with neighboring groups, such as the Arbore, Dassanetch, Nyangatom, Bodi and Mursi are at times marked by cattle raids and interethnic warfare.[20]

Dimeka constitutes a meeting point for interactions with state institutions (administration, police, primary and high school, health center) and with merchants and town dwellers who have mostly moved to Dimeka from other areas in Ethiopia, such as Konso, Gidole, Amhara, Wolayta, Gamo or Gofa. Hamar *woreda* is a rural district with the three towns Dimeka, Turmi and Arbore Town, each of which has between one and two thousand inhabitants (fieldnotes 2014). The total population of Hamar district is estimated to be 75,056 out of which 71,489 live in rural areas and 3,567 in urban areas (Hamar Woreda Administration, 2014).

A map of South Omo that includes roads and towns is hard to find, since national maps often show only towns like Jinka and Turmi, together with national parks and game reserves. Even on Google Maps, not every all-weather road is shown, only the road to Turmi along the Woyto river, and the road to Jinka. The all-weather road to Dimeka that became a tarmac road in 2015, as part of a project to improve the roads to the new plantations along the Omo river and to link the area with Kenya, has for a long time not been shown on Google Maps, and the town of Dimeka was misnamed (last checked 20.02.2017). This lack of detailed maps of the settlements points to the peripheral status of the area and underlines the importance of local knowledge for finding one's way through the zone, although many tourists visit parts of South Omo. Traveling from Hamar district to Addis Ababa, the federal capital, or to Awasa, the regional capital, normally takes two days by bus and car.[21] During my fieldwork, public transport to Hamar district was available on market days twice a week. A motorbike taxi system was not available within the district, but a few people owned a motorbike and some government offices and NGOs had motorbikes, too. For most people in the district the normal means of getting around was to walk, while government and NGO workers had access to cars and motorbikes, and Izuzu trucks also transported people. In the following discussion, I focus on the urban landscape in Hamar district, since I describe agro-pastoralist households in relation to children's work and learning in more detail in chapter two.

[19] Names in bracket are terms used by the Hamar to refer to their neighbors.

[20] On warfare, see for instance Fukui and Turton (1979); Gabbert (2012); Girke (2008); Glowacki and Wrangham (2015); Strecker (1979); Strecker (1999).

[21] An airport was opened in Jinka in 2017 which connects the city with Addis Ababa.

An early administrative post was built in Buska in the Hamar mountains in the 1940s (Lydall, 2000:43). From there the administration moved to Hamar-Koke, then to Turmi, and in the early 1970s Dimeka became the administrative center of Hamar, which it is until today (Strecker, 1976b:73). It hosts government offices, a police post, a health center, a primary school (grades 1-8), a kindergarten and a high school (grades 9-10). The high school opened in 2002 E.C. (2009/2010 G.C.). In the student hostel, 241 students were registered in the school year 2014/15 (fieldnotes 2015).

Figure 3 Dimeka on the west side of the Kaeske river (Google Earth, accessed: 20.02.2017)

Apart from the main road, streets in Dimeka are sandy and all buildings are one floor buildings with corrugated iron roofs. Most houses are made of wood and mud, while richer owners built with cement. After the rainy season, the fences between compounds turn into green bushes, which gives Dimeka a greener environment than Turmi where the land is more arid. During my fieldwork, life in Dimeka was centered on the market place in the middle of town and its surrounding streets, where one-room shops sold daily necessities, some merchants traded grain, and some offered coffee or tea, and home-made sorghum beer (*parsî*). Around six restaurants served dishes with *injera*, Ethiopian sourdough flat-bread. Pastoralists from the surrounding homesteads are mostly seen in Dimeka on market days. They come to sell their own products, buy new goods, use the electric grinding mills and meet people. (Inter-)national tourists visit the market with tourist guides, and also go to a separate market for handcrafts made for tourists, before leaving after an hour or two for food and an overnight stay in one of the hotels further south in Turmi.

Most people in Dimeka fetch water from the pumps along the Kaeske river and only a few houses have a water tap in their compound. In December 2014, the power line reached Dimeka. From then on, private houses had electricity 24/7. Before this, businesses and government offices had their own generators. The mobile network reached Dimeka around the year 2010, and in 2014 EthioTele, the national network provider,

opened a shop in Dimeka. During my research, the network did not reach all parts of Hamar district and some areas only at limited hours. The post office in Dimeka was rarely opened and the next bank was in Jinka. Two film houses screened Amharic or American films in the evenings as well as soccer games and champions league. There is a mosque in Dimeka, and various religious groups run churches, among them the Christian Orthodox Church and a number of Ethiopian Protestant churches. The Catholic Church runs a mission in Dimeka and supports educational and medical facilities in the district.[22] They do not offer pastoral services but cooperate with the Orthodox Church in this field. Some national and international NGOs run offices in Dimeka and Turmi or come to Hamar district for occasional field trips. After this introduction to the urban infrastructure in Hamar district, I will now turn to my research process, its methodology and dilemmas.

1.7 Research Dilemmas

> The "very strength of ethnography, [lies in] the way in which it deliberately leaves openings for unanticipated discoveries and directions" (Amit, 2000:17).

The unexpected outbreak of a violent conflict during my fieldwork forced me to adapt my research to a changing environment of tensions and insecurity. Vered Amit argues in "Constructing the Field" that it is "the circumstance which defined the method rather than the method defining the circumstance" (Amit, 2000:11). The uncertainty of the security situation limited some research activities during my fieldwork, but also opened insights into a burning social and political issue. Neither my interlocutors nor I had expected that the conflict would reach a level that had been uncommon in Hamar district for several decades. Coincidentally, my main research interlocutors – students and people who had been to school – were a target and played a crucial role in the conflict. While ethnographers construct their "field" and take the authority to "write culture" (Clifford & Marcus, 1986), the "field" also exercises its own power over ethnographers (Strecker & LaTosky, 2013:5), which becomes apparent in unforeseen events. In this section, I will reflect on the course of my fieldwork, the dilemmas I encountered, and the decisions I took to construct my field in an area of tension.

1.7.1 Constructing the Field in an Area of Tension

In a remote area, such as the Omo valley, classical fieldwork approaches, where the ethnographer delves into a place far away from her home and immerses herself in the life of a village over a certain period of time, have attracted many ethnographers. Depictions of life in South Omo often let the area appear as a remnant place for classical ethnographic

[22] The Mekane Yesus Church runs a student hostel in Turmi in cooperation with the Norwegian Lutheran Church and supports the clinic in Turmi, which has more facilities than the health center in Dimeka.

research, standing at the top of the "hierarchy of purity of field sites" (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997:13). An implicit hierarchy of ethnographic field sites, although widely criticized today, can still be traced in the "locational strategies" of ethnographic fields (Amit, 2000:4). Nevertheless, global connections can also be traced in a place associated with a certain degree of "purity" and remoteness by anthropologists. For my study of schooling in South Omo, I decided to leave the track of studying agro-pastoralists as living independently from the contemporary state, and to approach the place by studying a semi-autonomous social field as proposed by Sally Falk Moore:

> The approach proposed here is that the small field observable to an anthropologist be chosen and studied in terms of its semi-autonomy – the fact that it can generate rules and customs and symbols internally, but that it is also vulnerable to rules and decisions and other forces emanating from the larger world by which it is surrounded (Moore, 1973:720).

The concept of a semi-autonomous social field captures the diverse freedoms and limitations of action within a larger matrix. Thus, the study of schooling helps to unravel the different "rules and customs and symbols" that characterize social life and political relations in southwest Ethiopia. Studying schooling in a broad social context helps to grasp how transformations and social change are discussed ambivalently, not only imposed from "outside" but also wanted from "within" a society (Stambach, 2000:2).

On the way to becoming students, children move to localities far away from their agro-pastoralist homes. Working with a multi-sited approach in which I "follow the people" (Marcus, 1995), I look at the different phases involved in becoming a student and making a living after school. Thus, sites for my research were: agro-pastoralist homesteads, schools, hostels, towns, and offices dealing with education. Moving between these different locations, I got to know different social fields, the boundaries constructed between them, and students' dilemmas in crossing these boundaries.

Before carrying out this doctoral study of children and youth in South Omo, I conducted nine weeks of field research on street children in Addis Ababa in summer 2010 during my master's studies at the University of Bayreuth. [23] Here, I acquired basic Amharic skills and got to know an urban context in the highlands of Ethiopia. In autumn 2012, I returned to Ethiopia for a three-month internship at the South Omo Research Center and Museum (SORC) in Jinka.[24] Accommodating ethnographic exhibitions and

[23] Graduate student fieldwork training in "Urban Anthropology and Migration Issues", with collaboration between the Department of Social Anthropology, Addis Ababa University, and the Department of Anthropology, University of Bayreuth, organized by Professor Magnus Treiber.

[24] SORC was founded in 1993 by Professor em. Ivo Strecker and collaborated with the Department of Anthropology and African Studies at the University of Mainz, Germany and the Institute of Ethiopian Studies at Addis Ababa University. It later became a research center attached to Arba Minch University, and finally to Jinka University.

an academic library, SORC became a starting point for studying South Omo. My interest in education arose from a pilot English-teaching project for agro-pastoralist students, which, however, soon came to an end for political reasons. In summer 2013, I conducted fieldwork for my dissertation for two months, received research permits and visited several agro-pastoralist districts and educational institutions in South Omo Zone. Most of the data for this dissertation was collected between February 2014 and July 2015, with an interruption of three months in summer 2014.

Figure 4 Ethnographer on the way to the field, 2014

Spending time in Jinka with students from diverse agro-pastoralist backgrounds, I learned that they stay in the hostel for up to ten months a year and visit their agro-pastoralist kin only every few months or during the summer holidays. Thus, interactions between agro-pastoralist students in Jinka and their kin are very limited and therefore hard to observe. In order to analyze the distinctions between students and agro-pastoralists in practice, I left Jinka and moved to a place in the lowlands that is frequented by agro-pastoralists. I chose Hamar district as a research site, because the rate of school attendance was still one of the lowest in the zone (cf. appendix 10.4), and I was told that girl's schooling was particularly disputed among the Hamar. In contrast to other parts of the zone, Hamar district had a reputation for being peaceful and friendly towards foreigners, and the district's administrative center, Dimeka, was connected with Jinka by a four-hour bus ride. Furthermore, I was able to obtain an official research permit for that part of South Omo Zone.

Studying schooling across ethnic lines in South Omo Zone turned out to be difficult in practice, since the many languages spoken in the area create language barriers. Amharic is only spoken in towns and government institutions, so that people who have not spend time in towns, for instance in schools, prisons or the military, are mostly not fluent in Amharic. To broaden my access to different voices and become independent from male translators for English, I decided to learn a local language, in this case Hamar, which allowed me to communicate directly with men and women of all ages.

Hamar is a South-Omotic language. No officially accepted orthography exists for Hamar but linguistic research is being carried out to develop one (Yigezu & Mendisu, 2015).[25] A grammar and dictionaries of Hamar were only published after my research

[25] Save the Children has printed a small brochure for schoolchildren in Amharic letters with translations of Hamar and Amharic words.

(Petrollino, 2016; Takahashi, 2015). When I learned the language, I had access to English articles on the Hamar verb (Cupi, Petrollino, Savà, & Tosco, 2013), an outline of the Hamar language (Lydall, 1976), the Hamar dialect cluster (Lydall, 2005a), gender, number and size (Lydall, 1988) and ideophones in Hamar (Lydall, 2002), as well as a description of Hamar speech situations (Strecker, 1976a). Unlike in other languages of South Omo Zone, the only Bible translation I found in Hamar was not written, but an oral narration of some stories.[26] With the help of English-speakers in towns, I translated the Swadesh list of most important words into Hamar and then started to make sentences with the help of students who spoke English. Moving to homesteads and staying among people who spoke only Hamar helped me to learn the language and I discussed unclear meanings in town with people who spoke English and Amharic.

The course of my fieldwork became increasingly determined by the violent conflict that evolved in Hamar district and forced me several times to relocate, rethink my research methods, estimate the (in)security of places, and decide whether to stay or leave. Towards the end of 2014, the death of an elderly Hamar man and the beating of government workers near the school that I had chosen for my extended research led to a temporary shutdown of the school, since all government workers left the area. The school was reopened after two weeks and I returned with teachers and students, to leave again and not go back after several policemen and a teacher were killed nearby in January 2015. It was not the only time during my fieldwork that I left hastily, leaving my belongings behind and recovering them later at different places. In some parts of the district, people blocked access for "people who wear clothes" by beating or threatening to kill them with rifles. It became increasingly difficult for me to go to some rural areas in Hamar district, so that I had to meet people at other places. However, some areas remained accessible, so that I could visit schools there.

In January 2015, additional and special police forces were posted to Dimeka, since the town became increasingly threatened. Many town dwellers did not feel safe and women and children left for other towns, such as Jinka. I decided to stay in Dimeka, and after some weeks most people returned. A few days before the national elections on May 24, 2015, a man was shot at the river in Dimeka. Rumors got louder that something would happen around election day, so that I left Dimeka temporarily, just before another man got shot at the river. Two days after the election, there was shooting in and around Dimeka for three days. The shooting was stopped through a military intervention on the third day, in which many people were killed. After some weeks, when vehicles on the road between Jinka and Dimeka were no longer attacked, I returned to Dimeka, which some town

[26] Oral Bible in Hamar: http://oralbibles.org/content/hamer-ethiopia (last accessed: 06.03.2018); oral Bible in Bana: http://globalrecordings.net/en/language/3140 (last accessed: 06.03.2018). According to Yigezu and Mendisu (2015:14) the Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church of SIM has translated the New Testament into Bana and published it in Ge'ez script in 2014.

dwellers had left or were trying to leave. Many police and military forces had moved to Dimeka and partly controlled the roads in and out of town.

Staying in a town that was under threat of attack for several months, and finally was attacked, means sharing people's worries and fears. For fear of repercussions, people were very careful not to talk openly about what was going on, but on some occasions the emotional pressure was too great to be hidden. In those moments, conversations opened up, people shared their fears, anger and opinions, which were later covered again under a veil of silence. While I had the freedom and the money to take a bus or hitchhike out of the area when the pressure got too high, most students lacked the money to do so and government employees were sometimes forced to stay in Dimeka if they did not want to lose their jobs. During my absence at the end of May 2015, military forces moved into the house where I had rented a room. On my return, I passed soldiers whenever I left my room, seeing them cleaning their weapons. While I was treated in a friendly manner, I heard stories of intimidation, coercion, violence, torture and rape that young people experienced. It became increasingly difficult to comply with the ethical principle of fieldwork, to do no harm to people participating in the research, including myself. The day a government car came rushing towards me and made me jump into the ditch at the side of the road, I decided that it was time to leave and return to my academic armchair.

The conflict made it impossible for me to conduct research for the course of a whole school year, since I left two months earlier than planned. However, the year 2014/15 was different from other school years in many ways, since the conflict interrupted teaching and learning and led to the temporary closure of some schools. In the course of my research, my focus shifted from studying the life of students over the course of a school year to trying to understand the role of schooling and students in the escalating conflict, since the fight addressed fundamental issues of compulsory schooling. My research is not a classical conflict study that tries to understand the conflict by talking to all conflict parties in the aftermath of its escalation.[27] Instead, the conflict escalated during my fieldwork and I constructed my research through its ups and downs.

My research took me to schools in rural and urban areas, to student hostels and into classrooms, to agro-pastoralist homesteads and fields, to government offices, teachers' rooms and NGO offices. I sat on school benches and cowhides, walked through the bush and the dust of streets, rented rooms in several private houses and a mission compound, put up my tent at different homesteads and slept on spread out branches, shared cowhides, plastic mats and mattresses. While hanging out with students, I was frequently asked to help with homework. This joint activity often became a starting point for group discussions on difficulties in school and language as well as cultural differences between "Hamar", "*gal*" and "*ferenji*" (white foreigners). In particular, coffee rounds in

[27] Yohannes Yitbarek Ejigu started in 2016 to study the conflict in retrospect and its ongoing peace process.

the early morning and early evening are points of social gathering and debate, in which I joined. On walks through town, I caught up on the latest news and arranged meetings for more personal conversations and interviews. Depending on the topic, I took notes during conversations and wrote down new words and sayings that I learned in these formal and informal conversations. I recorded interviews and made memos of conversations.

During my fieldwork, I participated in the daily lives of students and teachers, as well as parents and young people who were not in school. The field ranges from Hamar homesteads to towns in South Omo Zone, with glimpses into student life in the bigger cities of SNNPR and Addis Ababa. While a study situated in a village "has always been as much characterized by absences as by presences and hence necessitated a variety of corresponding methods" to get insights into social performance (Amit, 2000:12), multi-sited ethnography is fragmented but united through shared narratives and people. Moving with students across different social fields not only revealed their dilemmas, but also posed dilemmas for me as a researcher in a particular political context characterized by silencing.

1.7.2 Silencing in a Repressive Research Environment

At times, political conditions in Ethiopia silence voices in public spheres, which affects the research and the writing and publication process. Human Rights Watch summarized the events of 2015 in Ethiopia as follows:

> In Ethiopia in 2015 there were continuing government crackdowns on opposition political party members, journalists, and peaceful protesters, many of whom experienced harassment, arbitrary arrest, and politically motivated prosecutions. The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), the ruling party coalition, won all 547 parliamentary seats in the May elections, due in part to the lack of space for critical or dissenting voices. Despite a few high-profile prisoner releases ahead of the June visit of United States President Barack Obama, there was no progress on fundamental reforms of the deeply repressive laws and policies constricting Ethiopian civil society organizations and media (Human Rights Watch, 2016).

The fact that the ruling EPRDF took the last opposition seat, thus occupying all seats in parliament after the May 2015 election, shows that the government controls the political field. It silenced diverse political voices in the run-up to the election, in which my fieldwork took place. The ethical considerations which apply to all research contexts become more important in an authoritarian state, under repressive conditions and contexts of violence. In an article on research during the civil war in Sudan, Hutchinson (2011) reflects on "Uncertain Ethics" and comes to the conclusion that a "neutral vantage point" for fieldwork does not exist:

> There simply was no neutral vantage point from which I could coolly survey the scene. And even if there were, I am not at all sure a position of political neutrality would have been morally defensible in this research context, because neutrality would have been tantamount to supporting the status quo, which in this case favoured a national state government brutally suppressing large numbers of its own citizens (Hutchinson, 2011:92).

The meandering course of my fieldwork which I have described above demonstrates the lack of a "cool" observation point. An additional aspect that Hutchinson emphasizes here is the question of neutrality, which she concludes does not exist if one wants to avoid supporting a politically suppressive regime. Although this insight is not new in anthropology and applies to all research settings, fieldwork under violent circumstances makes the need for ethical considerations like "do no harm" more evident (Pottier, Hammond, & Cramer, 2011:18). The impossibility for a researcher to be impartial goes along with the impossibility of writing a "neutral" ethnography which pleases everybody:

> One wonders whether it is really possible to write any ethnography in a place like the Sudan that does not contain an implicit or explicit denunciation of the state. In such contexts, impartiality is an illusion – but sometimes a vital illusion which I consciously sought to cultivate through strategic transparency and blurred identities so as to protect both my informants and myself (Hutchinson, 2011:92).

How do researchers deal with the impossibility of writing a "neutral" ethnography and staying impartial, when they become witnesses of violence? Hutchinson notes:

> Self-censorship is always an option and, sometimes, a security necessity. But at what point does an ethic of silence become an ethic of complicity? (Hutchinson, 2011:92).

In the following section, I will consider the dilemmas of research in, and ethnographic writing about, violent conflicts that I encountered in southwest Ethiopia by reflecting on processes and layers of silence.

In her article "Four Layers of Silence: Counterinsurgency in Northeastern Ethiopia", Laura Hammond (2011) reflects on the process of witnessing a government counterinsurgency against Afar pastoralists in northeastern Ethiopia in May 1996, in which government forces attacked Afar villages with artillery from helicopters. She identifies four layers of silence: (1) on the side of the Afar who in public deny knowing the rebels who fight for an independent state; (2) on the side of the Ethiopian government which tries to hide its attacks on Afar villages from the international community and the Ethiopian population; (3) on the side of the US embassy which does not undertake any action against Hammond's detention and against human rights violations committed by the Ethiopian government since the beginning of the 1990s; (4) her own silence and self-censorship, which deterred her from writing about the attacks on Afar villages for fear of

not being able to continue research in Ethiopia. Hammond summarizes the effectiveness and power of these different layers of silence as follows:

> In each of these layers of silence, there is a sense in which the communal construction of silence is at work. Silence serves a purpose that the parties to the act of censorship all agree to, and this is what gives it its effectiveness. In some cases, the recognition of the value of silence is also held by those towards whom the act of silence is expressed: in my case, the Ethiopian authorities clearly understood that my silence was valuable to them, and through their own version of silent intimidation, they succeeded in keeping me quiet. In none of the layers I have examined here has silence been associated with a lack of consciousness about the inequities at hand or of the implications of speaking out. This further supports the idea that awareness and expression are not necessarily two sides of the same coin (Hammond, 2011:75).

In this case of conflict in the Awash valley, various stakeholders, such as the state, the local population, the international community and the researcher weave various layers of silence, with the effect that the violence is hidden from the general public and only known to a select few.

While many anthropologists address in their work not only the "said" but also the "unsaid" aspects of conversations (Tyler, 1978), they seldom write about self-censorship. Hammond pleads for more transparency in this regard. Eva Poluha (2004:34) also observes how things that "smell" like politics in Ethiopia alter conversations, and either exclude researchers or researchers consciously or unconsciously apply self-censorship. The plea to be more transparent contains a dilemma, since the possible consequences for the people involved and for the researcher herself need to be balanced. Only after several years, when she no longer lived in the Horn of Africa, Hammond broke her silence by publishing a book on "Researching Violence in Africa" (Cramer, Hammond, & Pottier, 2011). The four layers of silence which Hammond uncovered in the Awash valley of northeast Ethiopia help to analyze the layers of silence that I encountered in the lowlands of southwest Ethiopia.

A national framework for silencing consists of a controlled media system that limits the radius of how far news travels. News about events in South Omo does not reach a broader audience in Addis Ababa or abroad. Likewise, many events that happened just a few hundred kilometers away from South Omo did not appear in the local media, but in international media. Local news tends to travel from mouth to mouth and is not discussed in Ethiopian media (Glowacki, 2012).[28] After about seven policemen and a pregnant teacher were killed in Hamar district in January 2015, I shared my observations about the limited radius of the public debate with a teacher saying to him: "If so many people were

[28] With the change of prime minister in early 2018 and in the course of reforms, the media landscape has opened up in most parts of Ethiopia. It remains to see how far this liberation will go and whether it will connect the southwestern part of the country to wider news networks within and outside the country.

killed in Germany, it would be in the news, journalists would write about it, and people in different parts of the country, and maybe abroad, would debate the case." The teacher answered smilingly in a calm voice: "Not in Ethiopia. This does not happen in Ethiopia" (fieldnotes 2015). The general public in Ethiopia was not informed about the number of victims, neither on the side of government employees nor on the side of civilians. However, as Hammond has stated, this silence does not mean that people are not aware of what is going on or do not talk about it. The debates are just more hidden, so that a public silence hinders the spread of concrete information but circulates disguised as rumor.

Layers of silence are created and maintained through intimidation. The German foreign office warns people who travel to Ethiopia that phone and internet connections can be shut down and strongly recommends to refrain from making any critical and political comments in oral and written communication (Auswärtiges Amt, 11.01.2018). Although this official warning came out after my fieldwork, it was already applicable during my fieldwork, when I experienced irregularities in my online communication. Sometimes the mobile network and internet connection was shut down completely for several days. This silencing leads not only to a limited exchange of information, but also to a modification of the information one shares with interlocutors, friends and family in the field and back home. It becomes a learning process for the ethnographer to assess which questions and topics are appropriate in which conversations. Several times, I wondered about single men who were sitting nearby while I was conducting an interview in a café and holding a smartphone in our direction. Were they recording our conversation or was it just coincidence? As Jeffrey Sluka (1995) has noted, there are reasonable grounds for paranoia in violent social contexts:

> One need not be paranoid about the dangers involved in doing research in violent social contexts, but a good dose of realistic appreciation goes a long way. And, all in all, it is no doubt better to be a bit paranoid about such things than it is to be a bit complacent about them (Sluka, 1995:289–290).

Governmental control involving threats and sanctions in daily life require sensible sharing and processing of information. Often, I wondered why similar arguments were brought forward by very different people. For instance, I heard most Hamar say that schooling was good. However, the conflict and violent acts against schooling told a different story. A triangulation of research methods consisting of participation, conversation, observation and listening helped me to look beyond the layers of such a repetitive and politically "safe" statement. The conflict made it obvious that alternative opinions about schooling exist, which could hardly be denied, but which were often not articulated in formal interview settings. In this political context, anthropological research methods show their strength.

Anthropological methods such as participant observation use a different approach from fact-finding missions, such as those undertaken by representatives of the international community and NGOs in South Omo. Unfamiliar with the environment and agro-pastoralist life and values, reliant on the help of translators and accompanied by government representatives, interviews in such settings risk not uncovering carefully constructed layers of silence. But even when interviewers look behind layers of silence, they might decide for diplomatic reasons to add another layer of silence. Anthropologist Will Hurt has criticized international organizations for this silence and published a literal transcript of a group discussion between DFID and USAID representatives and Mursi elders in South Omo (Hurd, 2012). Some international NGOs have criticized development donors for their silence in respect of human rights violations in the Omo valley. For instance, the Oakland Institute has blamed DFID for ignoring human rights abuses in the Omo valley (Hurd, 2013), and Survival International (2014) appealed to the chancellor of Germany to address human rights violations committed in the name of development against indigenous people in the Omo valley when she met the Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn in 2014. Opinions concerning development and transformations in the Omo valley easily become polarized and covered in layers of silence by locals, the Ethiopian government and the international community. In the next section, I will reflect on how I position myself among these layers of silence and tension.

1.7.3 Ethical Positioning in a Violent Political Field

Many people in Jinka were surprised to hear my interest in education and repeatedly asked: "Which tribe are you studying?" Many anthropologists have done research in South Omo Zone and passed through Jinka to then settle in the territory of one "tribe". The question about which "tribe" I am studying reveals not only dominant discourses about ethnic groups in Ethiopia, but also a specific approach in the history of anthropological research in southern Ethiopia (cf. chapter 1.2). However, my research focus was not "tribal" life, but schooling, which was often framed as "modern" and contrasted with "traditional" life. I expressed my interest in studying education among pastoralists to administrators and education officers, arguing that school attendance here is lower than in other parts of Ethiopia and many children leave before finishing school. This research was welcomed by officials and I was asked to give recommendations to improve the situation and to find donors to support schooling. In contrast to this narrative, school-educated people used different ways to introduce me to their agro-pastoral kin and presented me as a student *(temari*) interested in learning Hamar language and culture. This manner of introduction was not initiated by me, but opened the doors to people who held ambiguous opinions in respect of schooling.

To explain where I came from, some people referred to me as *Ivosa pe nasi*, which literally means a "child of Ivo's country" and refers to anthropologist Ivo Strecker. Walking in the footprints of other researchers clearly comes along with advantages and

challenges. During a workshop with Ethiopian and international scholars at the French Center of Ethiopian Studies in Addis Ababa, we discussed the difficulties of accessing field sites in the peripheries.[29] Ethiopian students talked about the difficulties of dealing with the expectations of informants who have received second-hand clothes and money from foreign researchers. As most Ethiopian students do not have the same means to "compensate" their informants, some refuse to talk to them. Although people generally did not refuse to talk to me but were interested in exchanges and often told me happily about their work with previous researchers, their expectations concerning "returns" were high. I entered a network of people that made the beginning of my research smooth, since many people had already worked with researchers and recommended me to each other or tried to spark my interest in researching their "tribe". They had their own ideas concerning how I should conduct "proper" research in the homestead and not in towns or schools.

The fact that I was an anthropologist became increasingly problematic. Towards the end of my fieldwork, I was asked by a government official if I was an anthropologist. The question surprised me, because we had known each other almost from the beginning of my fieldwork. When I asked him to tell me why anthropologists had a bad reputation in Ethiopia, which I had heard, he explained that anthropologists did not care about the development of people, but want to conserve people. He said that anthropologists were selfish and wanted people to stay as they were, to keep them only for their own studies (fieldnotes 2015). Accusations for being "opponents of development" affected not only anthropologists but also human rights activists. Another day, a government official told me that human rights activists were terrorists. When I asked him why he thought so, he replied that they were against development and did not care about the poverty of people. He added that those who disagreed with the government's development projects were in danger (fieldnotes 2014). These opinions are in line with the speech that the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi gave in Jinka on the pastoralist day, when he said:

> There are some people who say they are concerned for the pastoralists, but really they want the pastoralists and their lifestyle to remain as a tourist attraction forever. The pastoralists don't want to live as a tourist attraction. They want a stable, improved life. Taking this into consideration we should ignore the false propaganda of people who want pastoralists to be a tourist attraction. We are standing strongly by the idea of creating opportunities for pastoralists to live securely according to their own interests. […] I want to assure you again that all our development work will be in line with protecting the environment and the friends of backwardness and poverty, whatever they say or do, can't stop us from the path of development we are taking (Zenawi, 2011).

[29] Junior Scholar Fieldwork Research Workshop: Fieldwork in the Ethiopian Peripheral Zones, organized with Alice Judell (University of Sydney) on January 9, 2015 at the French Center for Ethiopian Studies in Addis Ababa.

Without mentioning the "friends of backwardness and poverty" by name, the speech was a clear sign for those who were not working in line with the government's "path of development". The statements speak of a developmental state which designs the path of development autocratically, pretends to be working in the best interest of its subjects, and regards people who express criticisms and hold different opinions as "opponents" or even "terrorists". This impedes the granting of research permits, limits research topics, censures conversations and information, and requires a sensitive positioning of the researcher. Many conversations have the character of indirect speech, citing rumors without mentioning the speaker, so that no one can be made responsible.

While male students often approached me by themselves and were interested in talking to me in English, it initially proved difficult to get in contact with female students. The language was one barrier, since most girls did not speak or understand English as well as boys did. Girls were also shyer than boys in talking to me, and only when I was more fluent in Hamar could I interact with female students without a male translator. Because of these differences, I spent more time in urban areas with male students, while in rural areas I was more among girls and women. Most schoolboys I talked to had not lived in the cattle camps along the Omo river. Only those who started school at a later age had herded cattle in mobile camps and hunted wild animals before entering school. Not having close contact with young men in the cattle camps, and being a female researcher, I did not visit the male-dominated sphere of the cattle camps, whose existence along the Omo river and in Mago National Park was highly disputed between the government and pastoralists during the period of my research.

My role as a foreigner *(ferenje)* who speaks Hamar often confused people. Some older Hamar men started talking in Amharic with me and had difficulties in changing to Hamar. Not understanding Amharic well made it difficult for me to follow school lessons and to talk to teachers. My limited Amharic skills gave me difficulties in class similar to those faced by students from Hamar who have not learned Amharic long enough to follow the lessons. My shortcomings in Amharic made me a student in class and teachers corrected my Amharic writing in exercise books. While my knowledge of English helped me to understand more in textbooks and in conversations with urban students, it often did not help me to talk to students and primary school teachers.

Although my Hamar language skills grew and were appreciated by Hamar, being a *temari* and wearing "modern" clothes put me on the side of students and the government. When I inquired if it would be safe to go to certain areas in which students were beaten, some people said I should not worry, because *ferenji* would not be touched (fieldnotes 2014, 2015). However, I felt that this assessment was not reliable. When some people wanted me to wear a leather skirt, I asked if it was appropriate clothing for school. Leather clothes are normally not worn in school and I expected stigmatization by teachers and students. Instead of leather clothes, I had a lot of bead jewelry and bracelets, which I got as gifts (cf. chapter 4). The mutual questioning of my position demonstrates the

sociocultural boundaries, which are created and maintained between town dwellers, school-educated people, pastoralists and foreigners. Through the movements between places and social spheres, I gained a deeper understanding of what schooling means for various people. My interlocutors and hosts did not always understand me going to "the other side", but it was necessary in order to compare and balance views.

The guiding principles of academic writing are transparency and accountability, while protecting interlocutors from any negative consequences of the research and its publication. The writer is in a dilemma between granting the interlocutors integrity and the reader accountability. I balance these diverging interests by a combination of methods. Since I am writing about distinctive events at a particular place and time, I cannot make the place anonymous. Any literature I refer to for the explanation of local terms and the cultural and historical background would make the place known to readers. Mentioning the real names of people would give credit to those who talked to me, acknowledge their knowledge and expertise and it would not obscure them. However, I conducted research on a politically sensitive topic and during a violent conflict, so that if I were to use real names, it would require me to censure some content and quotations in order to protect the speakers from possible repercussions. It is hard to guess what is politically tolerated and when and if this will change again. Another strategy could be to avoid writing about contested political topics, but this would not do justice to the events. Since I left the field earlier than expected and could not return before submitting this thesis, I could not ask permission for each quotation, but my interlocutors knew that I was a researcher interested in education. Since no one knows to what extent the state watches people, what is recorded and what is not, and who takes measures against whom and for what reasons, mistrust is high and caution is the mother of wisdom. Some researchers in Eritrea decide to use only pseudonyms and not to mention places and dates for quotations (Riggan, 2016:30; Treiber, 2005:32–33). However, to follow the unfolding of events during my fieldwork, a temporal note is necessary for understanding. Therefore, I give dates and places when necessary for understanding the course of events. To blur the traces of my sources, I change between pseudonyms and social descriptions, between concrete and approximate dates and places. This does not allow identification of individual speakers but tries to give readers enough information to understand the context.

1.8 Outline

The following chapters analyze dilemmas relating to compulsory schooling and state making in Hamar district. Chapter two investigates the economic dilemmas of compulsory schooling, since schooling intersects with children's education outside school and with labor demands in agro-pastoralist household economies. This chapter looks at the role of education and young people in a subsistence-oriented agro-pastoralist economy and the dilemmas created for households when all children are required to go to school.

Chapter three analyses how students experience daily life in school and their struggles with the languages of instruction, the cultural bias of the classes and how they have to wait for teachers, while at the same time they do not feel supported in school by their parents whom they cite as saying: "School is empty".

Schooling comes along with pressure to adapt to an urban lifestyle. In chapter four I analyze how children and young people adopt a distinctive habitus, lifestyle and vision of the future as they become *temara* who set themselves apart from Hamar. This creation of boundaries makes students appear less like Hamar and more like *gal* so that schooling creates a distinctive social group of young people who distance themselves from agro-pastoralism and try to connect with the wider national and global world, while facing dilemmas in being related to both.

Faced with different notions of proper life courses and corresponding rituals, students find themselves in a dilemma when they need to decide with whom and how to get married, without jeopardizing their enrollment in school and their social connections. The violent conflicts these decisions about initiation, marriage and schooling create for students, their kin and the government are discussed in chapter five in relation to gendered expectations of life courses and debates about "harmful" culture.

Finally, chapter six analyzes how Hamar students who become government workers challenge notions of authority and power. Looking at how the relationship between fathers and children, as well as between "father state" and its citizens, is negotiated, I show how the claims of "fathers" to legitimately use physical force create dilemmas for students who get beaten by both sides. When students start working for the government, this often creates a political battlefield involving their agro-pastoralist kin, in which not only claims to power over young people and their education, but also claims to power in general are fought over. These battles reflect a process of ongoing state making on the frontier of the state, which creates dilemmas and struggles for students who live at the interface of these competing powers and whose decisions about their education affect not only their personal life course but society at large.

2 “Who Herds the Cattle? Who Herds the Goats?” – How Schooling Creates Dilemmas of Labor in an Agro-Pastoralist Economy

2.1 Armed Disputes Over the Implementation of Compulsory Schooling

Young people’s education and the politics of schooling are debated controversially in any society. However, the rejection of compulsory schooling is rarely as strong as it is in southwest Ethiopia.

> In autumn 2014, I sat in a packed 4x4 pick-up full of government employees. The car drove through Hamar district, left the main road and maneuvered on narrow paths through bushlands and dry river valleys to reach remote schools. The young men in the car were in their twenties or early thirties and worked for the woreda administration. One after the other man left the car at dispersed schools. Independently of their occupation and training, they said their job was to “talk to the community” and to mobilize parents to send all of their children to school.
>
> At one stop in the south of Hamar, Dore, one of the young men who recently finished college and got employed by the woreda pointed at the newly built school and said: “This school is very new, but people here don’t like school. They like fighting.” Saying this he laughed. The school building looked indeed very new but empty of children. It was a cement building and in front of it was a new playground with a roundabout and a seesaw.
>
> Three days later, I sat in the same car, which picked up the school mobilizers and drove them back to their homes in Dimeka. During the drive, Kolmo, one of the Hamar government officials, started to tell me how he was attacked the day before when he was driving along this road with four government cars, in which were also policemen. The men in the car did not tell me why they went there, but said people spread wrong rumors and there were some misunderstandings between the Hamar and the government. On the main road, close to the newly built school, which Dore had pointed out to me three days earlier, young Hamar men with rifles and some elders stopped the cars and encircled them. Pointing their rifles at them, they told the government officials to come out holding their hands up. The men told the government workers: ‘We don’t want you here. We don’t want your school. We don’t want to give our children to school. Don’t come back or we will shoot you.’ The armed men did not allow the government workers to leave and the talks went on for several hours. Kolmo cited the armed men as saying: ‘What’s school? It’s nothing.’ And a young Hamar man shouted from the back of the car

> that these men insisted: 'Let them sign that they won't come back. Let them sign', which evoked a lot of laughter in the car. I asked the men in the car if they signed, and they laughed again and said: "No, they had no paper."
>
> No one else dared to pass the road meanwhile and a motorbike turned straight back when the driver spotted the scene. This fearful escape evoked a lot of laughter among the men in the car. On our way back, we passed the spot without problems but did not leave the main road to reach schools off the all-weather road.
>
> Some weeks later I heard that the newly built school was closed, when I met some of its teachers who were transferred to other schools (fieldnotes 2014).

This incident shows how compulsory schooling is contested in the local arena. In this case, the weapons served only to threaten government officials, while some weeks and months later they were used to kill on both sides. Most of the young men in this conflict share an agro-pastoralist background, but the difference lies in their education. While those who went to school and work for the government support compulsory schooling and try to implement it by "mobilizing" Hamar parents to send all of their children to school, other young men actively resist schooling and the government's policy. The latter took up arms to prevent government workers from entering their settlement area and wanted to get a binding document from them testifying that the government representatives would not return to implement compulsory schooling.

However, the Ethiopian government requires its local government workers, who also originate from agro-pastoralist homesteads to go to a rural *kebele* to convince the elders to send all their children to school. This was also the case at the beginning of the new school year, when I accompanied the government workers in the car that drove them to remote schools to bring the government's policy to the people. The school mobilizers often told me that their work is challenging, since elders ask them: *"Who herds the cattle? Who herds the goats?"* (fieldnotes 2014). This question can be read in several ways. To grasp its meaning, knowledge about the agro-pastoralist economy and the organization of school is necessary.

To understand the dilemmas connected with integrating compulsory schooling in agro-pastoralist life, this chapter follows the elders' question and looks into young people's work and education in agro-pastoralist households, which shows the great importance of children and their education for society, in the present and in the future. The consequences of a strict implementation of compulsory schooling can only be discussed hypothetically, as I have not yet heard of any agro-pastoralist household in Hamar district that sends all its children to school. Although herders sometimes cross the school compound with their animals, the paths to school and the paths followed by the cattle and goats lead in different directions. Young people's education does not take place in a neutral space set apart from its surrounding, but childhood and education are embedded in economic contexts. Who educates children, for what and how, are important

questions, since controlling the education of children is a way of shaping social reproduction and the future.[30] By analyzing young people's education in agro-pastoralist households and showing how this way of learning is entwined with the agro-pastoralist economy, we can see how schooling profoundly shapes household economies and requires a new distribution of labor among the household members. Agro-pastoralist households find themselves in a dilemma when they are pressured to send all their children to school, because they depend on young people's labor.

2.1.1 Paradoxical Criticisms of Young People's Work and Schooling

Children's labor is highly contested so that debates about schooling and children's learning through work are often polarized. Some strands of research follow an idealized "Western" concept of childhood and argue that children's work, such as their involvement in domestic, agricultural and small businesses is harmful, and a hindrance to successful schooling. In this view, schooling is seen as the best way to raise children and children's participation in work is abolished.[31] For instance, the United Nations adopted the "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", which continues the elimination of children's work in its target 8.7. This target is to "eradicate forced labour […] and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms" (United Nations, 2015). In contrast to this aim of a work-free childhood, other scholars regard children's work not as exploitive per se, but as a form of learning that is entangled with play and crucial for the acquisition of skills necessary in children's future lives (Abebe & Bessell, 2011; Abebe, Waters, & Skelton, 2017; Spittler & Bourdillon, 2012). While the latter approach has to defend itself against the criticism of romanticizing children's work, schooling is seldom criticized as a romanticized form of learning.

Schooling became the dominant model of educating the young generation in the 20th century, often replacing learning through working in the household. The two approaches to children's learning in school and in households, or spaces outside school, are reflected in research on education: studies of schooling mostly pay little attention to children's learning outside school but look at the institution of the school. Other studies often focus exclusively on learning outside school, like children's work, knowledge transmission in agriculture and handcrafts, children's learning on the street, or so-called "indigenous", "informal" or "traditional" education. Since all these different forms of education and learning co-exist and are valuable in one way or the other for children and

[30] cf. Michel Houellebecq's statement in his novel "Soumission": "celui qui contrôle les enfants contrôle le futur" (2015:81-82) (those who control the children, control the future).

[31] The International Labour Organization (2017:5) estimates that 152 million children are involved in child labor, of which the highest proportion of 19.6% live in Africa. 70.9% of working children are engaged in agriculture, followed by 17.2% in services and 11.9% in industry.

households, this chapter looks at the dilemmas of combining children's schooling with education and work in households.

Although the content and form of school education are debated all over the world, for instance with regard to curriculum, reform pedagogy, and home schooling, the institution and existence of schools are generally not questioned. In Africa, forms of education outside schools – which cannot easily be subsumed under one term, such as "informal", "traditional", or "indigenous" education – compete with "Western"-style schooling. During the past few decades, the latter has become a mass phenomenon, promoted since 1990 through the United Nations' "Education for All" policy and Millennium Development Goal No. 2. Schooling became a global model "within and against" which teachers and local reformers work (Anderson-Levitt, 2003).

Entangled as "Western"-style schooling is with ideas of individual and national development, it is surprising that schooling has not been criticized as much as the concept of "development", which post-development theorists fundamentally condemn for its Eurocentric and "Western" hegemonic claims (cf. Escobar, [1995] 2011). The institution of schooling seems to be sacrosanct, and not open to any general and fundamental criticism. It might therefore come as a surprise that some people in Hamar district reject schooling at a point in time when schooling has been generally accepted as the morally "right" way of educating young people. Historical examples, however, show that resistance to compulsory schooling has always accompanied its implementation, and is documented for instance for 18th century Prussia and Austria (Melton, 1988), as well as for colonial South Africa (Comaroff, 1996).

In most parts of the world, resistance to compulsory schooling changed at a certain point in time, when people started to see schooling as the avenue towards a successful life. Davidson describes how farmers in Guinea-Bissau have begun to say "school is the path now", since they no longer see a future in the hard work of rice farming in times of decreasing rainfall (Davidson, 2015:166–175). Among agro-pastoralists in southwest Ethiopia, this turning point, where compulsory schooling becomes accepted and where almost every child is sent to school, has not been reached. While most farmers among the Aari in southwest Ethiopia have started to send all of their children to school, pastoralists are openly reluctant to do so. Their reasons for not sending all their children to school are manifold and will be discussed in the following chapters.

2.1.2 Push for Compulsory Schooling in South Omo Zone

In 2013/14, only 34.7% of the school-age population in Hamar district were enrolled in school (Zonal Education Office, Jinka, 2014). This is one of the lowest enrollment rates in South Omo Zone and in Ethiopia as a whole.[32] In October 2014, the government's action plan was to reach a school enrollment rate of 65% in Hamar district, which was almost double the previous year's figure (fieldnotes 2014). This ambitious increase was realized in Maale district, a semi-pastoralist district north of Hamar, between 2008 and 2013. In 2008, the school coverage (Gross Enrollment Ratio, GER) in Maale district was 33.88% (Thubauville, 2012:221). Five years later, in the school year 2013/2014, the GER had increased to 113% (Zonal Education Office, Jinka, 2014).[33]

These statistics have to be regarded with caution since the total population, as well as the school age population, and age in general, can only be estimated in an area of limited administrative control. Furthermore, statistics serve different political goals in the area of schooling and do not necessarily depict actual school enrollment (Fichtner, 2016). However, that the number of schools is growing is obvious in many settlements in Hamar district, and is also reflected in Save the Children Norway's evaluation:

Number of	*before 2004*	*after Save the Children's Intervention at the end of the year 2010*
Kindergarten	2	17
Alternative Basic Education Center	0	38
Primary School (Grade 1-4)	5	16
Primary School (Grade 1-8)	2	5

Figure 5 Number of Schools in Hamar District, Table after Zeleke and Zeleke (2012:22)

Before 2004, there were no Alternative Basic Education Centers in Hamar district and only five Primary Schools (Grade 1-4), two Primary Schools (Grade 1-8) and two Kindergartens. Following Save the Children's intervention, at the end of the year 2010, there were 38 Alternative Basic Education Centers, 16 Primary Schools (grade 1-4), five Primary Schools (1-8) and 17 Kindergartens (Zeleke & Zeleke, 2012:22). Thus, the number of schools has multiplied more than eight times within six years.

Instead of struggling to deal with masses of schoolchildren, like in other parts of Ethiopia, the task of local government officials in Hamar district was to fill the schools with children. Although teachers and government workers kept telling me: "Now it is

[32] See comparative data in appendix 10.4.

[33] The gross school enrollment ratio (GER) can be above 100% since it includes children who are older or younger than the "official age group". To give an example, the GER is 100% when all children aged seven go to grade one. If children start schooling at the age of ten and also join grade one, or if many people repeat grade one, or younger people enroll in grade one, the gross school enrollment (GER) goes beyond 100% (cf.https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/114955-how-can-gross-school-enrollment-ratios-be-over-100 (accessed 15.06.2018)).

getting better. The Hamar have become more aware of the benefit of education" (fieldnotes 2013, 2014), the violent conflict in Hamar district in 2014/15, in which many people violently resisted the government's plan to send all children to school, and during which schools were closed and some destroyed, tells a different story.

2.1.3 Notions of Schooling Among People Who "Walk with Cattle"

Epple (2012b) describes in respect of Bashada how the attitude towards schooling has changed in recent decades. At the beginning of schooling in Hamar district, parents were very skeptical, since the first schoolchildren from Bashada in the 1970s and 1980s were sent to fight in the war in northern Ethiopia and in what is today Eritrea, and most of them died and never returned home. This association of schooling with recruiting young people for war changed in the following decades. When the first school opened in Bashada territory in 2007, Epple saw people being very enthusiastic. In 2011 several men from Hamar, Banna and Bashada finished higher education and took up positions in the local administration in Dimeka. This was appreciated in Bashada, since they hoped that these local administrators would act in their interest, unlike the administrators who up to then had come from other parts of Ethiopia. However, the support for schooling diminished, since almost none of the first students who went to the school in Bashada in 2007 remained in school in 2011, and only few students proceeded beyond the first grades and continued schooling in Dimeka or Jinka (Epple, 2012b). One of the reasons which Epple heard very often in Bashada to explain the low rate of school attendance was: *"Wodi wunga-xa de yaya"*, which she translates as "we walk with the cattle" (Epple, 2012b:208). This self-description emphasizes how pastoralists see themselves primarily as cattle owners who walk through the world and through life with their cattle.

This explanation for low school enrollment, in which people emphasize that they walk with cattle shows that schooling is assessed with regard to its contribution to the cattle economy. When schooling does not fit into the rhythms and ways of living with cattle, schooling is abandoned rather than the care of cattle, which constitutes the basis for making a living. This self-identification also relates to the elder's question "Who herds the cattle and goats?" It is a core question, since it captures the essence of the local means of livelihood and explains the dilemma created by implementing a national and global school policy. Thus, the question is why walking with cattle is a reason for not going to school, and why schooling and cattle breeding are seen as mutually exclusive life paths.

2.2 Diversified Agro-Pastoralist Household Economies

The activity of agro-pastoralists in southwest Ethiopia is not primarily oriented towards a market economy. It is geared to producing goods for the pastoralists' own consumption and to buy products that are not locally produced.

> Despite their renowned self-sufficiency, pastoralists have always consumed foodstuffs they did not produce, such as grain, and used tools and weapons they did not manufacture themselves. To acquire them they exchange animals, hides and skins, dairy products, utensils, and decorations made from the flora and fauna of their habitat, with their sedentary neighbours. Such occasional involvement in trade does not alter the fact that pastoralist production is not designed to produce livestock for the market as its primary purpose. In subsistence oriented systems, exchange or trade is a complementary component rather than the main goal of production (Markakis, 2011:29–30).

The argument that the main goal of agro-pastoralists is to produce enough for self-consumption is strengthened by the fact that, in contrast to other parts of Ethiopia and Africa, labor migration is almost non-existent in South Omo (Donham, 1985:3) and cash crops have seldom been introduced in agro-pastoralist households. Most households depend on their own production and not on wages or remittances. Those people who leave agro-pastoralist homesteads and work, for instance, for the government, as tourist guides and scouts, are few and they are mostly students. Thus, in this subsistence-oriented economy, young people and their education are a crucial part of social units of production, which I describe as households.

Young people grow up and are educated among people who are often described as "family". Abebe (2008) uses "family collectives" as a unit to analyze the entwined nature of children's agency in generating familial livelihoods in Ethiopia. Lydall (2005b:157) applies the term "individual family unit" to describe those responsible for the education of children in Hamar (Lydall, 2005b:157). Following the anthropology of kinship's critique of describing children's kinship relations only in terms of the "Western" concept of a nuclear and "biological" family (Alber, 2018), I prefer to describe children's social relations and interdependencies in terms of *households*, which in Hamar are often polygamous. The concept of "household" serves as a unit of analysis to show the interplay between various household members who contribute, from various locations and at certain times, to the unit's (economic) life (Goody, [1958] 1969). My use of the term household refers to and translates the Hamar term *dele*, which describes an economic unit consisting of people who cooperate in their daily work and in the education of children.[34]

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[34] According to Strecker (1976:35), "*'Dele'* may be translated as 'house' or 'homestead', but in its wider social sense it means 'family', 'the people of one homestead', 'lineage'. The term has witnessed the same extension like the English 'house' or German 'Haus', which (especially when applied to the aristocracy) may mean 'members and descendants of one family'". Lydall (2005b:153–154) adds the role of women in households and distinguishes between homestead and household: "In Hamar, a distinction is made between

In the following sections, I will describe agro-pastoralist households in Hamar, their geographic distribution, working locations and division of labor to demonstrate the social and economic contribution of young people to the households. I will show that young people's learning, work and play is interwoven with household life. The data for this section is mainly based on participant observation in agro-pastoral homesteads located in a radius of two to three hours walk from Dimeka at the beginning of a rainy season and the beginning of a harvest time in 2014.[35]

2.2.1 Household Composition

A household in Hamar, Banna and Bashada may consist of several houses (*oonî*) and its members may reside in different localities, but they are almost all related to an elderly man or widow, either through descent or marriage. If the father of the household (*imbá onnî*) has passed away, his first wife and his eldest son (*djeldápa*)[36] are supposed to lead the household in his name (cf. Lydall, 2005b:153–154).[37] Among the Hamar, Banna and Bashada, many households are polygamous with men marrying several wives. Due to patrilocality, brides normally move to their husband's homestead and become part of the husband's household. A newly married couple as well as further brides who join the household initially share the house with the husband's relatives. When a woman has two or three children, she normally gets a house for herself. In most of the households I visited, the household head had two or three wives and his children grew up with several mothers. Although they know which mother gave birth to them, children called all wives of their father *indó* (mother). Most elderly women I met who had passed the menopause had around six living children.

Young people often move between the houses and fields of their father's wives, and sometimes also their grandmother's house. Some women I met had left their husbands because they were severely beaten, and had moved with their children to a house close by their older brother(s) and mother(s). Although daughters are said to be only guests (*shooshî*) in their father's homestead, since they are supposed to move to their husband's household when they marry (Lydall & Strecker, 1979b:140), to some extent these women

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household (*ono* – house) and homestead (*dele* – livestock enclosure). Houses and their hearths are associated with individual women and those who depend on them for food and drink. Although her husband is acclaimed the household head (*ono-imba* – house-father), a woman is also acknowledged as the female household head (*ono-imbano* – 'female house-father')".

[35] In Hamar district, people can harvest up to three times a year, if the rainfall is favourable.

[36] Different forms of the term for the first-born son of a sibling group who will become his father's successor can be found in the literature. While I mostly heard the term "*djeldápa*", like Petrollino (2016), Jensen (1959c:345) writes "*djell-afa*", Lydall (2005b:153)"*djalatta*", Epple (2012b:205) and Strecker (1988a:71–73) "*djalepha*". The slight differences may be regional variations.

[37] In her censuses carried out in Dambaiti in 1973 and 1983, Lydall (2005b:154–155)shows that more houses and homesteads were headed by widows than by married men.

who moved back became members of their father's household again. For understanding the dilemmas of schooling and work, households are a useful unit of analysis, since the labor is divided among all household members, including children and adolescents. The decision as to which child should go to school, and thereby work and learn less in the household, affects the work arrangements of all household members and is therefore not only one individual's decision.

2.2.2 Dispersed Working Localities

The need for many helping hands in agro-pastoralist households becomes obvious when one looks at the diversity of work. Agro-pastoralist households combine slash-and-burn cultivation with pastoralism,[38] so that daily life and work extends over several localities. The main house of a household is mostly the *zéle ono*, a house surrounded by a goat enclosure, and often with a nearby cattle kraal (*waaki zéle*). It is normally the house of the first wife (*máa garo*) where rituals like initiations take place. Daily life in the house starts with a round of coffee at dawn, when the woman of the house distributes calabashes of coffee *(búno)*, cooked from coffee shells. If present, an elder speaks a blessing (*barjó äla)*.[39] During daytime, the *zeelí ono* is mostly empty, as people leave in the morning to go to the fields, herd cattle and goats, go to school or to the market, or visit other people. In the evening, around sunset, people come together again in the *zeelí ono* to have dinner and sleep on cowhides or plastic mats in the house or outside the house in the goat enclosure.

Figure 6 Main house with goat enclosure, 2014

[38] Strecker (1976b:49) argued that the Hamar-Banna-Bashada Cluster should not be labeled as "pastoralist", since agriculture is also important and for some people may be even more important than pastoralism.

[39] Although Strecker (1988a) writes only about men calling *barjó*, and Lydall agrees that women do not call *barjó* the way men do (in Epple (1995:103)), an elderly woman who lived without a husband also invited me and her children to call *barjó* in her house in the morning. She did not spit coffee out during the blessing but rubbed the bottom of the coffee calabash while speaking. Other people I spoke to confirmed that elderly women who live without husbands can call *barjó* in their house (fieldnotes 2015).

The field (*hámi*) for planting the staple crops, such as different varieties of sorghum and maize, as well as beans and squash, are situated on cleared land along river beds. In Hamar, Banna and Bashada, agriculture depends on rainfall, since most rivers and streams in Hamar district do not have permanent water, but turn into streams only temporarily after rainfall. Hamar district is situated between Omo and Woyeto rivers, which have running water all year round, but the Hamar do not plant in the seasonally flooded land of these rivers, where the Kara and Arbore reside and plant their fields. In the higher altitudes of Hamar district, and in Banna, people also grow tobacco and cabbage, as well as individual banana trees around water pumps, and papaya trees. Some NGOs experiment with vegetable gardens and distribute Moringa plants (also called *alekko*), a tree with edible leaves that contain iron and besides self-use are intended for sale and export.

Figure 7 House at the field, 2014

In the households I visited, the *zeelí ono* and the fields were between ten and twenty minutes' walk apart. During daytime, most women, children, married men and older people work in the fields. A house at the field (*hámi ono*), which is in general smaller and not plastered like the *zeelí ono*, serves as a place for cooking, and serving coffee and food. It also provides shelter during the rainy season and storage for grain. In southern Banna, I also saw households headed by younger men who had only one house that was situated directly at the field. Other households had a *zeelí ono* for the first wife, and the second wife lived in a house at the field. While some co-wives shared fields, others planted their own. Sometimes the houses of the wives of one man are some kilometers apart, and sometimes three wives of a man live next to each other in houses with animal enclosures. While some children slept in the house of their natal mother, others stayed in the house of another of their father's wives, or their grandmother's house. All settlements *(gurdá)* that I saw were widely dispersed so that the description "village" seems inappropriate. Often only houses of close relatives were built within sight of each other.

Besides the daily movements between the house and the fields, young people also move with domestic animals. These are divided into three groups: (1) cattle, (2) calves and (3) goats and sheep. While cattle need to be guided to grazing areas, goats and sheep

are herded in the bush, and kids and calves are separated from the mother animals and kept around the homestead. Tariku explained the distribution of herding to me by counting his fingers:

> One boy goes with the cattle;
>
> one boy or girl goes with the goats and sheep which are herded together;
>
> and one child goes with the calves (fieldnotes 2014).

This enumeration shows that ideally at least three children are needed for herding the domestic animals around the homestead. For these herding groups, the herder's gender and age is decisive. Boys and girls herd small animals, while cattle are mostly the responsibility of older boys and young men. This division of labor corresponds to taboos (*qáis*) in people–animal relations and in gendered divisions of labor, since, for instance, only males and unmarried girls are allowed to touch the udder of cows and milk cattle, and only girls and women are allowed to grind flour.

Figure 8 Boy milking goat, 2014

Figure 9 Young people milking cows. While the girl is holding the calf, her brother is milking, 2014

Wealthy households divide their animals into "domestic herds" and "camp herds" (Strecker, 1976b:54). While the first group is herded in the proximity of the homestead and returns to the homestead every late afternoon, the latter group stays in mobile cattle camps on the outskirts of Hamar-Banna-Bashada territory.[40] In northern Hamar

[40] Strecker (1976b:54–55) describes the herding pattern as oscillating between rainy and dry seasons. In the south, Hamar herds reach areas bordering on northern Kenya and neighboring groups like the Dassanetch (Galeba) and the Nyangatom (Bume). Today these herding areas are also places of occasional interethnic raids and conflict.

and southern Banna, people told me that they herd some of their cattle in the plains along the Omo river, where grass for cattle (*shudî*) can be found that reaches up to the height of trees and which no longer grows close to the homesteads. Those richer pastures are about two days' walk away from the homesteads (fieldnotes 2014). Boys and young men work in shifts, spending several weeks or months at a time in the mobile cattle camps and in the homesteads.[41] Older boys who had been herding in the plains told me that during herding they only eat milk, blood and meat. Food made of grain is only available in the homesteads, where it is the staple food and is always prepared by women and girls, since it is said to be taboo (*qáis*) for men to grind flour.[42]

The cattle around the homestead are mostly dairy cows with their offspring, as well as two oxen for ploughing the field (*hámi waakî*). However, not all homesteads I visited had dairy cows around the house, so that they lived mainly by cultivating crops and without milk in their daily life.[43] Depending on the size of the herds and the available herders, people form "herding units" in which several young people herd animals belonging to different owners, who may be relatives or friends (cf. Lydall, 2005b:158). Many people, and especially young people, are needed to care for the animals and at the same time enable farming. Thus, the work is distributed among household members according to their ability, age and gender.

2.2.3 Gendered Distribution of Labor

In general, women are responsible for work around the house and in the fields, and the care of young children, while the animals are seen as the man's domain. Both spheres cooperate and are not exclusively male or female. However, certain taboos (*qáis*) whose violation is believed to cause harm to the community, make people follow a stricter separation of male and female work. Strecker described the ideal division of labor between husband and wife in slash-and-burn cultivation in the 1970s as follows:

> The Hamar practice slash and burn cultivation. […] To clear one hectare of bush for a new field it needs only one to two months of heavy work. This is usually done by the husband, who uses two different kinds of light axe and, more recently, sometimes a bush knife. When he has provided the field with a thorn fence, which is meant to protect the crops against the herds and wild animals, his main share of the work is done, and his wife takes over. Her task is to put a final touch to the field by clearing it of small growth, and to do all the weeding that might be necessary.

[41] Herding and hunting along the Omo river conflicts with the interest of protecting wild animals in Mago national park, which was another reason for the conflict in 2014/15.

[42] For different meals made of sorghum, see the film "Sweet Sorghum" by Strecker, Lydall, and Strecker (1994).

[43] North of Dimeka I was told that goats are not milked for people, but that the milk is left for the kids. In other parts of Hamar, I saw that goats are milked for children, who also drink directly from the goat's udder.

> Then, when at the beginning of the wet season the first rains fall, husband and wife jointly plant the field together. With the sharpened stick of hard wood he digs the holes into the soil, and she inserts the seeds (millet and/or maize). During the first month when the crop is growing, the wife does the weeding and whenever she finds that some seeds fail to grow, she plants them again. […] As the crops blossom and ripen, more and more birds, baboons and other animals, begin to threaten them, and from now on from dawn to dusk, someone has to guard the field. This job is (usually) done by children. During the harvest, husband and wife again work together. She cuts and collects the millet (and/or maize) and he builds a platform of wood on which he stacks the grain, and covers it with the stalks of dry millet (Strecker, 1976b:50).

This division of labor between men and women is also what I observed and discussed with household members during my fieldwork. Young and old men normally work with wood; they prepare the field and make fences and granaries, while older girls and women clear the field of small bushes, plant, weed, and harvest. Ploughing is a shared task, which is partly done by hand as described above by Strecker, but, since the 1970s, the ox plough has been increasingly used and is common today (Lydall, 2016). Children not only guard the fields when the sorghum ripens, but also have other tasks which I will describe below. The division of labor between men and women described by Strecker is an ideal division, as he points out:

> The division of labour which I [Strecker] have sketched here is an ideal cultural norm. But the situation of real life constantly forces the Hamar not to do what they think ideal, but to do what is necessary. So a widow, or the wife of an incompetent man, will clear the bush for her field herself. Both husband and wife will take turns in guarding the field if they have no children, or their children are still too young, etc. Yet, however big the contribution of the husband may be, the main [burden] of the constant care for the field falls on the wife. Families that are well off often call their neighbours to help make a new field, to help weed or to help harvest. On such an occasion a goat may be slaughtered, or beer may be given as a payment to the people who have come (Strecker, 1976b:50–51).

The continuous rearrangement of a household's labor depends on the size of the field and herds, the number of household members, their gender, age, and health, as well as the season. While the work in the fields is mainly done by women and older people, aided by young people, herding is mostly young people's work. The following section will take a closer look at young people's activities in agro-pastoralist households.

2.3 Education Through Play and Work in Agro-Pastoralist Households

2.3.1 How Children Learn Within the Household

As children's education takes place within daily household life, learning, play and work cannot be separated and are not mutually exclusive (Spittler & Bourdillon, 2012). Comparing ethnographies of childhood, Lancy uses the concept of "chore curriculum" in order to describe the kind of learning that takes place outside school, in contrast to the "core curriculum" of schools:

> The term 'chore' is somewhat self-evident, except that in contemporary society, we use it to characterize relatively minor tasks, completely peripheral to the 'important' work that is done exclusively by adults. However, in the archives of ethnographers and historians we find that children are expected to assist in a variety of critical areas of domestic and corporate production including the care of infants, gardening, herding and foraging. There is a widely acknowledged distinction between the work that all children are expected to do (contingent upon age and gender) and realms of endeavour that are optional or, contingent upon the child's interest and aptitude. A chore is any task that all boys or all girls should master by a roughly agreed upon age and carry out willingly and efficiently (Lancy, 2012:23–24).

Learning to perform chores mostly happens through observation, imitation and play, as I was able to observe during my fieldwork:

> Sitting in front of a house, I observed how a mother left the grinding stones for a short moment and her daughter – around the age of two – immediately took over her mother's place. The young girl kneeled in front of the grinding stones and although she did not yet have the strength to move the stone, she imitated the movements of grinding flour by swinging her body and hip. When her mother wanted to continue grinding, she distracted her daughter to access the grinding stone again (fieldnotes 2014).

On another occasion during my fieldwork, adults and young people were ploughing the field with oxen while younger children came together at the side of the field.

> The children took two leaves, which they called oxen, and connected them with sticks symbolizing a plough. A small flexible stick served as a whip for the oxen and the children took shifts in ploughing lines in a field of sand. At the same time, adults and young people took shifts in ploughing the field some meters away. When the younger people got tired or the oxen ran off, adults stepped in and took over the plough (fieldnotes 2014).

Figure 10 Young man and student (right) ploughing the field, 2014

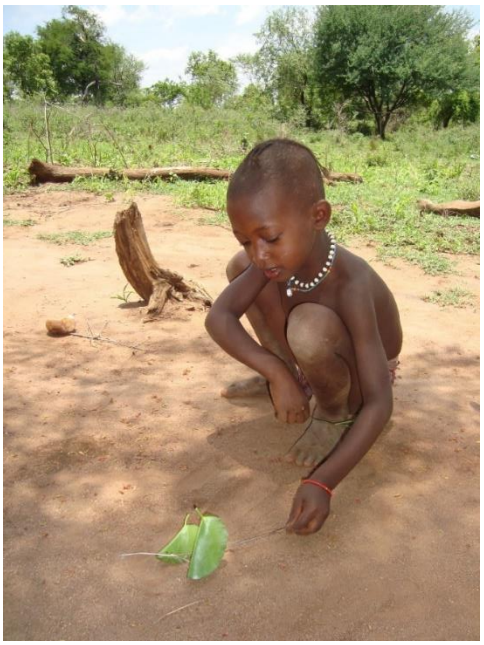

Figure 11 Boy playing "ploughing the field" using leaves as oxen, 2014

These field observations show how children imitate older people's work. Katz (2004) argues that children's play mimics the skills they acquire through experimenting with tasks and anticipated roles. An "element of play is always fused with the work of children – they work at play, they play at work – temporally, metaphorically, imaginatively" (Katz, 2004:60). Small children in Hamar are said to "play only" (*yiga bish*) and have no work (*waadíma qolê*). However, they observe and playfully imitate the work of older siblings and adults. The prerequisite for children's playful and detailed imitation is that children have the possibility to observe older people's work by sharing the same social sphere (Fortes, 1938), or as Lancy writes:

> In order for children to take the initiative and get a head start on learning their culture, chores included, the 'culture' must be an open book (Lancy, 2012:27–28).

While education in classrooms separates children from agro-pastoralist work places, children in agro-pastoralist households are educated by older household members, adults or older siblings. This does not mean that children can access all knowledge of older people easily, or that parents do not keep any secrets from their children.[44] However, by spending most of their time with older siblings and adults, young people start to playfully imitate their work and gradually learn to master the work independently.

Whereas studies of children's work emphasize that learning often takes place without teaching and instruction by adults (Klute, 1996:219–221; Lancy, 2012:30), I

[44] Gabbert, Echi Christina (with Ginno Ballo) (2013:113) describes culture as the "food of the elders". They share their knowledge of culture only bit by bit with young people, who pay for it by feeding the elders.

observed that older people in Hamar tell younger people what to do and punish them, for instance if they misbehave or fail to perform a task successfully, such as losing an animal. These instructions are expressed in terms different from school lessons. In the Hamar language, instructions are given using terms such as *kilima* (advise) (Epple, 2010c:112), *giya* (tell) and *ɗoi* (show). The care of children is often described by the term *gish*, which literally means herding, but is metaphorically applied to guiding children and showing them the right way, so that they may grow up well (Strecker, 2010:107–122). In this guidance of children, the *micere* (whipping wand) plays a ritual and practical role to which I will return in chapter six. When children have learned and are able to do something, they are said to know (*ɗes*) it. In contrast to these forms of learning and knowing, Hamar speakers use the Amharic loan word *temara* to refer to learning in school. *Temara* derives from Amharic ተማረ (*temar*) which means to "learn". While the word *temar* is used in Hamar to describe teaching and learning processes in school, I have not heard of a counterpart for learning in Hamar. The basic word "learn" is not included in Petrollino's dictionary of Hamar (Petrollino, 2016) and Takahashi (2015:71) translates the two Amharic loan words "*tammara*" and "*tammarsa*" as to "learn" and "to teach" respectively in his dictionary of Hamar. Thus, the different words used to describe knowledge acquisition in school and outside school in Hamar hint at a distinction in its forms and processes.

The Amharic word for school is ትምህርት ቤት (*timihrti bét*), which literally means "learning house" and is translated in Hamar as *timirte ono* (literally: learning house). Consequently, ተማሪ (*temari*) the Amharic word for student, is also found in Hamar as *temari* and is used to refer to all people who are learning, or have learned, at school, college or university.[45] The Amharic loan words for learning in school, learned people and school buildings give hints about the origin of schooling in Hamar district, where the space of schooling is still associated with a history of Amharic rule.

2.3.2 Work as an Indicator of Children's Maturity

Instead of counting biological age or school grades, people in the Hamar cluster measure social age according to people's work capacity. They talk about the maturity of children in terms of what they are already able to do and by mentioning the work children do (cf. Appendix). When I asked a Hamar mother about her children, she told me that her daughter knows how "to bring something when you tell her", meaning she can understand and run small errands. Older children are characterized as knowing (*ɗes*) how to herd (*gish*) kids (*anqána*), goats (*qullá*), calves (*otárra*) or cattle (*wongá*) respectively (fieldnotes 2015). The age of children in Hamar can therefore only be estimated by the

[45] While the Amharic plural for ተማሪ (*temari*) is ተማሪዎች (*temariwoch*), Hamar speakers mostly use "*temara*" as plural.

work they do and in relation to the age of older and younger siblings, since the children of a woman are often born three years apart. After giving birth, a mother is supposed to stay abstinent for about two years, or uses a hormone implant, until her child's lower and upper teeth have grown and the *gúngulo-ka* ritual has been performed for the conception of a new legitimate child (cf. chapter 5).

Figure 12 Girl holding a kid, 2014

While children pick up playful tasks in their first years, such as chasing chickens, dogs and kids, and carrying around small items, they gradually learn herding. Baldambe explained this process in detail and put an emphasis on how boys learn to hunt and protect the herd from wild animals (Lydall & Strecker, 1979b:69–127). Since Baldambe's account, the environment in Hamar has changed. There are fewer wild animals and the savannah has decreased. I could not observe how boys learn to hunt since I saw no bows and arrows or spears, and heard nothing about wild animals, such as lions, around the homesteads, apart from baboons which sometimes catch small goats, and in some settlements people talked about hyenas as a threat to the herds. Automatic rifles have mostly replaced spears, and big game can only be spotted in the cattle camps along the Omo river and in Mago National Park. Boys and girls start to herd animals around the age of seven, at the same age when they are supposed to start schooling. Children's herding normally starts with herding kids and calves. When they grow older, around the age of ten, boys and girls herd goats and sheep independently of adults, but older people check whether all the animals have returned from the bush and are healthy.

2.3.3 Young People's Gendered Work

The older children get, the more their work becomes differentiated according to gender. Lydall (1993), who lived with her daughter and sons in Hamar between 1970 and 1974 and again in 1982, observed how her daughter and sons were treated differently and describes how boys and girls are educated. While women encouraged her daughter to play with grinding stones, her son was scolded for playing with "women's stuff" (Lydall, 1993:30–31). Girls learn to grind flour and cook, to fetch firewood and water, and to sweep the animal enclosures. Older girls also clear, plough and weed the field. In the first years of life, boys and girls spend their days with women and older people, but while girls

stay in this sphere, boys gradually become integrated into the men's work of herding, burning and clearing fields, and doing wood work. Older men and women spend most of their time in the homestead.

While I observed that children of both sexes take care of younger children and herd goats and sheep, sweeping the yards and preparing food is mostly girls' work, while herding cattle is mostly boys' and young men's work. Goats disperse in different directions in the bush, while cattle move more slowly and tend to stay together. Thus, younger people herd goats and sheep, while older people prefer to herd cattle. When a bride moves to her husband's homestead, he normally spends more time at the homestead than in the cattle camp, but as one young bride told me, if no child (*naasí*) is available for herding, married men also live in the cattle camps (fieldnotes 2014).

The animals do not graze in fenced pastures but normally move under the guidance of herders. If the herders are in school, the animals may be left alone to wander through abandoned fields, since wild animals, such as lions and hyenas, have been decimated and no longer live close by the homesteads. During the night, the animals are kept in enclosures around the house. While it is common in some places, for instance in Aari, to tie animals to a stake and to move them with it to different grazing places during the day, animals in Hamar are normally kept without ropes.[46] Around the area of Dimeka, I only saw the oxen used for ploughing tied up close to the field. This mobile way of breeding cattle and goats depends on children of both genders: boys and girls who herd the goats and older boys and young men who move with the goats and cattle, while older men and women work around the homestead and in the fields, where young people's help is also needed.

2.4 Young People's Contribution to Agro-Pastoralist Households

Generally, labor in agro-pastoralist households is divided among all household members. Children start at a young age to perform work independently, but are still guided by older people. As they grow older, children's ability to work increases, and this support makes older people's workload decrease. When I discussed the division of labor in Hamar with an elderly woman, I remarked that in Germany parents work a lot, but children do not work much. She replied: "In Germany, all children go to school that's why older people work" (fieldnotes 2014). This observation shows different ideas concerning how labor is

[46] An Aari teacher told me that a person in Aari who has 20 cows is considered rich, while in Hamar an owner of 20 head of cattle is considered poor. The average person in Aari is said to have one or two cows (fieldnotes 2015). I have no contemporary data on the average number of cattle and goats in Hamar, Banna and Bashada households, since the animals are dispersed over several localities to diversify the risks of theft and sickness. Strecker (1976b:37–38) counted on average 82 head of cattle per kraal in the cattle camps of Dunka in 1974. I estimate the number of animals kept in the kraals around the homesteads I visited at around 30 cows and calves (if they had any) and around 100 goats.

divided between the old and the young generation, and how this arrangement shifts more work onto older people when many children go to school. In this section I will discuss the rearrangements in respect of the generational division of labor made necessary by the implementation of compulsory schooling.

2.4.1 Who Replaces Schoolchildren's Work?

Lydall (2010) recounts an incident where the division of labor was called into question after a new school opened in Hamar district:

> Once the school had been built and the teachers had arrived, the people of Umbale were told they should now send their children to school – all of them. When the parents ask, 'Who should herd the goats and guard the fields?' they are told that they should do so themselves, never mind that they have many other important tasks to do and not enough time for everything. Since the traditional agro-pastoralist economy and the education appropriate to it depend on all family members taking an active role in farming and domestic activities, compulsory schooling will entail severe economic impoverishment for decades to come. The children will not only be taken out of the workforce while they attend school, they will also learn to despise traditional life and fail to learn the things essential to it (Lydall, 2010:331–332).

While Lydall cites this example in an article about the paternalism of northerners towards people in the south, it is also an example of how different concepts of childhood, education and economic needs clash. Based on a specific model of childhood developed by the European bourgeoisie at the beginning of the modern age, schooling is constructed as a space for children's learning that is set apart from the work of adults, and where children's learning is supervised by non-kin teachers (Ariès, 1962). In the transformation from an agrarian to an industrialized society, education has become the business of schools and experts who teach literacy and form employable subjects (Gellner, [1983] 2008:33–34).

The formerly elite notion of childhood which includes learning in school spread across all social classes in Europe, and was disseminated in Africa. The idea of a work-free childhood is also promoted by international organizations, such as the International Labor Organization (ILO) that tries to end "child labor" by 2025 (International Labour Organization, 2017). However, not all work performed by children takes place under harmful and exploitative working conditions resembling those in factories at the beginning of industrialization. Children's work is often a way of learning that is entangled with play and at the same time contributes to the household's economy (Abebe et al., 2017; Bourdillon & Spittler, 2012). Young people's education and work play a crucial role in many households.

Anthropological studies show that households not only constitute spheres for children to learn, but through "learning by doing" children also make an indispensable contribution to the household economy (Lancy, 2012:30). For example, Katz's (2004) research on children in a village in Sudan lists the percentage of work that is done by children and how significant this is for households. In her case study, children do 90% of the work of herding animals, gathering food and shelling groundnuts, 70% of running errands, sweeping and fetching water, 60% of planting and collecting firewood, and 40% of harvesting, as well as feeding and comforting children (Katz, 2004:261–262).

When parents in Hamar district ask school mobilizers, "Who herds the goats and cattle?", the question is not only a reminder that children normally herd them, but also a demand to know who will substitute the herders when all the children are in school. Hanna G. Amare reports that parents in Maale use the number of their children to argue against the requirement to send all children to school:

> Regarding formal education they [parents] stated that they do not have 'extra children for extra school activity'. Because every child contributes to the survival of the family by working on the field, baby sitting, herding and so on. The expression 'extra children for extra school activities' has remarkable implications. It shows how all members of a given family (in lowland Maale) contribute in cultivation and related activities for their survival. In other words, in lowland Maale every child has tasks to carry out. To this end, they say the expression there are no 'extra children for extra school activities' clearly reveals as to why lowland parents become adamant to send their children to school (Amare, 2012:167).

This argument about "extra children" makes the point that all children in agro-pastoralist households are valuable and that no child is "superfluous" so that it can be sent to school. The contribution of young people to the household's survival ensures continuity. Agro-pastoralist households depend on children to manage the labor load. Children's work and learning in households is not only important for making a living in the present, but also in the future. Through this kind of education, children acquire the knowledge and skills which are needed for an agro-pastoralist livelihood and which are not taught in schools (cf. chapter 3).. Children's education in agro-pastoralist households ensures a continuity of herding and farming, as well as intergenerational work arrangements.

2.4.2 Adults' Dependence on Children's Work

While farming activities rest between the harvest and the new planting season, animals in nomadic societies need daily care (cf. Klute, 1996:212). The diversity of tasks across several localities, as described above, makes young people indispensable for agro-pastoralist households, since adults cannot perform all the work simultaneously without the help of children. The following empirical descriptions show the importance of children and adolescents for the interplay of work in agro-pastoralist households.

> Spending days with adults and children in the fields, I observed how women watched the fields constantly at the beginning of the rainy season when the newly planted crops started to grow. While women weeded the field, ground flour, cooked, breastfed small children, made leather skirts or did each other's hair, they kept an eye on the fields. Whenever they caught sight of cattle or goats approaching the field from the edges, they called children by name and shouted directions to them to tell them where to run. The children had to interrupt their play to follow the adult's instructions and drive the invading animals away. This participation of children enabled adults to stay at their work place and continue their work. Otherwise adults would have to run across the field time and again. One day a neighbor came to visit the field and told us dejectedly that the afternoon before some cattle had entered her field and eaten the sorghum and maize plants. Within a few minutes, she lost almost half of her crop. All the women present pitied her and told me that this was very bad (fieldnotes 2014).

This example shows that, depending on the season, the fields need to be watched carefully to protect the crops. The support of children allows adults to perform other tasks while the children drive away intruding cattle and goats. The help of children and adolescents is also necessary when the sorghum is ripe. During this time, young people and women watch the fields from sunrise to sunset, and some spend their days on platforms to watch the fields and to chase away birds and monkeys with stones and slingshots.[47] While some of the household members watch the fields, women and girls do domestic work, like fetching firewood and water, grinding flour and cooking. At the same time, young people herd the cattle around the homestead, and again others stay with the herd in the cattle camps. This combination of younger and older people's work allows households to diversify their economy and make a living by combining agriculture and pastoralism. If children are taken out of this network and sent to school, the work has to be redistributed among the remaining household members.

Figure 13 Girl fetching water, 2014

[47] In Aari, people have stopped chasing birds during harvest time, since most children are in school and cannot help. Here, people accept a smaller harvest (Personal communication from Julian Sommerschuh, 2014).

2.5 New Labor Arrangements Because of Schooling

2.5.1 Division of Labor in Households with Many Schoolchildren

To illustrate how households deal with the loss of children's labor due to schooling, I will describe two households which, for Hamar district send a comparatively high number of their children to school.

Kuni's Household

Kuni had six children, of whom three have been to school and now live in different towns throughout Ethiopia for studies and work. Three sons remained in her homestead and her husband was mostly absent, living with his other wife. While Kuni did most of the work in the fields, the younger son herded the goats, the middle son shifted between cattle camp and homestead, and the oldest son helped in the field and with the animals. Her daughter-in-law, wife of the first son, also helped with domestic work, and one daughter of another wife of her husband lived in her homestead and helped with domestic work in the afternoon while going to a nearby school in the morning. When Kuni's children came from town to visit her, they repeatedly told her to send her youngest son to school. However, she insisted that she needed him for herding the goats, as she had no one else to do this work (fieldnotes 2014, 2015).

This work arrangement shows that households can replace the work of schoolchildren to some extent. The household got help through a daughter-in-law and a foster child. However, a minimum of people remained in the homestead who did not go to school but cared for the animals and fields. This is also the case in another household.

Keri's Household

Keri had six children. Her three sons were in school and lived in town. Her three daughters had married and moved to their husbands' homesteads so that she remained without children in her house. She worked with Pitta, the second wife of her husband in the fields. Pitta's oldest son had left school after some years and looked after the animals. Her second son went to a nearby village school and the remaining children were still too young to herd animals. Thus, one teenage boy was left alone to look after the cattle and goats during daytime and needed help for milking the cows in the morning and evening. Part of the animals wandered alone during daytime, as they had no herder. The household reportedly did not keep any cattle in pastures far away from the homestead and the cows were quite skinny. The father of the household helped only occasionally in the field and his two wives did most of the work without him. In the evening, Keri often complained that she had back pains from the heavy work in the field and was tired. She worked not only for her own food, but also for her schoolchildren in town, who asked her to give them grain. The schoolboys sometimes visited her at

> weekends and helped for a couple of hours with the animals and the fields. However, they also had tutorials and soccer games on weekends in town and therefore did not go to help in the homestead regularly. When I asked Aska, one of her sons, if his mother is happy that her children are in school, he said: "My mother always says that one day she will sit at the roadside in town holding out her hand". This suggests that she will become a beggar. When I asked him what he will do in the future, he replied that he will find a job in which he sees money every month and he will send some money to his mother (fieldnotes 2014).

Sending many children to school means more work for the household members who stay in the homestead. The remaining household members work not only for their own living but also for the absent schoolchildren, who, in addition to the support of the government, depend on the support of kin to make a living in town. In addition, the schoolchildren in these two households and their parents were partly supported by external donors. Since most mothers do not send 50% of their children to school and most households do not have sponsors for schooling, these two households are among the exceptions in Hamar district. Most households send only one or two sons to school in town. Nevertheless, these exceptional cases, which are closer than most households in Hamar to fulfilling the ideal of compulsory schooling, help us to imagine the scenario of labor division when all children go to school.

In the first example, some sons were kept in the homestead to care for the animals, and new members were integrated in the household, such as daughters-in-law and foster children, to divide the workload among male and female members. The second school arrangement left a mother without children in her house, since the boys left for school in town and the girls married and moved away as required by patrilocality. Thus, the household depended on the children of the second wife, who were partly still very young and moved between the houses of the two wives. This arrangement meant more work for the women of the household who remained with the young children in the homestead. If the sons were not in school, they would take care of the animals, lead them to richer pastures and help making and ploughing fields. In this way, the work would be divided and the parents would not have to work as much as they do without their children in the homestead.

2.5.2 Economic Sacrifices for the Sake of Schooling

Sending many children to school means sacrificing the economic potential of the household and poses questions about the future of the household.

> In one conversation, an elder man told me that school is good and that he wants to send all his children to school. When I asked him who will then take care of the cattle, goats and fields, he laughed and said: "The government wants us to stop

> herding cattle and goats." I further asked what they will eat then and the conversation ended (fieldnotes 2014).

Although the question remained open as to how adults and their children would make a living without animals and fields, and without young people to help with the work, it is one of the urgent questions to which the policy of compulsory schooling does not give an answer.

In other parts of South Omo, the government has coercively resettled agro-pastoralists in villagization projects, one of the arguments being that this would make it possible to send all children to school. However, hunger became a severe concern for people in these new resettlement sites (Stevenson & Buffavand, 2018). Other studies come to the conclusion that governmental projects to make people abandon animal husbandry are often directed at expanding the state's control over people rather than benefiting the people (Regassa et al., 2018; Regassa & Korf, 2018).

In the examples cited above, households in Hamar have dealt with the requirement to send children to school by diversifying the learning contexts of their children. They send some children to school and keep half, or more than half, the household's children at home, sometimes additionally integrating new female members into the household. Another way of dealing with the labor loss through schooling is looking for alternative sources of income. Through the safety-net program, some households in Hamar district, particularly widows, occasionally get grain distributions.[48] However, this is only additional food which does not sustain households throughout the year.

The staple foods are self-produced crops and dairy products, of which the surplus is sold in the market. Crops are sold for goats, goats for cattle, or animals for crops, as required. Some NGOs have distributed hens, whose eggs, and sometimes the animals, are sold to people in town, since many agro-pastoralist households do not consume eggs and chicken themselves. Tourism brings additional income: tourists buy handicrafts, or pay to take a Hamar person's photo in the market, or visit dance performances, homesteads and initiation ceremonies. However, tourists mostly visit the markets in town and homesteads close by the main road and around the lodges in Turmi. The money tourists pay is not equally distributed among the community but goes to tourist guides and visited homesteads, which are close to the main road. Therefore, tourism does not constitute an alternative or reliable income for most people in Hamar district.

The majority of students who have jobs in town or work as government employees have a meager salary, which is often paid irregularly. Their jobs often do not last long and are changed, so that people who have been to school are often not as economically

[48] While people only referred to this grain as "safety net", I assume it is distributed as part of the "Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP)" run by the government, World Food Program and development partners (https://www.wfp.org/content/protective-safety-net-programme-ethiopia, accessed 02.07.2018).

supportive for agro-pastoralist households as they expected and as was promised by those who advertise the benefits of schooling. On the contrary, an agro-pastoralist backup food supply is helpful for kin in town.

The requirement of sending all children to school forces households to find new ways of arranging the work. Parents in the highlands of Maale, who are more agriculturalist than Maale people in the lowlands, have started sending almost all their children to school. A school principal in the highlands explained this as follows:

> The villagers are more "modern" than [at the] time when he was attending school. He stated that, these days, most families send almost all children to school and keep on working on the farm alone. In Beneta [in the highlands of Maale], cattle herding is completely stopped due to school activity (Amare, 2012:153).

This example shows that within a few decades schooling replaced cattle herding in the highlands of Maale. However, parents still send only *almost* all their children to school. Even in this case, where compulsory schooling has been almost completely implemented, and there are sanctions for not sending children to school (people are fined by the police), some children remain out of school. Amare observes a shift in cattle keeping: people in the highlands of Maale send their cattle to relatives in the lowlands, where people are more reluctant to send all their children to school. However, also in the lowlands of Maale, the police puts parents under pressure to send their children to school (Amare, 2012:154).

In Hamar district, teachers told me that they try to get school leavers back into school with the help of the school committee. In meetings between teachers and parent representatives, teachers complained about the low attendance of children and told the representatives to go to the parents whose children were absent. A mother told me that she has to pay a fine of 50 Birr if her children do not attend school regularly and stay away too often (fieldnotes 2014). I could not figure out to whom the money goes or how attendance is measured, since I did not see attendance being registered every day in school, and it seemed to me that the teachers did not know the names of all the students.

> A former school principal told me that in the past, poor parents in Konso could not afford to bribe teachers to leave their children out of school. He narrated the story of a doctor from Konso who said that he only became a doctor because his parents were poor and could not pay for him to stay out of school, so that he had no option other than to stay in school (fieldnotes 2014).

This life-story shows that not necessarily children of well-off households stay in school, but those children whose parents do not have the means to bribe the school authorities. In Hamar district, I observed that in many cases orphans and children of widows stayed in hostels, while children who had the option and support of parents or other sponsors left the harsh living conditions of hostels to live in a rented room in town or to go back to their agro-pastoralist homestead. Instead of parents supporting the schooling of their

children, some pay to get their children out of school, and others expect to be compensated by the government for the loss of their children's labor when they go to school.

2.6 Going to School or Going with the Animals?

> One morning when I was preparing to go to school, a daughter of the homestead, who was in her late teenage years, told me that her father wanted me to help her drive the twelve goat kids from their enclosure to the field. It was the first time for them to go out of the compound and they did not yet know the way. We tried to drive them out of the compound, but they dispersed in all directions and returned to the compound after a few meters. We repeated this several times without success, since we were only two people and could not block all directions, so that the kids found ways around us to go back. Finally, two children between approximately five and eight years of age came along the path beside the enclosure. We asked them to help us. All the children did was to stand at certain places giving hand signs to prevent the kids from running back. Several meters out of the enclosure, the kids gathered together began moving in the right direction, and the children left. We were again just the two of us looking after the kids, when a schoolboy came by. He wanted to pick me up to walk together to school. However, I felt responsible for the goats and did not want to leave the daughter alone with the kids after we had finally got them going the right way. That day I decided to change my plan and follow the kids to the field instead of spending my day in school (fieldnotes 2014).

This experience shows that in certain situations a minimum number of people are needed to guide the animals, which conflicts with sending all children to school. While students sit in school, other household members have to look after the animals, work in the fields, care for young children, the elderly and the sick, fetch firewood and water, prepare food, and go to the market. The contribution made by young people to the household is not always hard work, but a number of children are necessary, as shown by the above example. Klute (1996:221–222) describes a good herder among the Tuareg as someone who is always vigilant and ready to leap up to stand by the animals. This behavior is also required of herding children in Hamar and is impeded by schooling.

Decisions for or against schooling are not only taken once a year during the time of enrollment between September and November, but in rural areas the decision is made almost daily. Household members constantly weigh their labor needs against letting their children go to school to decide whether a child's help is needed in the household or whether it is free to go to school. Some reasons for not going to school that I heard were work in the fields, herding animals, driving animals to the market or to relatives, accompanying people to the market, but also, for instance, doing a child's hair. A teacher in a rural school complained that children would come to school after a night of dancing

and sleep in class because they were tired (fieldnotes 2014). Thus, children in agro-pastoralist households alternate going to school and working at home, and prioritize one or the other option at different times.

The answer to the elders' question: "Who herds the cattle? Who herds the goats?" is: the young people. After considering the role of young people, how and what they learn, and their contribution to the agro-pastoralist household economy, the dilemma people face in respect of sending all their children to school at the same time becomes obvious. In a diversified, labor-intensive economy, adults cannot compensate the work of young people without economic losses.

Normally, herding is a young person's duty and not older people's work. The elder's question can thus be read as a reminder of the division of labor between generations, and at the same time constitutes an open question that can be framed as: Who will take care of the animals if all children go to school? Taking into account the complex system of a diversified subsistence-oriented economy, and its division of labor among old and young people as well as among female and male household members, the implementation of compulsory schooling seems impossible without major socio-economic transformations. These fundamental changes which compulsory schooling implies are the reason why some people resist schooling for all children and why others aspire to schooling for all. The competing interests in socioeconomic change might explain why schooling has not become the dominant way of educating children in agro-pastoralist communities in South Omo Zone, although it has been accessible in Hamar district since 1969 and is framed as a "global good" by international education policies (Maurus, 2019). The following chapter follows children into the classroom and analyzes learning experiences at school which reveals more reasons for refusing or evading schooling.

3 “School is Empty” – How Schooling Creates Struggles and Dilemmas of Learning

Agro-pastoralist students in Hamar and Jinka often cited their parents, saying: “What’s school? School is nothing.” They said this in English or in Amharic, when they used “የለም” (*yelem*) for “nothing”. *Yelem* translates not only as “nothing” and “inexistent”, but also as “empty” so that the meaning of the saying is also “school is empty”.[49] This expresses the idea that schooling is an empty or worthless enterprise in contrast to education in agro-pastoralist households. It also describes a feeling I got during participant observation in many rural schools, with few students and teachers in the classrooms. Looking beyond the image of “failed schools” that produce many drop-outs, this chapter shows how schooling is actually carried out in rural schools in Hamar district.

My aim is twofold: I analyze why many parents think that school is empty for their children, and how students experience schooling. Many Hamar students describe schooling as being “*wócci*”, which means “dry (wood), hard and difficult”, or they call it “*gaal*”, which means “struggle”, while at the same time schooling is described as promising. Through participant observation in classes, and by sharing the daily life of the students, I gained an understanding of the struggles of ethnic minority students in public schools in the periphery of the state, and of a national school system that has to deal with a high level of cultural and linguistic diversity. In this chapter, I will first show how parents’ mistrust of schools is linked to the history of schooling and how the state has been experienced in Hamar, and then analyze how students spend their days in school learning and waiting, and how students and teachers struggle with regard to communication, the languages of instruction, and different cultural knowledge in and outside schools in South Omo.

3.1 History of Schooling in Ethiopia’s Southwestern Periphery

A general trend observed in the history of schooling is that schooling changed from an elite to a mass system.

> The golden age of modern education in Ethiopia is usually dated to the years between 1941 and 1970. The education sector with his late majesty the Emperor as frontline minister was by far the best staffed and financed (Tekeste, 2006:12).

Emperor Haile Selassie employed English mother tongue speakers as teachers in secondary schools and created an elite of students that found jobs easily after graduation (Tekeste, 2006:17). During that time, no schools existed in Hamar and only one or two sons of dignitaries from Hamar, Banna and Arbore became “Haile Selassie’s students”

[49] I am grateful to Tatek Abebe for pointing out the twofold meaning of የለም.

who went to a boarding school in Addis Ababa (Interviews 2014, 2015, cf. Lydall, 2010:320).

Unlike in many rural areas in Ethiopia, no schools were constructed in Hamar in the 1940s and 1950s. Instead, schooling was introduced in Hamar towards the end of Haile Selassie's reign in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and expanded during the Derg regime in the 1980s and again under the EPRDF government in the early 2000s. Through the transformation of a school system from elite to mass education, the quality of education changes (Tekeste, 1996), and most agro-pastoralists did not participate in the early phase of elite education. Thus, Hamar's peripheral position within the state becomes obvious in the history of schooling.

3.1.1 Mistrust in Schooling

The first schools in Hamar were built near police posts and administrative and trading centers, such as Buska, Turmi and Dimeka. Therefore, schooling in Hamar is associated with the state, with the town, and with the Amhara who send their children to school. Tariku, one of the early students in Hamar, describes in an interview the skepticism of the Hamar towards schooling since its introduction in the late 1960s and early 1970s:

> The Amhara people say that when they introduced school and educational activities in Hamar area, there was no awareness. 'What is education? What is the benefit of education? What is the benefit of the educated person afterwards?' [asked parents]. They don't know about it. They have no experience. Their only experience is to cultivate the fields and to look after the cattle.
>
> Because one elder says: 'If my boy looks carefully, looks and watches the cattle, watches the goat or looks after the goat properly, that is, he is educated for me,' he said. 'When he puts the bee hive properly, he puts it over the tree, that is, he's educated, because that is his education. [laughter]. He watches the cattle properly, he watches the goat, he watches properly. He keeps the sheep, that is, he is educated. [He knows] how to hunt, so that is his education. So what does your education mean?', he said. 'We are teaching already how to watch the cattle, how to look after the cattle, you know, this type. He's already educated, because we have that type of resource. We don't have other types of resources. What are you talking about education? We don't know, we don't have experience.'
>
> There is no awareness. That's why the people are challenging. 'Is education good or bad? We don't know. We don't test it. Until we test, maybe we give it a small number of boys. They go to school and then if it is good and better, then we can give the other children and follow that track [laughter]' (Interview 2014).

Tariku describes different notions of education. The elder cited by Tariku insists that parents educate their children without school and defines an educated person as someone

who knows how to manage resources: how to look after cattle, goat and sheep, to hunt game and make beehives. The Amhara settlers, by contrast, describe these notions of education as "having no awareness" in respect of schooling. In the eyes of the cited Amhara settlers and administrators in Hamar, an educated person is someone who has been to school and has book knowledge. When the settlers introduced schools, the Hamar were skeptical, since they had not experienced the outcome of schooling for their children and questioned its benefits. Hamar elders first wanted to try giving some of their sons to school to see if it was "good" for them. If it proved to be good, they would give more children to school.

It is interesting to note that in this conversation people talk about "giving" and not "sending" children to school. This perception of "giving" children away to the school has been described by Stambach and Kwayu (2013) for Chagga children in Tanzania. Understanding children as "gifts" turns the act of giving children to the school into a way of establishing a relationship of trust between parents and those who run the school. According to the principle of reciprocity, the act of giving children to the school means something is expected in return. This relationship of trust also applies in Hamar district. Trust – and its opposite, mistrust – is crucial in the arena of schooling. Since the relationship between the northern rulers and the local population goes back to a history of conquest and enslavement, skepticism in respect of giving children to the schools of northern settlers appears plausible. In the eyes of the above-cited elder, the goal of children's education is the acquisition of skills to manage the local resources properly, such as animals. In this regard, education is valued and schools are tested in respect of what they give in return to the parents and the community. The returns for giving children to school, which locally are often called the benefits of schooling, are still discussed ambivalently in Hamar today.

Although people who have been to school advocate schooling and want to see more Hamar children in school, they cannot guarantee parents that their children can finish school, get jobs and are safe in government schools, since they cannot foresee how the political situation will impinge on student's lives. For instance, during my fieldwork parents were concerned that the government might take their children out of school and force them to fight in the army, which happened during the socialist regime. In the light of this fear, Tariku has problems in arguing in favor of schooling. Parents told him:

> 'You know, we don't want to give a person to school who then goes to war. We don't like that.'
>
> [Tariku recalls that] 'maybe the regime will be the wrong direction […] but that's out of our capacity. I can't control students. The political people, they bring your children to war.' (Interview 2014).

Memories of people who were forced to fight in the wars in Ethiopia in the 1980s are still alive in Hamar today. People who were young at that time remember that young men

disappeared from school or from the town on the backs of lorries which took them to camps where they were trained to fight in the war in the North. Some of these forcefully conscripted died and never returned to Hamar, but some managed to escape and returned (Interview 2015).[50] During the conflict in 2015, the fear reappeared that students in town would not be safe from the government authorities, which might use force. Some students were warned by relatives that town was not safe, and reminded of the fact that students had disappeared from school in the past (fieldnotes 2015). As described at the beginning of this study, students found themselves in a dilemma, unable to decide where they should go to find a safe place to learn and go to school. Despite these reasons for mistrusting the project of sending children to school, many arguments in favor of schooling are also brought forward.

3.1.2 Arguments in Favor of Schooling

Despite the initial skepticism towards schooling, the following passage shows how Tariku impressed elders by the literacy skills that he acquired in school:

> When I was in grade six, I could write, read and speak Amharic. Because during that time, Derg time, the education, we learned in Amharic, not our language. So for me it is challenging to know Amharic in school, but when I was in grade six, I already started writing and reading. One time there was a drought in Hamar and the relief office at *woreda* level said: 'You go to the village and write the names of the people in the village.' And then I write it. Also there is food for work. And then I want to check all that thing. 'Who is coming today?', I made an attendance list. That time, I first wrote the name and the next day I wanted to check their attendance. I called the name and [checked] who was absent, who was present, you know, these types. And then some people wonder: 'Wow, how can he memorize ALL these people?' [laughter] He can memorize, since his memory is very, very, very high.' 'That is not true', an elder says. 'He just sees the white paper and then he calls our name. But yesterday he wrote our name that he memorized it.'" (Interview 2014)

In this passage, Tariku shows that while he was still at primary school, the administration made use of his reading and writing skills by sending him to his village to register the attendance of people during a food-for-work program. In this program, the government hands out food to people, who work for it. For instance, during a drought, people can work in road construction in order to get grain. Tariku impressed illiterate people by his capacity for memorization and his ability to remember people's names and record their

[50] Proof of their participation in the fighting can be seen in men's scarification. An elder explained to me that he killed an enemy while he was fighting in northern Ethiopia and what is today Eritrea and got the scarification on his chest after his return to Hamar district (fieldnotes 2015).

attendance through his writing. When the government made use of his writing skills to register the people in rural areas, the student became an intermediary between the state and the local population, which helped the government to expand its control over the people and at the same time advocate schooling.

In his narrative, Tariku continues to give examples of how he tried to convince agro-pastoralist parents of the benefits of schooling:

> One time I want to tell the community that from Addis to Kenya, Nairobi, the airplanes are going, they are flying over Ethiopia, over Hamar territory. 'Look these are educated people. [laughter] They are pilots. Even [if they are] not pilot, the educated people build this machine. If you are educated, you become pilot. Even [if you do] not [become a] pilot, you can make cars and drive cars, you know this type of things. Even the medicine, if you are educated [you make it].' One guy says: 'Ah, ok. Ya, but you start [schooling] and then we see you.' [laughter] (Interview 2014).

Tariku argues that education – and by education he means schooling – has the potential to turn students into pilots and to enable them to build machines, make medicine and drive cars. However, his interlocutor is skeptical whether schooling really works that way and leads to these jobs. He first wants to see what happens to Tariku when he goes to school, before setting his children on the track of schooling. This argument shows again that parents were skeptical about schooling and wanted to see first success stories of individual students before sending all their children to school.

In the next step, Tariku tries to convince parents of the advantage of schooling by pointing to the use of schooling for the health of cattle:

> Another thing is for example that in town the educated people treat animals with medicine. That is an educated person. If you go to school, the educated people treat your animals. 'YES,' the people say, 'yes that's right.' You know, what's the whole problem? The others say: 'We don't see Hamar who are educated and who come to treat our cattle. We don't see this. We haven't experienced this type. Somebody, the Amhara, they are educated and then they treat our people and our cattle.' (Interview 2014).

Having stressed the importance of cattle for the Hamar, Tariku tries to convince them of the benefit of schooling by saying that educated people can treat sick animals. However, not many Hamar have studied veterinary medicine and come back to Hamar to treat sick animals. What we can see from these arguments about schooling is that parents observe children who go to school to see if schooling is really as advantageous as it is said to be. Parents judge the behavior of students and their later profession in terms of their contribution to the community. They want to see returns from sending their children to school. Thus, Hamar students are closely watched. If students behave well in the eyes of elders, the latter admit that they might be willing to send more children to school. These

expectations put pressure on students to perform well in order to become good role models and enable more children to go to school. Students face dilemmas when the conditions at school and later at work do not allow them to act in the interest of their parents.

The lack of perceived benefits when Hamar students work in jobs that foremost serve the interests of the government and not those of the agro-pastoralists has created a mistrust of schooling. Even though people who have been to school put forward arguments in favor of schooling and promise the possibility of becoming pilots, doctors or engineers, during my fieldwork I never heard of any person from Hamar who had qualified for these jobs. Few people have been to college, and even less to university. That the prestigious professions have not been accessed by people from agro-pastoralist households is also due to the way schooling is designed and carried out in the area, and the lack of support for agro-pastoralist children in school. In the following section, I will analyze the specific struggles of children from ethnic minorities, such as agro-pastoralist children in South Omo, in the public education system, which makes it hard for them to compete in higher education institutions.

3.2 Distinctive School Space and Time

> Living in an agro-pastoralist homestead two hours walk away from town, Aike left the homestead around eight o'clock in the morning after having washed his face and put on his school clothes, shorts and a t-shirt. He was around twelve years old and in grade five. Following small paths through the bush and crossing the fences around fields, he took a short cut to the next school, which was around 20 minutes walk away and situated on a road that was accessible by car. On the way, he often met other schoolchildren with whom he entered the school compound which was not fenced.
>
> The school compound was an agglomeration of three cement buildings situated around a flagpole. The walls of the classroom building were painted by teachers with maps and historic sites of northern Ethiopia, such as the stelae of Aksum. After waiting some time hanging around in front of the classrooms and listening to Amharic music played from a cassette recorder in front of the teachers' room, students and teachers assembled in front of the flagpole. The children lined up in front of signs indicating their grade. The lines started with the shortest and ended with the tallest child in each grade. No one wore a school uniform. Teachers corrected the children's position and shouted drill commands. As the Ethiopian flag was slowly raised, students and teachers sang the national anthem, which often resembled more a whispering than a loud chorus. After some public announcements, the students went into their classrooms and waited for the teacher to start the lesson (fieldnotes 2014).

Figure 14 Morning flag ceremony at rural primary school, 2014

A day in school begins with children preparing their bodies and clothes for school, where each school day starts with a flag ceremony dedicated to the country of Ethiopia. These practices show how children's education in school directs their lives towards the nation. School assemblies have been discussed as "symbolic actions between the state and the children signaling the mutually requested modernity" (Meinert, 2009:71) and as representations of interaction between nations and children (Fuller, 1991). The symbolic action of ordering student bodies in lines, around the national flag and making them sing national songs, is part of disciplining student's bodies.

Foucault analyzes schools as disciplining institutions, which use "a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behavior. The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it" (Foucault, [1975] 1979:138). Similar to monastic life, schools are an "enclosure" organized around a certain space and time (Foucault, [1975] 1979:141). This enclosure can be seen in the way schools in rural Hamar district are often fenced compounds in the middle of a different surrounding, where time is divided into school lessons of 30 to 45 minutes and where events like the flag ceremony arrange student bodies in lines.

Studies of schooling in Africa show the ambiguous character of schools, which are spaces for disciplining student bodies but at the same time spaces where discipline is subverted (Göpfert & Noll, 2013; Simpson, 2003:111). Riggan describes the "disorder" in Eritrean schools, which can be seen for instance during the flag ceremony, when students jump out of line and hardly listen to the speech made by a teacher, clapping loudly to make the teacher stop speaking, and where several teachers do not attend the ceremony but wait in the staff room for the ceremony to pass (Riggan, 2016:122–123). While I did not observe such an open display of disorder during the flag ceremony in schools in Hamar, the anthem sung by twenty to fifty students was often quieter than the surrounding birdsong. Some schools had no flag or flagpole, but assembled the students and formed lines in front of stones representing each grade. Sometimes young men who passed the school on their way to the fields sneaked into the ceremony and stood in line with the students, but then left for the fields. Thus, the boundaries between the school and its surrounding were not completely closed, but it can be noted that even with limited

resources, the formality of "a new set of body techniques, such as standing in lines, singing during parades, […] sitting at desks, writing on paper" is enacted (Meinert, 2009:69), and transforms student's bodies and habitus (Bourdieu, 1977:78). In the following examples from my classroom observations, we will see that in Hamar, as in Uganda, these transformative school practices often concentrate on form rather than on academic content (Meinert, 2009:68).

3.2.1 Daily Routine in Rural Schools

The school day normally starts with a flag ceremony in the morning for which students and teachers come together in the school compound. During these daily morning assemblies, I had a chance to count the students. Although some students arrived after the ceremony and sneaked into the classrooms later, in the assemblies I attended in different rural schools I never counted more than one third of the number of officially enrolled students as communicated to me by headmasters and the education office.

To show the use of time in classrooms, I will present some excerpts from my fieldnotes, written during participant observation in classrooms and school compounds. I will describe in detail the routine of a school day, from entering the school compound in the morning to leaving it in the afternoon. The following example stems from a day that I spent with grade three students in their classroom at a rural school, a few hours walk from Dimeka. In order to give an impression of the duration and routine of a day in a rural school, I will cite at length from my fieldnotes.

> In the morning, I went with two students from their homestead to the school. Since no one in the homestead had a watch and I did not know the official starting time of the lessons, we arrived late and missed the flag ceremony. That day I decided not to move with a teacher from class to class, or move between classes, but to stay with one class over the school day. An old wheel rim hung in a tree in front of the classrooms and when a student beat it with a stick, it signaled the beginning and end of classes.
>
> During the time of the first lesson, no teacher was present in the grade three classroom. Students copied the English alphabet from the blackboard into their text books. Two students pretended to be teacher. They took a stick, pointed to each letter on the blackboard, said the name of the letter, and the other students sitting on benches shouted out the name of the letter in chorus.
>
> A total of nine students were in the classroom, out of which seven seemed to be around the right age for grade three, meaning they started schooling at the age of seven. Two students were much older, seemed to be in their late teens, and wore bead jewelry, a wrap-around cloth and a shirt. Younger students wore soccer jerseys and shorts or a wrap-around cloth. The classroom was a spacious cement

building in good shape, with several windows and six desks with benches arranged in three groups. Not all seats on the benches were taken and the room would have been big enough to accommodate more benches, tables and students. On the wall next to the door was a blackboard, and on the yellow wall were the days of the week written in English.

I started to talk to Gardu, one of the older students. He said that only the older students learned anything. The young ones didn't learn. I ask him if the teachers didn't teach the young ones, too, but he replied that the young children did not understand it. Thirteen students are enrolled in grade three, but Gardu said that they don't come. He said about himself that he was not in class the day before, since he went to a neighboring place to collect something. He was afraid that the teacher would scold him for not being in class. But there was no teacher there to scold him. He could not read Amharic well, but was sure that he would learn how to read Amharic in grade four. Starting from grade five, textbooks are no longer in Amharic but in English and I wondered how he would cope with that when he was not yet fluent in Amharic, to say nothing of English. Towards the end of the class, an older student enters class and announces that the math teacher is not there, since he went to Jinka.

The second lesson is Environment Science (አካባቢ -*'akababi*). The teacher enters the class, in which there are now twelve students. She speaks in a loud voice that echoes from the cement walls. Without paying much attention to the teacher, an older student is reading out loud from a textbook. Some young students wriggle on their benches, others sit quietly and look apathetic. The teacher walks through the classroom while talking loudly in Amharic. She slightly hits wriggling students on their head with her hand or book. Only occasionally she says single words in Hamar, for instance she compares an urban park with Mago Park. When she refers to a picture in the textbook, she does not mention the page number and no student looks at the image with her. Many students turn the textbook pages loudly and some read out loud. No one seems to listen to her lecture and I am not sure whether the students understand the teaching in Amharic. When she writes on the blackboard, some students copy the text, but three students do not write at all. The writing on the blackboard is not always clear and I have difficulties in recognizing the Amharic letters. Some students are still copying the writing, when others have already started reading. Only the older students try reading. The teacher spells every letter of the writing out loud and all students repeat the letters in chorus, many without looking at the blackboard. Looking at two exercise books, the teacher crosses through the written words with a red pen and signs with the date and her name, without correcting the content. After that she walks through the classroom with a pointer, sometimes hitting students with it on their backs to make them write. After she leaves the classroom, an older student takes the stick,

walks around the classroom and makes sure that students write. He also takes exercise books out of younger students' pockets and flicks through them quickly so that many pages almost fall out.

While students copied from the blackboard, the teacher talked to me. She finished school seven years ago and went to teachers' college for three years to get her diploma. For three years she has been a teacher at the school. However, after she had left, I asked students her name and they did not know it.

The third lesson starts without a teacher. The older students still controlled the younger ones, sometimes hitting them with a stick on their hands and backs. Students sit together in groups. The older student with the stick tries to read the letters on the blackboard out loud and asks if the others have written them down.

After this lesson without a teacher, it is break time and the students go out of the classroom into the open compound. During the break, the election of the student representative takes place. Teacher Tom organizes the election and tells me: "We show them the way". Tom holds a paper box with a slot, into which students throw small election cards. On one side of the card is written "vote 2007" and on the back is the teacher's signature. Before students insert the identical, prefilled cards, the teacher asks the student's name, writes the name in an exercise book and asks in Hamar: *"Hara nashaw? Waakí? Gamále? Qau?"*, which means: "What do you like? Cow? Camel? Forest?" Students choose one of the three options and their vote is noted down in a table in the exercise book. The teacher and students emphasize that the three candidates "compete against each other." Some students do not want to say anything and are very shy in front of the election box, but they are pressured by older students and the teachers to say their name and to choose one option. I wonder if they know which student is behind the "cow", "camel" and "forest", but the teachers say that they know and demonstratively ask some students to tell me. Some students mention the names of the people the three options stand for and others do not know the candidates. Not all students appear for the vote and particularly very young students have been pressured to come and vote. Teachers draw parallels between this and the election of the bee, which represents the party of the current prime minister whose election is upcoming.

In lesson four, the English teacher writes the days of the week in English on the blackboard. She shouts out loud the names of the days and the students repeat what she says loudly. The writing on the board contains spelling mistakes. On the wall next to the blackboard are the days already written in English, with other spelling mistakes. The teacher emphasizes that a week has seven days and starts with Monday as the first day. These explanations take place in Amharic. Although the spelling on the wall is different from English dictionaries, the pronunciation is mostly similar to mainstream English. She also translates the English terms into Amharic and writes the pronunciation of the English words in Amharic letters on

the board. The students copy the writing in their exercise book. After they have written the days, she starts singing a song about the days of the week and everyone joins in the singing. As homework, the students are told to write the days of the week in the back of their English books, designed by USAID. The lesson was conducted independently from the textbook. Although the teacher mostly spoke Amharic to the students, she gave orders in Hamar, such as *"t'afa!"* (write), *"qansa!"* (listen) and *"Qansidu?"* (Did you hear/understand?).

During the fifth lesson, no teacher is present. Students sit on their chairs and wait with boredom. They say that the Amharic teacher is in school, but will not come since she has a young child and breastfeeds. They explain that they have four subjects, of which two were taught today. The school started at eight and will be over around twelve. Around 11:30 am an older student enters class and asks how many children will be present for lunch. The older grade three students sit outside the classroom on the veranda. The young students have to stay in class. If they come out, an older student beats them with a stick to make them return inside again. He tells me that the young ones won't listen.

In the sixth lesson, no teacher enters the room either, and the students still wait in the classroom. Some students ask me when I will go to Dimeka. I tell them in Hamar that I will go on "*geban gari*", which literally means "big market" and refers to Saturday. I ask if they know the English term for the "small market day" (*geban líkka*), which refers to Tuesday. They said no. In the lesson two hours ago, they were told the days of the week in English and Amharic, they learned the number of weekdays and the first, second, etc., day of the week, but this knowledge was not related to their daily life, in which people talk about the small and big market day and count the days between those two days as the day before and after market day.

The final beating of the wheel rim makes the students leave the classroom and gather in the shade of a building. They sit in groups and some older students serve plastic plates with porridge. They use sticks to distribute the plates and allocate eaters to plates. Several students share one plate and eat with their hands. After lunch, the students leave the compound and walk to the fields of their mothers (fieldnotes 2014).

I have cited these notes at length, because they shed light on the rhythm of a school day, which is marked by the sound of the wheel rim, but for the students consists mainly in being held in classrooms and waiting for the teacher. The actual content of the lessons occupies very little time. Although the teaching plan scheduled six classes, only two classes were taught. However, students spend the time of six classes in school, if they do not arrive late. Their attendance was not registered every day and the duration of lessons often varied. The lessons that were actually taught were not scheduled consecutively, so that students could arrive late or leave early to work and play outside the school compound, and to contribute to the agro-pastoralist economy.[51]

Figure 15 Student teaching classmates in lesson without teacher, 2014

According to the teaching plans that I was shown and which teachers filled in and school directors signed, each scheduled class had an assigned topic, referring to a chapter of the textbook, and the teacher indicated the teaching method used. Although designed in detail and signed on paper, the teaching practice and the lessons that were actually carried out deviated from the plan. By sticking to the formality of the school schedule with regard to the time students spend in classrooms, the teachers and the students pretend to follow the rules of the school. Inside the classrooms, very little time is used for teaching and learning according to the curriculum; much time is spent waiting or with students teaching each other. Not knowing what the next lesson will bring, students stay for the whole school day in the space of the school, where they are separated from the agro-pastoralist activities that simultaneously go on outside the school compound.

[51] Since most people in Hamar district do not have watches but judge the time of day by referring to the sun and the work with animals, a shortening of school time to the lessons actually carried out ought to make use of this way of counting time.

In rural schools, teachers often complained that students only attend class for two or three days a week. By counting the students during the morning assemblies and in the classrooms, I also realized that less students were present in school than the number officially enrolled. However, during the days I spent in school, and by asking students after school about the lessons they had that day, I also found that instead of the six scheduled lessons per day which were written in the teaching plans, on average two to three lessons a day were actually held in the rural schools of Hamar district. One reason for this is that sometimes not enough teachers are employed to cover all subjects, so that some subjects are not taught at all. At times, teachers go to town and are absent in the rural schools, since they have to pick up their salary, buy food and wait for transport back to the remote schools. Taking together the irregular attendance of both teachers and students in rural schools, I estimate that students attend four to nine lessons taught by teachers per week. As far as I could see, the amount of teaching per week is higher in town schools, where the teachers live permanently, and where students have very few other learning and work options compared to rural areas.

3.2.2 Paradoxes of Waiting in School

The longer I stayed in rural schools, the more I had the feeling that everyone was waiting, not only the students in classes without teachers but also the teachers who were waiting for the weekend and hoping to be promoted so that they could move to another location or job. Rural schools often appeared as places where people were just waiting to leave again. Students came and left the compound, and the teachers waited for the week or month to pass so that they could return to their private rooms, friends and family in town. Rural schools constitute temporary residences for government workers where they share rooms, often a room similar to a classroom, and live away from settlements, towns and shops. Many teachers said that it was good to stay in rural areas, since they do not get a high salary. Because they bring food from the town and have no shops around, they do not spend as much money as they would in town. However, most new teachers had difficulties adapting to the local language, the climate and the culture, and had difficulties in communicating with students and parents. Although teachers and parents interact, for instance by buying and selling butter and eggs or sorghum beer (*parsî*), rural schools constitute islands of the state, which are set apart from their agro-pastoralist surroundings.

In Hamar district, school compounds – fenced or not – are recognizable through their rectangular buildings with corrugated iron roofs, pit latrines, a flagpole with the Ethiopian flag, and Amharic-speakers who bake *injera* (እንጀራ), a flat sourdough bread and the common food in highland Ethiopia and in towns in southern Ethiopia. Around these islands are dispersed agro-pastoralist settlements, which consist of round, grass-thatched huts surrounded by animal enclosures and fields, where people prepare meals from sorghum, maize and milk products and speak Hamar.

Figure 16 Rural primary school, 2014

Students who had experienced more intensive teaching in urban schools and colleges, sometimes criticized teachers in rural schools for not preparing lessons, often giving no homework, drinking *parsí* and sleeping a lot. In their turn, teachers complained that students did not appear in class, did not understand Amharic, did not learn properly, and were not very interested in learning, as they put it. Despite these criticisms, town students and government workers visited rural schools and homesteads, telling parents and children that schooling is good and that every child should go to school in order to be able to become whatever they want, such as a pilot, an engineer, or a doctor. This idea of sending all children to school imagines schooling as a way to enable a linear, progressive process of personal and national development (cf. Mains, 2011:68). The linear picture of schooling and its transformative power stands in stark contrast to the way time is spent in rural schools. Given the long hours of waiting and the language differences, which make it difficult for students to follow the teacher, I wondered what students get from their time in school, and how they come to see themselves as "educated people" distinct from "illiterate" agro-pastoralists.

Meinert and Dungey (2017) analyze "learning to wait" among young people in Uganda. They make the point that "the practice of waiting is often regarded as essential for achieving 'successful' adulthood as opposed to 'doing nothing' activities at home" (Dungey & Meinert, 2017:90). Thus, waiting in school is associated with waiting for a better future, but the outcome of this practice is ambiguous:

> At times waiting was regarded as morally significant and a practice to be mastered to be educated, but at other times students experienced waiting as highly frustrating as they could not achieve a stable adult status in the eyes of others (Dungey & Meinert, 2017:101).

Thus, Meinert and Dungey identify waiting in school as part of a moral practice of becoming educated, which students seek but are also frustrated about, particularly when they expect to build up a stable adult life after school:

> Paradoxically, school practices of preparing children to expect an office job when they grow up, as well as practices of waiting and 'keeping busy', actually seem to contribute to young men getting stuck and losing adult status in later life. They are taught to endure hardship and wait patiently and are kept busy in a way that does

> not prepare them to become proactive job creators or creative farmers (Dungey & Meinert, 2017:100).

The paradox of school is that it promises children a bright future and teaches them "to endure hardship and wait patiently" for it, but does not teach them to become active job creators or farmers. Rather, schooling separates children from their local environment and tries to discipline and habituate their bodies to school space and time (Foucault, [1975] 1979:141; Simpson, 2003:83). The school's motto of "suffer now" to "enjoy later" (Simpson, 2003:110) implies struggles in school which students need to endure to "harvest the fruits" of education later.

However, most students in Hamar decide to leave school after some years and before earning the official qualifications they need to obtain the promised jobs. Of those students who stay on in school, only a few get the jobs they hope for. The result of this school system is a high rate of school leavers and "educated unemployed" youth in Ethiopia. Paradoxically, the expansion of compulsory schooling continues to be promoted, parents are forced to send their children to school and many young people hope that their waiting and struggling in school will help them to get access to a different life after school. Sometimes, parents, students and teachers secretly admitted that they were disillusioned about the potential of schooling in Hamar. Nevertheless, the official narrative continued to be that schooling was good, and the right path to follow, despite the obvious difficulties.

3.3 Struggles over Language in School

> One afternoon, I sat with some teachers in front of their house in a rural school. One of the teachers told a young man who sat among us on his small wooden stool, holding a rifle in front of him, that tomorrow evening lessons for adults will start again. He groans: "O*h, wosa gaalane*!" This means: "Oh, this is our struggle". He sat among the teachers who talked in Hamar since some of the teachers had lived in remote schools for some years and spoke Hamar, while other teachers spoke only Amharic and their own vernacular so that they could not follow the conversation.
>
> In the evening class I attended, the topic of the lesson was body parts in Amharic. The teacher mentioned the Amharic word for different body parts and asked the adult students to repeat. After saying each new word twice, the teacher asked the students to say the words without her. They could not repeat all the words, nor write them, so that the teacher constantly complained in Hamar that they had forgotten everything she told them and added that they did not listen. While the teaching took place in Amharic, this complaint was made in Hamar.

> Although I knew some of the words that were asked in Amharic, I also had difficulties in remembering the new words mentioned in that short time. The constant complaint that the adult students had forgotten everything was repeated more often than the new words and the actual content of the lesson. The students sat silently and patiently in class, but I wondered how often they would attend such a class where they are told that they know so little (fieldnotes 2015).

Describing schooling as a struggle (*gaal*) reflects the lived experience of students who struggle with the language in school, of teachers who often do not feel prepared to teach people who do not speak Amharic, and of households that have to compensate the loss of work normally performed by students.

3.3.1 Paradoxical Use of Languages in School

That schooling serves implicitly and explicitly as a way to Amharize young people in Hamar becomes obvious in the following example:

> One afternoon while I was learning new Hamar words and expressions, a high school student told me that that day a teacher had forbidden Hamar students to respond with "*yo*" and "*woi*" in class. The teacher said that school was not a cattle kraal (*waakí zéle*). The student laughed about it but took it as a lesson that what is a common and polite answer in Hamar is not appropriate language in classrooms (fieldnotes 2014).

The responses "*yo*" and "*woi*" are common replies in Hamar, which I had to learn in order to interact politely. When someone addresses another person by her/his name, the person responds with "*yo*" if she is female or with "*woi*" if he is male (Lydall, 1999). The teacher in school had forbidden this language in the classroom, describing it as the language of the "cattle kraal", which surely was not a compliment. Forbidding the use of Hamar in class means preferring students who speak Amharic. However, the use of local languages is allowed in the constitution of 1994, and in practice, I observed many teachers giving orders in Hamar, although the language of instruction is supposed to be Amharic.

The debate over languages in school reveals tensions in connection with ethnic rights in the federal system, where the use of local languages has been strengthened by the Ethiopian constitution. Article 39 (2) of the Ethiopian constitution states that "[e]very Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has the right to speak, to write and to develop its own language" ("Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia," 1994). In many parts of Ethiopia, this right was transferred into mother-tongue education, which is highly disputed in many multiethnic regions and towns. Pierre Guidi (2012) analyzes how, in 1999/2000, the introduction of a new language of instruction turned into a violent conflict involving the Wolaita, an ethnic group in SNNPR, north of Hamar. The conflict arose because of the planned introduction of a new language of instruction, Wogagoda

(an Esperanto created out of four Omotic languages), but was also a fight about local identity and the place of the Wolaita in the national system.

Since the conquest of the south under the lead of an Amhara emperor at the end of the 19th century, knowing Amharic has served as a mark of power, separating the powerful and the subordinate, the "civilized" and the "uncivilized", with Amharic becoming the lingua franca of towns and of organs of power (Guidi, 2015:46). While other languages of Ethiopia are linked to local identity and knowledge, knowing Amharic has proved to be essential for social mobility and access to the power center. The 1994 constitution grants nations, nationalities and peoples in Ethiopia the right of self-determination, so that more than 90 languages in Ethiopia can be used "in the courts, in governmental and other political entities, in cultural and business communications, and in education" (Wagaw, 1999:75). Teshome Wagaw argues that the "language policies governing education are only part of the larger national ethnic policy" (Wagaw, 1999:85). Ethiopia's language policy evokes acts of ethnic cleansing, dismissing qualified teachers on the basis of ethnic origins (Wagaw, 1999:86). The using and banning of languages in school has been debated throughout the 20th century in Ethiopia (Bowen & Horn, 1976; Tekeste, 1996).

Language policies became even more politically charged in the new millennium (Guidi, 2015; Tekeste, 2006). Since 2002, there has been a ruling that teaching in Ethiopia should be in the mother tongue to enable dialogue between teachers and students (Guidi, 2015:58). Mother-tongue education is implemented differently in the regions and zones. While local languages have become the language of instruction in grades one to four in many parts of Ethiopia, and up to grade six or eight in some regions, in South Omo Zone Amharic has remained the official language of instruction in grades one to four, and often also in the following grades when the teachers and students are not fluent in English.[52]

The implementation of mother-tongue education in South Omo is challenging not only due to the many languages spoken and the multi-lingual composition of the population, but also since many of the local languages are oral languages that have no standardized written form or trained teachers who are fluent in these languages. The use of local languages in school is also disputed, since many government documents are written in Amharic and people without a mastery of Amharic have diminished job opportunities (Guidi, 2015:56; Wagaw, 1999:87). Therefore, many parents want their children to learn Amharic in school.

Although most rural children in South Omo do not speak Amharic when they start school, Amharic is not introduced as a new language. Rather, the textbooks anticipate that schoolchildren understand Amharic. The teachers are also not trained to teach Amharic

[52] Exceptions in respect of mother-tongue education in South Omo can be found in Aari, where a pilot project started teaching in the mother tongue in six schools in 2014, and in a Protestant mission school in Mursi (fieldnotes 2014).

as a foreign language to students who do not understand it. Many teachers in Hamar district learned Amharic the way schoolchildren in Hamar learn it, since Amharic is often not the teacher's first language, but a second language which they also learned in school.

Students who are native speakers of Amharic have advantages in the first years of school, when they do not have to learn a second language on the job in order to understand the lessons. I had a conversation with an official from the regional education office, in which he pointed out new textbooks for Alternative Basic Education (ABE) schools, which use Hamar names of people and places, so that non-Amharic-speaking children will understand that these words refer to people and places. However, the use of these textbooks is contested, since neighboring groups complain that they do not want to read the names of their Hamar "enemies" in their textbooks, but want books with names in their own language (fieldnotes 2015). Thus, the design of school books and the language uses touches political issues involving ethnic identities and rights.

Figure 17 Lesson at Alternative Basic Education Center, 2015

After grade four, when the textbooks change to English and Amharic becomes only a subject in South Omo Zone, teachers in town observe that agro-pastoralist children have advantages compared to native Amharic speakers. While they are used to learning in a foreign language, native Amharic speakers struggle more with English (fieldnotes 2015). However, I observed that teachers as well as students struggle with English. Many rural teachers started teaching after completing grade ten, and enrolled in summer programs to get a teaching certificate, while already teaching. During my research, some hostel students who finished grade ten applied for jobs as teachers. After one day of orientation training, they were employed by the district's education office and were sent to teach in rural ABE schools. In many schools I visited I tried to find a teacher with whom I could communicate in English. This was often not the school director, or even the English teacher, but someone who had spent some time with English speakers. My conversations with teachers were often limited to my basic Amharic skills. I was also able to have conversations with teachers who spoke Hamar because they had grown up in Hamar or had stayed some years in remote schools where they learned it. While teachers complained about students not understanding Amharic, students described how hard it was for them to follow the lessons in the first years until their Amharic skills grew.

> One student in Jinka described his way of dealing with Amharic and English texts, saying when he looks at English texts in his Biology or Civics textbook, he recognizes only single words which he knows. He picks these words like he picks out single cattle in a herd but he does not get all of them (fieldnotes 2014).

Dictionaries were hard to get and existed only for Amharic and English. Apart from a small booklet produced by Save the Children, no dictionary of Hamar existed during my research.[53] Therefore, students who want to learn Amharic look for personal tutors and translators in and outside school. One way for students to deal with the language in school is to ask other students in class for help with translation. This is easier in town schools, where Hamar- and Amharic-speaking students learn together in class. Some students I met had their own strategies for learning Amharic, for instance by asking Amharic speakers in town to explain words and meanings to them, and they often collected words and wrote their own vocabulary lists in exercise books.

Dictionaries are very rare in school libraries and some students bought their own dictionary, since textbooks do not contain word lists or introduce new vocabulary. While doing their homework, many students asked me to explain English words. When I asked them what they do in class when they do not understand words, many reported that they sometimes ask the teacher, if he/she is a good teacher. But often they were afraid to ask, since instead of explaining, teachers often reprimanded them, saying that the word has been explained last year and asking why they had forgotten it (fieldnotes 2014). In the classes I attended, I almost never observed students asking the teacher, but I did see them asking a classmate sitting next to them. Thus, learning in school demands a lot of initiative and a very good memory.

Although Amharic is the official language of instruction in South Omo Zone, Hamar is not a "weak" language in classrooms in Hamar district. Older students in Dimeka often told me that teachers get angry if they speak Hamar in class, since many teachers do not understand it. If students were angry with the teacher, they could make jokes about the teacher by saying something in Hamar which made their classmates laugh. Thus, on some occasions Hamar works as a secret language among students that can be used to undermine the teacher's authority. Teachers in rural schools quickly learned at least commands in Hamar to tell students in class to sit, listen and write. Thus, the communication between teachers and students and their understanding of textbooks in Amharic and English, was not always straightforward, but fragmented.

During my class observations, I was never sure what the students got from the lessons. Most lessons took place in Amharic, even beyond grade four, and often only the writing on the blackboard and single words were said in English. I could not always

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[53] When I showed a Hamar student the booklet, which was written in Amharic letters and listed words in Hamar and Amharic, he found translations which he said were not right and handed it back to me immediately (fieldnotes 2015).

follow well, but neither could the children in the lower classes whose Amharic skills were also quite limited. When teachers switched to English I understood more, although some pronunciations and the use of grammar often made it difficult for me to follow. However, I never knew what the students understood, since they were less fluent in English but more used to the teacher's pronunciation and language structure. This multilingual setting was a challenge to my research, which I could balance a bit by talking with students and teachers after class.

3.3.2 Reproduction of Ethnic Inequality

The difficulties of agro-pastoralist children in school are to some extent taken into account in the numerus clausus for higher education institutions. Students explained to me that pastoralist students need less points than non-pastoralist students in the national grade eight and grade ten examinations for admission to high school and preparatory school respectively (fieldnotes 2015). Teacher's expectations in respect of speaking and writing Amharic were lower for students in Hamar district than in Jinka. While I met many students in grades five and six in rural schools in Hamar district who could not fluently write and read Amharic, teachers told me that they are expected to read and write Amharic in grade three or four (fieldnotes 2015). However, children who went to a private kindergarten in Jinka could write Amharic and some English sentences in the second year of kindergarten before entering school (fieldnotes 2013). Thus, the competences taught to and expected from schoolchildren varied, both within South Omo and compared to other regions.

Teachers and educational administrators often explained to me that the different levels of knowledge among schoolchildren are due to the fact that some children learn easily and others slowly. This explanation that regards educational success only as an individual achievement has been deconstructed in the sociology of education. Although educational systems attribute educational success to an individual's merit, a closer study shows that success in school depends not only on the capacity of individuals but also on the cultural capital of their social milieu. Schools are designed to reproduce the elite (Bourdieu & Passeron, [1970] 1977). In Ethiopia this elite is associated with Amhara (Shack, 1973), so that schools are contested institutions of social classes and ethnic identities.

Children from agro-pastoralist households constitute the majority of students in rural schools, but often a minority in town schools, although the latter situation is slowly changing. The following tables show the composition of classes in the two schools in Dimeka. The data was collected with the help of the principals who asked the class teachers to count how many of the children in their class had agro-pastoralist parents.

Grade	Boys from agro-pastoralist households	Girls from agro-pastoralist households	Total number of agro-pastoralist children	Total number of boys	Total number of girls	Total number of students	Percentage of students from agro-pastoralist households
1	12	19	31	35	42	77	40.3
2	9	9	18	32	33	65	27.7
3	10	14	24	30	30	60	40.0
4	22	17	39	44	33	77	50.7
5	16	16	32	37	35	72	44.4
6	22	11	33	43	30	73	45.2
7	28	10	38	43	37	80	47.5
8	40	9	49	64	43	107	45.8
total	159	105	264	328	283	611	43.2

Figure 18 Enrolled Students in Dimeka Primary School, March 2014.

The table shows that in Dimeka primary school, the number of urban children exceeds the number of children from agro-pastoralist households. One reason for this is that many schools in rural areas have been opened and students no longer need to move from their agro-pastoralist homesteads to hostels in town to attend primary school. The figures also show a trend that girls tend to exceed or equal the number of boys in the first years of primary school. However, after grade six, the total number of girls enrolled in school is considerably lower than the number of boys. Reasons for this are, for instance, that girls from agro-pastoralist households start schooling at a later age, often in their mid-teenage years; after some years in school, they start living with a partner, have children before finishing school, or are busy with domestic work and small businesses.

The number of urban children in high school is also higher compared to agro-pastoralist students.

Grade	Boys from agro-pastoralist households	Girls from agro-pastoralist households	Total number of agro-pastoralist students	Total number of boys	Total number of girls	Total number of students	Percentage of students from agro-pastoralist households
9	42	6	48	63	29	92	52.2
10	25	2	27	48	19	67	40.3
total	67	8	75	111	48	159	47.2

Figure 19 Student enrollment in Dimeka High School, March 2014.

These figures show that the total number of girls, and in particular girls with an agro-pastoralist background, is lower than the number of boys in high school and primary school. In most grades, the children of town dwellers slightly exceed the number of agro-pastoralist students. This ratio is disproportional to the population size. The population in Hamar district is estimated to be 75,056 people, out of which 71,489 live in rural areas and 3,567 in urban areas (Hamar Woreda Administration, 24.03.2014). Nearly 95% of the district's population live in rural areas. The majority of inhabitants are agro-pastoralists. Although the population figures are estimations, they show that the urban population makes up around 5% of the district's population and constitutes slightly more than 50% of the school population in Dimeka. The high proportion of urban children in higher grades continues a trend which existed from the beginning of schooling in Hamar district, when schools were mainly used by children of government workers and settlers from other parts of Ethiopia, and were not designed for the local population (Lydall, 2010:323–324).

The composition of the class gives children different chances to learn Amharic, the language of the state. The first children from Hamar to attend school learned mostly among Amharic-speaking classmates. Many of them recall that it was difficult to follow lessons but that they learned Amharic quickly. In rural schools nowadays, where, with the exception of some children of teachers, all children speak Hamar, the chances to learn Amharic have diminished, since only conversations with teachers take place in Amharic. This has the effect that schoolchildren are marginalized by speaking their mother tongue, since it affects their chances of learning Amharic, the language that opens doors to government jobs. This process of exclusion can be observed in various school contexts in the periphery of the state.

3.4 School Struggles in the Periphery

3.4.1 The National Knowledge Background Expected in Schools

Their disconnection from the nation state's center is felt by Hamar children when they not only struggle with the language of instruction but also with the content of lessons that assume a certain cultural knowledge background. The gap that agro-pastoralist students have to bridge in order to succeed in school is created not only by language barriers and different living environments, but also by lessons and exercises that are designed for children with an Amharic and urban social background.

> One afternoon, secondary school students asked me for help in an English language exercise. I could not help much since like the hostel students I did not recognize all the national and historic monuments of northern Ethiopia, or the national runners and singers upon whom the language exercise was built up. Having hardly seen these national icons on TV or other media, students lacked the

> national cultural background for the exercise and not necessarily the English language skills to fill in the blank spaces in the exercise book (fieldnotes 2014).

Differences between the living environment of the student and the content of the exercise also became obvious when a girl in grade six, around the age of twelve, who lived in an agro-pastoralist homestead, asked me to explain her English homework.

> The exercise wanted her to link English words for pieces of clothing with the respective drawings. While I tried to explain the words in Hamar, she tried to find the items of clothing she had never seen in the black and white drawings. For instance, I tried to explain socks to her which proved difficult since they are not part of daily life in Hamar and I did not have any to show her. It was hard for her to learn an English word for something she knows no word for in Hamar, and which she has maybe never seen or not paid attention to when she saw people wearing socks in town, which is very rare due to the hot weather. She almost gave up and wanted me to do the homework for her.
>
> Later in the afternoon, the mother of the house sent her with me from the field to the house to help me light a fire and start cooking. While my fire just produced smoke, she took over and managed the cooking fire easily by using wood of different sizes and at varying distances from the fire's center thus keeping the fire at the right cooking temperature with as little smoke as possible (fieldnotes 2014).

These examples show that not only the languages used in school render learning and teaching difficult, but also the learning materials, which are based on knowledge to which many rural children have little access. Exercises in the textbooks often appeared difficult to many agro-pastoralist students, who were keen to do the exercise but lacked the background knowledge to understand what was required. While this gave them a sense of being excluded from access to the knowledge of the school, they mastered other tasks outside school easily and confidently.

In many conversations, I observed how children – independently of whether they were in school or not – were very excited to learn something new. They asked, for instance, what a plane looks like inside, what people do in a plane, what food and animals exist in my country, and what the weather is like in Germany. The curiosity which makes them want to know what is beyond their familiar environment is an incentive for young people to go to school. Schooling among agro-pastoralists has been criticized as irrelevant for these children, since it does not teach them skills directly linked to their lives, and pastoralists do not see teachers as role models for their children (Abbink, 1996:126). Contrary to this critique, I found many students very curious and motivated to learn something new in school. However, their expectations in respect of learning new languages and getting more knowledge of the world were often not met in school.

Given that children in rural schools only attend school on two or three days a week, that in many rural schools only around half of the scheduled classes take place and

in a language which they hardly understand, the knowledge children acquire in rural schools in Hamar district can hardly compete with schools in town and other districts. I met many grade five and six students who went to rural schools in Hamar district and were not able to read Amharic and English or write short sentences.

> Wondering how these students pass exams, I observed examinations in rural schools where the teacher wrote questions on the blackboard and four answers to choose. Students did not have to read the questions and answers since the teacher read them out loud and students wrote on their piece of paper the number of the question (1-10) and the answer they chose (A,B,C,D). Sometimes a student also shouted the answer out loud so that the examination almost became a shared task between students and the teacher (fieldnotes 2014).

Thus, many informal arrangements between teachers and students keep the school system in rural Hamar district officially running. While rural schools enable children to stay with their kin and participate and learn in the agro-pastoralist economy at the same time, these children do not learn enough of the formal curriculum to pursue schooling in town. Conversely, students who live in hostels in town do not participate and learn in the agro-pastoralist economy, but learn Amharic and more academic content and skills to participate in the national system.

3.4.2 Paradoxical Reasons for Low School Attendance

Many young people stop going to school when they have to move from a rural school to town to continue their schooling. In town, many students leave school because they do not have enough food, or money to buy it, have difficulties in following the lessons, or become sick. In contrast to these struggles, the reasons I heard from officials for the low school enrollment of agro-pastoralist children were mostly cultural in nature.

Teachers, government workers and town dwellers repeatedly told me that pastoralists and the Hamar do not care about education. One leader of an education office told me that "*Hámarsa meté ciggír dáane*", which translates as the "heads (minds) of the Hamar have problems" (fieldnotes 2014). At first I was not sure if I understood right that a person from an agro-pastoralist family could talk about his relatives in such a derogative and disrespectful way. However, discourses about pastoralists' low awareness of schooling, their rejection of "change" and "modernity" and their "backwardness" were repeated time and again during my fieldwork, not only by outsiders, such as Amhara and town dwellers, but also by Hamar who had been to school. Finally, I came to understand that these cultural arguments and the "othering" of pastoralists serve as a veil to cover shortcomings in the provision of schooling and national development.

As Georg Elwert (1996) has pointed out, "culture" often serves as an explanation for the failure of development projects, since it does not address other shortcomings like

power inequalities and a lack of mutual collaboration, open communication and shared decision-making. Instead of questioning the suitability of the project, the cultural argument blames the supposed receivers and not the providers of the service for its failures. Analogously, the dominant discourse about the difficulties of schooling in agro-pastoralist communities makes use of "culture", too. In this narrative, it is the "uncivilized" pastoralists who hinder the implementation of compulsory schooling rather than the shortcomings of schooling in the periphery of the state with its huge gap between promises and outcomes.

The national school system is not oriented towards agro-pastoralism and does not take the lifeworld of agro-pastoralist children as a starting point for developing the school curriculum, but expects children and households in the periphery of the state to fit into the existing system. The dilemma of compulsory schooling lies in the divergent notions of a "good" education and a "good" childhood, which are different for agro-pastoralists and for the state, and which are organized as mutually exclusive pathways, where young people have to decide which path to take. To the parents' question "Who herds the cattle? Who herds the goats?" we can add the question: "Who goes to school?" In Hamar, it is mostly not the first son and not girls, but rather second or third born sons or very young children, or teenagers who have younger siblings that can herd the animals. This selection of children for different kinds of education stands in contrast to international policies that require parents to send every child to school at the age of seven. The diversification of children's education allows households to make a living in a semi-arid environment where most people practice agro-pastoralism rather than taking up government employment and white collar jobs, so that they question why they should send all of their children to school.

3.5 What is School?

During my period of participant observation, sitting on hard school benches, with teachers' loud voices echoing from the walls in a mix of languages that most students could hardly understand, and during the hours of waiting in the classroom, wondering whether teachers would come to teach, I stopped asking myself "Why don't more children come to school?" and asked instead: "Why do children stay in school?" Witnessing the daily struggles of students and teachers and the limited possibilities for academic learning, it seemed to me that the reasons for leaving school were more plausible than the incentive for staying in school, which is the hope of getting rewarded for the struggles in school by a job and a different life after school.

In fact, the way schooling is practiced can be considered as a farce that reveals power relations between the center and the periphery. Johnson-Hanks argues that "much of what happens in southern Cameroonian schools is boring, confusing, or frustrating" (Johnson-Hanks, 2006:122) and that "there is something ironic or even farcical about the

practices of discipline" in the schools she visited (Johnson-Hanks, 2006:124). As in her study, where farmers constitute the minority of the population in school, but are treated as an exception who "lack education, modernity, and even honor" and have to adapt to an urban elite (Johnson-Hanks, 2006:142), schooling in agro-pastoralist South Omo aims not at educating children to improve an agro-pastoralist economy but at transforming students into urban dwellers who model their lifestyle on that of the ruling class and become subjects of the state.

Eva Poluha (2004) describes the education of children at home and in a school environment in Addis Ababa as spaces in which children grow up into power hierarchies that reproduce patron-client relations. Despite several changes in the political regime in the past century, she concludes that

> the contents of the education and the way knowledge is perceived and transmitted does not promote critical thinking or people who formulate new questions or look for new answers; neither is this required within the state bureaucracy today. The educational system instead helps produce passive officials who can agree to do only what they are told to and thereby maintain the state apparatus as it is (Poluha, 2004:190).

The values of being patient, enduring and obedient are not only taught in school, but are also required values for herding and farming. However, in the one case the patrons are elders and in the other government officials who have different interests in their "clients'" education. These different and competing interests in young people's education become obvious in the ways each side frames the education of the other side.

Some students in Jinka told me that their parents think "nothing" (የለም - *yelem*) about their schooling and expressed the feeling that their parents mostly do not support their schooling but want them to come back, herd cattle and marry (fieldnotes 2014). Calling schooling "የለም" can be translated not only as "nothing", as the students did, but also as "empty". However, the "emptiness" of education depends on the speaker's perspective. While government officials do not consider learning in agro-pastoralist homesteads as education, agro-pastoralist parents do not see how the schools in which their children learn improve their lives. Parents expect returns from children's time in school.

Remembering their own schooling, some government officials told me that over time their relatives started to see the benefits of schooling and accepted it, since on home visits they often brought soap or coffee as gifts for their parents (fieldnotes 2014). Although students have almost no money to buy food and clothes for themselves in town, these gifts are an attempt to convince their parents that schooling is not an "empty" enterprise, but that schoolchildren return something to their household.

The dilemma for students lies in the fact that they have to prove to their parents that learning in school is not worthless, while at the same time the way schools work in

the periphery of the state makes it difficult for them to succeed in the national education system and job market. Thus, while the state forces its citizens to go to school, it fails to provide access to academic knowledge. Nevertheless, the time in school does not leave young people unchanged (cf. Stambach, 2000:173). If they attend school for a couple of years and then proceed to schools in town, they become more closely connected to the state and national Ethiopia, and grow up with the feeling that they are educated and know more about the world and life in town than people who have not been to school. This distinction becomes obvious in the lifestyle adopted by students over time.

4 Becoming a Student – Dilemmas of (Dis)Connecting Lifestyles

4.1 Students' Movements Between Social Fields

As shown in the previous chapters, schools and agro-pastoralist homesteads constitute distinctive fields, which set themselves apart and create mutual boundaries. Moving between these competing fields, students from agro-pastoralist homesteads face dilemmas in adapting their lifestyle appropriately. When they abandon their agro-pastoralist habits, they earn national appreciation for having become an "educated" and "civilized" person, but if they set themselves too far apart, their agro-pastoralist kin refuse to accept them as Hamar and punish them for having turned into *gal*. By looking at students' habitus, lifestyle and taste, this chapter reveals the creation of distinction between them and their kin, revealing the dilemmas of connection and disconnection in the lives of students who move between contested socio economic fields.

4.1.1 The Distinction of Students

The distinctive appearance of students was very striking to me during my first visit in 2012, when I did not yet speak Hamar but was limited to observation.

> One morning, together with Ivo Strecker and Jean Lydall, I was invited for coffee in a house in Dambaiti. The woman of the house sat next to a fire and wore a cape of goatskin, which was decorated with cowrie shells. Her hair was formed in ringlets, which glimmered reddish from ocher and butter. The woman scooped a hot drink out of a clay pot over the fire. She filled the drink with a gourd ladle into calabashes and handed the first calabash to the oldest man in the house, who sat on a small clay platform between the entrance and the fire. The next calabashes went to the oldest men, then to the foreign guests, older women and younger people. The oldest man spoke a blessing by taking a sip of the drink called *búno*, made of coffee shells boiled in water, and spitting it in front of him. Everyone answered in chorus. We sat on cowhides and the men used a small wooden stool *(borqotó)*, on which they sat or rested their leg. Conversations emerged in which people attentively listened to each speaker. The atmosphere seemed cheerful and people laughed a lot. Some of the men had braided their hair along their head and others had formed it into a clay cap decorated with different colors of red, purple and white clay and a feather. The women wore skirts of goatskin decorated with beads and their hair was shining in ocher ringlets.
>
> Among the elder men sat a young man who wore jeans, white sneakers and a white hoody. His hair was cut short, he did not wear as much bead jewelry as the other

> men, did not bring a *borqotó* but he held the key of a motorbike in his hand, with which he had come to the homestead. When I asked who this young man was, I was told that he was a *temari*, a student. His appearance was different from the other people present. He resembled young men in other parts of the world and he spoke Hamar (fieldnotes 2012).

The difference in the appearance of *temara* and Hamar was impressive, not only in this group but in daily life generally. The symbols by which students mark their status as a distinct social group concern not only physical appearance, clothing, hair style and jewelry, but also the ways they behave. In many conversations, students underlined their distinctiveness from other Hamar and said that they had stopped performing certain customs and rituals, or doing certain kinds of work, since they were *temara* and had "learned". A question I kept asking myself during my fieldwork was: how and in what ways do *temara* become different from their peers who are not in school? How does schooling transform a child into a *temari*? How do *temara* create and navigate the connections and disconnections between them and their kin who have not been to school? To answer these questions, I will analyze a collection of observations and conversations about the differences between *temara* and other Hamar.

The distinctive lifestyle of students from agro-pastoralist homesteads is part of their social mobility and socialization in school. Different learning environments influence young people's acquisition of style and taste consciously and unconsciously, which is not only the case in Hamar but has been prominently analyzed in France. Biographies and sociological studies of prominent social climbers, such as Pierre Bourdieu and Didier Eribon, reveal the pressure of different milieus on social climbers to adapt to certain lifestyles. National education systems mostly reproduce social hierarchies and privilege children from social elites. By growing up in a well-off environment, children acquire a certain habitus, taste and lifestyle that helps them to succeed in national education systems (Bourdieu & Passeron, [1970] 1977). Thus, children from different social backgrounds adapt to an elite-oriented lifestyle in higher education institutions. Although the biographies of Pierre Bourdieu and Didier Eribon prove that young people from working class families can make it to elite learning institutions, social climbers are the exception rather than the societal norm. The struggles of social climbers in education systems reveal social inequalities which have been discussed with regard to working class children in higher education institutions (Bourdieu & Passeron, [1970] 1977) and children of immigrants and ethnic minorities in national education systems (Hall, [2002] 2009; Ogbu, 1982). On their way through national education systems, children from diverse cultural backgrounds struggle with (dis)connections between their natal milieu and the social milieu in which they study and work.

Learning to live appropriately in a new milieu and to acquire its lifestyle often goes along with the creation of distance to the natal milieu or even the hiding of one's social background. Eribon (2013) breaks the silence about his social background in his

autobiography, where he writes about how he moved from a working-class family in Reims to study sociology in Paris. He describes how he broke off his contacts with his parents, brothers and childhood friends in order to succeed in Paris and to plunge into a circle of intellectuals. Only after his father's death, when he was already well established in Paris, did he return to Reims to visit his relatives and the space of his childhood and youth. Disconnections between first-generation students and their relatives have not only been studied in France, but also among first-generation students in Africa. Before analyzing (dis)connections between *temara* and their relatives in Hamar, I will briefly outline how I use Bourdieu's analysis of distinction, habitus and lifestyle.

In his work "Distinction", Bourdieu argues that "different conditions of existence produce different habitus-systems" (Bourdieu, [1979] 1984:170) and that lifestyles, as "systematic products of habitus", "become sign systems that are qualified (as 'distinguished', 'vulgar', etc.)" (Bourdieu, [1979] 1984:172). These sign systems are expressed in the taste of given classes:

> Taste, the propensity and capacity to appropriate (materially or symbolically) a given class of classified, classifying objects or practices, is the generative formula of life-style, a unitary set of distinctive preference which express the same expressive intention in the specific logic of each of the symbolic sub-spaces, furniture, clothing, language or body hexis (Bourdieu, [1979] 1984:173).

Bourdieu's theory of social milieus, which was developed for France (Bourdieu, [1979] 1984) and reworked for other European countries, cannot simply be translated to an African state.[54] However, Bourdieu's concept of social fields, in which certain habitus, lifestyles and tastes are distinguished from one another, helps to analyze student's dilemmas in moving between different fields. Taste as an expression of lifestyle, and its symbolic expression in clothing, language and incorporated body hexis, serves as a lens to describe the different milieus of town dwellers and agro-pastoralists in Ethiopia. Thus, looking at the dilemmas of first-generation students moving in a social space between different milieus, reveils the particularities, tastes and lifestyles of each milieu.

4.1.2 Distinctive Appearances of Hamar and *Gal*

In many situations, people in Hamar pointed out to me the differences between Hamar, *gal* and *temari*, distinctions which were not always as clear as they claimed.

> One afternoon I was sitting among women in front of a Hamar house, when the woman next to me said that in the neighbor's field were two *gal*. I had to make a great effort to recognize people among the growing sorghum plants in the

[54] Neubert and Stoll (2015) have started to identify socio-cultural milieus in urban Kenya, where ethnicity, for instance, plays a bigger role than in studies of milieus in Europe.

> neighbor's field across the river bed. As far as I could see there were two people wearing pants and t-shirts. When I asked the women what the differences were between Hamar and *gal* they explained that a male *gal* does not wear a cloth wrapped around the hips, but pants and a t-shirt. Furthermore, he cuts his hair short and does not braid it or form it into a clay cap. A female g*al* does not wear *aizí*, goatskin clothes, and does not put *asíle*, red ocher, on her hair like Hamar women (fieldnotes 2014).

The women explained the differences between Hamar and *gal* in terms of their clothing and physical appearance. According to these women, the indicators that show people are Hamar are the way men wear a wrap-around cloth and do their hair, and the way women wear leather clothes and color their hair with ocher. Upon spotting people who do not wear these clothes but t-shirts and pants, people in rural Hamar refer to them as *gal*. Through these physical markers, they distinguish at first sight between "insiders" – Hamar, Banna and Bashada – and "outsiders", such as Ethiopian town dwellers.

Distinctions in appearance and bodily practice have been analyzed as the "social skin" which marks the "boundary between social classes" (Turner, [1980] 2012:503).

> The surface of the body, as the common frontier of society, the social self, and the psychobiological individual, becomes the symbolic stage upon which the drama of socialization is enacted, and bodily adornment (in all its culturally multifarious forms, from body-painting to clothing and from feather head-dresses to cosmetics) becomes the language through which it is expressed (Turner, [1980] 2012:486).

Thus, bodies are a stage on which societies create boundaries among social classes. The bodily adornment of people is used in this chapter as a lens through which to identify how socialization in agro-pastoral households, on the one hand, and in urban schools, on the other, shapes young people's habitus and lifestyle differently. However, the physical appearance of people is not always a clear indicator of their social background.

Although the women told me that *gal* wear "modern" clothes, they themselves wore t-shirts above their goatskin skirts and their husbands often wore short pants and t-shirts. However, these clothes were not associated with being Hamar and did not have the same meaning as goatskin clothes and hair done in "Hamar" style. So-called "modern" clothes, which were often made in China and sold in shops in town, did not express ethnic belonging as much as did home-made goatskin clothes. The wrap-around cloth worn by men was also bought in shops. However, the different fabrics and the way it was worn, and by which age group, signified belonging to various agro-pastoralist and age groups.[55]

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[55] Ethnographic films from the 1970s and 1980s, such as Gardner (1974) and Strecker ([1975/76] 1998), show Hamar men wearing white cotton cloths. Today these white clothes are replaced by colorful synthetic fabrics that can be found throughout East Africa.

Although agro-pastoralists also wear industrially produced clothes, the way they wear and combine clothes often distinguishes them from town dwellers.

In towns, agro-pastoralist schoolchildren mostly adapt to the clothing style and haircut of town dwellers so that it is difficult to recognize students from Hamar at first sight.

> One afternoon while I was sitting among teachers in the open compound of a rural school, one of the teachers pointed at a young man who came walking towards us. She spoke in Hamar to me and said that a *gal* is coming. I saw a young man in sport pants, t-shirt and flip-flops, and carrying a drawstring gym bag. I recognized him. He was a student in Dimeka whose mother lived near the rural school. When I later told him that a teacher had identified him as *gal*, he said that this happens whenever he goes to an area in rural Hamar where people do not know him personally. He added that as soon as he starts talking, people recognize him as Hamar. Only around his homestead people know him well and recognize him no matter what clothes he wears (fieldnotes 2014).

This example shows that over hasty distinctions between Hamar and *gal* can be misleading in the case of students whose outward appearance seems to be *gal*. The confusion over the student demonstrates how far agro-pastoralist students adapt an urban appearance, so that seen from a distance, people who do not know them personally identify them as *gal*. Students' appearance and its association with *gal* was a disputed topic during the conflict in Hamar.

4.2 Battles Over Fashioning the Frontier

The wearing of clothes is political and became part of the battle about the distinction between *temara* and Hamar.

> Shortly after the attack on the police in January 2015, the inhabitants of Dimeka worried about the security situation in town. In an evening conversation with two male students and a female student, they tried to assure me that I was not in danger, since the fighters would not touch *ferenji* (white people). What the Hamar do not like, said one student, is people who wear clothes. They want to kill people who wear clothes. The other student interjected that if people took off their clothes, they would only be beaten and not killed (fieldnotes 2015).

In this conflict, clothes become a factor distinguishing between ally and enemy. Seemingly excluding white foreigners and their clothes from the debate, people in Hamar district often distinguish between those who wear clothes and those who do not. However, this distinction does not literally refer to naked bodies but rather to certain types of clothing and corresponding lifestyles that are associated with being Hamar or being *gal*.

In this dialectic, debates about students' clothing became a political issue during the conflict.

Battles over clothing are part of historical and contemporary processes of social transformation on frontiers. The "fashioning of the frontier" has been analyzed in the book "The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1997:218–273). The dialectic of clothing and nakedness as its presumed opposite is hotly debated in South Omo and in Ethiopia. When I told Ethiopians from the highlands that I had conducted fieldwork in South Omo, usually their first question was – with a smile on their face and a joking tone – if people there wear clothes. This question derives from the common stereotype of "naked people" on the frontier where certain types of clothing, particularly leather clothes, are not considered clothes. Comparing battles over the fashioning of the 19th century South African frontier with fashioning discourses on agro-pastoralist people in southwest Ethiopia, I identify some similarities.

On the South African frontier, colonial discourses address "immodest" leather clothes, red ocher on the skin, and certain hairstyles (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1997226-227, 230). The (in)appropriate use of "the blanket" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1997:270) and ideas of "clean" and washed bodies and souls were also debated. Tswana people who worked for the colonizers had to change their habits: men had to wear trousers and women had to cover their breasts (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1997:249). Although the Tswana did not wear the clothes inspired by British cotton and wool manufactures in the manner intended by the colonizers (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1997:241), clothing became part of the cultural battles over inner and outer social transformation (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1997:226–227). Clothing "made the 'native' body a terrain on which the battle for selfhood was to be fought, on which personal identity was to be re-formed, re-placed, re-inhabited" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1997:220). In this battle, dress codes are part of the "making and marking of new social classes", so that fights over transforming bodies and clothes are not only aesthetic, but also moral and political struggles (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1997:222).

Fights about dress codes, body adornments and hairstyles are part of conflicts over schooling in Hamar district, and have to be analyzed in a larger framework of state making and cultural assimilation, which in the national discourse is described as a form of "civilization". Since first generation students in Hamar move between social fields with different dress codes, their struggles and dilemmas in adjusting their clothing, style, taste and personal sense of shame to various contexts reveals broader cultural transformations, as well as moral and political struggles that are fought through students' bodies. Student's dilemmas in respect of their bodily and social connections and disconnections will be analyzed by taking a look at their distinctive clothing, jewelry and hairstyle.

4.2.1 (Im)moral Clothing

Throughout Ethiopia, the dress code of school-educated people appears quite similar, whereas Hamar clothing and body adornment distinguishes them from other ethnic groups and from urban and school-educated people. Clothes, hair and jewelry mark ethnic distinctions. My interlocutors often pointed out to me that the colors of their bead jewelry and the way in which they wear the same bracelets make it possible to distinguish the Hamar and the Banna. Hamar people told me that they use more yellow beads in their beadwork, while the Banna use more blue beads, and that they wear the same bracelets on their lower arms, but that the Banna wear more bracelets than the Hamar (fieldnotes 2014). Since clothing always follows certain fashions, the way of dressing has changed in Hamar over time and in contact with different people, fabrics and materials (Strecker, 2005). Beyond these changes in fashion and variations in personal preferences, many people pointed out to me how clothes, hair and jewelry make the Hamar distinct from other ethnic groups. Throughout the life course, a change in clothes accompanies status changes and signifies age and gender. In a first step, I will describe clothes associated with Hamar before analyzing how school clothes and Hamar clothes are negotiated.

During my fieldwork (2012-2015), young rural girls wore a belt of strings and beads (*shirra)* like a little apron covering their private parts, while young boys were often naked until they got a cloth *(apála)* to wrap around their hips when they started herding kids and calves. When boys grow up and become men, they change the style of cloth and its length. Older men normally wear thicker and longer clothes than younger men. Before girls get a leather skirt around the age of six, they practice sitting and moving appropriately with small pieces of goatskin. Although leather skirts were often referred to simply as an *aizi* (goatskin), they consist of two pieces, a back part (*palante* for girls; *budo* for women) and a front part that is either of leather (*toqo* for girls; *korbaa* for women) or of beads (*sillaa* for girls only). The shape and style of the leather skirts changes according to social status and indicates whether its wearer is *anzá* (an unmarried girl), *uta* (a bride in seclusion) or *gol* (an older married woman). In northern Hamar and southern Banna, girls often replaced the leather skirt's front part by a skirt of beads. While in southern Hamar, girls and women wore leather capes (*qashí* and *qadi*) decorated with cowrie shells, in northern Hamar and southern Banna I saw only married women wearing capes. For dances, an *aizi* and a t-shirt or tank top were seen as the appropriate dress for girls, but in daily life clothes of fabric were often worn over the *aizi* and sometimes instead of it (fieldnotes 2014).

Although some teachers told me that students can wear whatever they want in school, the students told a different story. Some students had to repeatedly sign a paper that they agreed to follow the rules and regulations of schools and its dress code. An ideal male student has short hair and wears a school uniform or "modern clothes", such as pants covering the knees, t-shirts covering the shoulders, shoes and, if at all, only single pieces of jewelry. An ideal female student has long, braided hair and wears a school uniform, a

long dress, or a skirt or pants that cover the knees with a t-shirt, shoes and single pieces of jewelry. Students repeatedly told me that they are punished by teachers if they do not obey this dress code in class. According to my observations, the enforcement of students' "proper" dress is stricter in town than in rural schools. In the latter, I never saw schoolchildren wear uniforms but I sometimes saw them changing into a set of school clothes, such as pants and t-shirts. In Dimeka many children in primary school did not wear uniforms, but they wore "modern" clothes and not Hamar-style clothes. Only in rural schools did I observe schoolboys wearing a wrap-around cloth. Leather skirts and bare torsos were rare in rural schools and not tolerated in town schools.

Figure 20 Hostel Students, 2014

Many students told me how shameful it is if one cannot afford clothes and shoes that fit the style of school and town. "Appe arance, for example, having good, clean clothes and shoes, and neat hair" are categories, which are often left out in international definitions of poverty but which preoccupy young people in Ethiopia (Camfield, 2012:214). Students in Hamar lament that the Hamar clothes are cheap, while the clothes of town dwellers are expensive. For instance, a goatskin can be bought for 10 Birr at the market or taken from an animal slaughtered at home. Women tan, sew and decorate the skins themselves. Buying a cloth, skirt or pants from a shop was more than ten times the price and they did not last as long (fieldnotes 2014). Without much financial support, students in town struggle to find ways to afford clothes.

A schoolgirl in Jinka who lived with a foster family told me that in the past hostel students were easily recognizable in her class, since they were the ones who could not afford school uniforms (fieldnotes 2014). During my research this stigmatization of agro-pastoralist students had slightly changed, since the hostel provided school uniforms for students in Jinka. However, money to buy clothes for the time outside class was still a big concern for hostel students. Since the student hostel in Dimeka did not provide any clothes, students tried to earn money or find sponsors in order to be able to afford appropriate and fashionable urban and school-style clothing. Being expensive and rare, clothes were often stolen in school and university hostels. Students described how they tried not to let their clothes out of sight during washing and drying. Some keep their clothes and personal belongings with trusted friends outside the hostel or try to get lockers in the hostel.

While most students in town schools struggle to get the means to comply with the dress code, I met a young men who went to a rural school and who challenged the connection between learning and clothes.

> One afternoon I was in a field when I met a young Hamar man with braided hair and a bead-band on his head, wearing sandals made from a tire, a wrap-around cloth, tank top and many beads and bracelets on his arms, legs and neck. He said that he was going to the village school. When I asked him if the teachers like his clothes and beads he responded: 'We learn with our heart, not with our clothes' (fieldnotes 2012).

Living in the homestead and going to school occasionally when his agro-pastoralist work allows it, this young man, who went to primary school, refuses to change his appearance to that of a uniform school body. His statement recalls that the process of learning is an intellectual project and not tied to clothes. However, schooling transforms not only students' minds, but also their bodies.

Some remarks made by teachers and students revealed their belief that an agro-pastoralist appearance is not compatible with literacy and intellectual capability. For instance, a teacher pointed to a boy in a rural school, saying that he was a brilliant student, despite the fact that he wore only a wrap-around cloth (fieldnotes 2015). This comment shows that styles of clothing are associated with forms of intelligence. Wearing "modern" clothes does not turn a child into a brilliant student, and dress and appearance are not valid criteria for judging a person's learning capacity. However, bodily appearance is often associated with (im)moral behavior, so that it constitutes an arena in which wider social transformations are negotiated. Clothes, as well as jewelry and hairstyles, express social status and (dis)connections with ethnic groups and urban and rural environments.

4.2.2 Marking Social Status through Jewelery

At the beginning of each school year in September, most students arrive in the hostel with brass bracelets and beaded necklaces and bracelets which they had been given by relatives and friends during summer holidays. In the course of the school year, one can observe how student's jewelry slowly decreases. This is partly due to the school's pressure to adopt the style of a "proper" student, but is also caused by the fact that young people in town live on the edge of the social sphere where beaded jewelry is made and circulates.

> In a conversation at the river, two hostel students told me that teachers advise them not to wear bracelets since it hinders their writing and doing sport (fieldnotes 2014).

This practical argument does not count among those, who do all their hard, manual daily work wearing an abundance of bracelets on their arms and legs. A more plausible reason for the teachers' discouragement of brass bracelets and bead jewelry is that they do not fit national ideas of how schoolboys and schoolgirls should dress.

In contrast to town-dwellers, agro-pastoralists wear abundant jewelry on their lower arms, above the elbow, around the neck, in the earlaps, above the ankles and knees, and around the head. The style of brass bracelets and the size, form and color of bead jewelry serve as ethnic identity markers and give hints about the social status of a person. In a conversation with Tariku, he made the comparison that foreigners wear a ring on their finger when they are married. In Hamar, the first wife gets a special necklace called *binyere* when she moves to her husband (fieldnotes 2014). A woman's *binyere* is made of leather and metal and contains pieces of leather from a male and a female dik-dik which her husband had worn during his initiation ceremony. A woman normally wears the *binyere* until her first son becomes initiated or her first daughter marries and gets a *binyere* herself. The *binyere* symbolizes the status of a first wife who is called *binyere ma* (*binyere* woman) (Epple, 2010b:178–179). Thus, jewelry expresses social relations and social status.

The visible markers of social status and ethnic belonging have been described for other East-African pastoralists, like the Maasai (Klumpp & Kratz, 1993), as well as the Fulbe in West Africa (Boesen, 2008). In her study of young Samburu in Kenya, Carolyn Lesorogol (2008) shows how symbolic boundaries are drawn between Samburu girls and schoolgirls through the (not-) wearing of beaded jewelry. Girls who do not go to school receive beaded jewelry from their mothers and wear layers of neck beads, which change over the life course. These beads symbolize fertility and convey moral messages. Once in school and used to not wearing beads, it is hard for schoolgirls to go back to wearing beads. After finishing school, Samburu girls often do not wear beaded jewelry. This distinction is reflected in the contrasting terms "schoolgirls" and "bead girls", or the equivalent "*manyatta* girls", which translates as "girls of the homestead" (Lesorogol, 2008:564–567).

Stambach describes a similar distinction between "stay-at-home mothers" and school-educated "city sisters" on Mount Kilimanjaro (Stambach, 2000:61). In both cases, the symbolic boundaries between schoolgirls and "bead girls" or "stay-at-home mothers" are not long-lasting social boundaries. Most Samburu schoolgirls agree to an arranged marriage and do the same (house) work as non-school girls (Lesorogol, 2008:572). In the 1990s, many schoolgirls on Mount Kilimanjaro could not transform their lives in the way they aspired to. But in contrast to the Samburu schoolgirls, schoolgirls on Mount Kilimanjaro changed their way of dressing, adopting the style of stay-at-home-mothers, in order to be reintegrated into and not excluded by the majority of people without secondary education (Stambach, 2000:162–163). Although the boundaries between young people who have been to school and those who have not can be temporary and changeable, discourses and practices create two social groups (Lesorogol, 2008:559). These two groups exist also in Hamar, but with slightly different practices in respect of (not-) wearing beads.

As in Lesorogol's description of a "life-cycle of beads" among Samburu girls and women, which underlines their gender roles (Lesorogol, 2008:567), a lifecycle of beads also exists among the Hamar, Banna and Bashada, and not only among girls and women but also among boys and men. The older children get, the more jewelry they wear. For girls the peak of bead jewelry is in their teenage years as *anzá* before they move to join their husband. A change in the bride's jewelry accompanies her status change from girl to woman. At the beginning of the period of seclusion, brides remove the colorful beaded jewelry that they wore as girls (Epple, 2010b:182–183). The new brides I met had new necklaces of bigger, wooden beads and two iron necklaces (*issante*), given to them by their husbands, and if they were the first wife they also had a *binyere* (fieldnotes 2014, 2015). Young Hamar men wear plenty of beaded jewelry independently of their marriage status. The older men and women get, the less jewelry they wear, and the more discreet their jewelry becomes, in contrast to the abundance of jewelry worn by young people.

In Hamar, working on beaded jewelry is a leisure activity shared by young men and girls, who sit together during breaks from their work in the fields, making jewelry and chatting. The jewelry wanders from person to person, as gifts among friends, and when its threatens to come apart, the beads are redone. I also met some Hamar women in town making bead jewelry, but not in order to wear it but to sell it to tourists (fieldnotes 2014). Since people might also wear jewelry that they got from a friend of another ethnic group, a single piece of jewelry is not always a clear ethnic identity marker. Only the dominant jewelry, its color and style, combined with clothes and hairstyle, give a practiced eye hints about ethnic belonging. What kind of jewelry people appreciate as a gift from friends and relatives, and whether they like it for its aesthetic appearance or its ethnic associations, depends very much on the social context.

> When I stayed in a Hamar house, I wore bracelets that I got as gifts from people of various ethnic groups. On many occasions, people took my hand, looked at the bracelets and asked from whom I got them. They studied the differences between the bracelets and many Hamar and Banna said that the Mursi bracelets with their carving were not good. They preferred the plain Hamar-style bracelets and pointed out that the Mursi killed the Hamar and Banna. When I was sitting in a cafe or walking along a street in Addis Ababa, men who I did not know addressed me because of my bracelets. They made jokes about them and asked laughingly if I come from the south. When I took the bracelets off outside South Omo to avoid these conversations, it led to questions on my return to Hamar, with people asking me where and why I had removed the jewelry. When I wanted to put the bracelets on again, I needed help to adjust them properly and to make their size fit well to my wrist and to each other. Badly fitting bracelets were also a cause of remarks in Hamar (fieldnotes 2014).

These examples show that the making, adjusting and wearing of jewelry is embedded in social relations. The social context determines whether, which and how much jewelry is appreciated or disapproved. Divergent perceptions of jewelry become most obvious when young people move to town or outside South Omo Zone, where a lot of ethnic jewelry can give rise to stigmatization. Instead of wearing a large quantity of beaded jewelry, schoolchildren in towns often compromise by wearing one or two bracelets and a single beaded necklace, combined with fashion jewelry bought from shops. Necklaces made of a giraffe tail, ankle rings made of black monkey skin, and beaded head bands were hardly ever worn by students, but appreciated by agro-pastoralist youth. However, most agro-pastoralist students do not give up wearing ethnic jewelry completely. I met many Hamar students wearing single bracelets or necklaces in hostels and at university, combined with "modern" clothes. While jewelry and clothes can be adapted easily to different social contexts, hairstyles sometimes need a preparation lasting several years.

4.2.3 Changing Hairstyles to Become Urban

> When I was walking across the school compound in Dimeka with some students, many of them pointed at another student saying: "Look at him, he's a student!" The guy wore long sport pants and a soccer jersey together with much bead jewelry and his hair was formed into a clay cap decorated with a feather (fieldnotes 2014).

This student was exceptional in a town school since he was breaking the school rules by wearing a clay cap. While many Hamar men made their hair into a clay cap and visited Dimeka, the school and the hostel were normally seen as a learning space for boys and men with short hair. Male students in town told me several times that according to the rules and regulations of schools, teachers are expected to ensure that students' hair is cut

short. Male teachers wore their hair short and did not like to see extravagant hair-styles in class. Nevertheless, some students in Dimeka experimented with the latest fashionable hairstyles, letting their hair grow long or having it trimmed into different styles, before getting reprimanded or punished by their teachers (fieldnotes 2014). However, these styles were different from Hamar haircuts, so that the distinction between *temara* and Hamar remained.

During my fieldwork in Hamar, both boys and girls typically shaved their hair, apart from small strands on the top of the head which are plaited. Most girls in southern Hamar, like married women throughout Hamar, Banna and Bashada, twirled their hair with the help of butter and resin-based incense (*qúŋa*) into ringlets decorated with ground red ocher. In contrast to this styling, schoolgirls in town let their hair grow long and plait it in changing patterns like most girls and women throughout Ethiopia do when they do not wear styles typical for certain ethnic groups. Older married men shave the front and back of their heads, leaving the hair in the middle which is plaited across the head; or they form the hair with clay into a cap at the back of their head. This clay cap is painted with red, purple and white clay and decorated with feathers.

Figure 21 Women doing their hair, 2014

Figure 22 Men forming hair into a clay cap, 2014

These different hairstyles are an indication of the social group which a person wants to be connected with, be it the ethnic group of the Hamar, Banna or Bashada, or the group of *temara* and urban Ethiopians. Magnus Treiber and Benifer Ghere Elias (2017) have analyzed the symbolic meaning of hairstyles in Ethiopian history and show that haircuts in town attract attention when associated with poor people or the

countryside. Urban and cosmopolitan styles have developed which make use of artificial hair, for instance (Treiber & Elisas, 2017:207). Referring to beauty salons in Addis Ababa, Delia Nicoué (2017) writes how hair styling becomes a way for rural people to access urbanity, which constitutes a first step on the way to transnational migration. Thus, a change in hairstyle often accompanies social mobility between rural and urban areas, ethnic groups and social classes, as is the case with agro-pastoralist students, who change their hairstyle to express their disconnection from their rural background and their connection to the urban world.

4.2.4 Students' Demonstration of (Dis)Connections

That secondary school students in Africa set themselves apart from their rural origin has been documented, for instance, in studies of Samburu schoolgirls in Kenya (Lesorogol, 2008), male boarding students in Zambia (Simpson, 2003), and secondary school students in Tanzania (Stambach, 2000). Students distinguish themselves from a rural environment through their physical appearance (clothes, jewelry, hairstyle), but also through their preferences for and consumption of different food, drinks, music and leisure activities, as well as in their aspirations in respect of marriage and future life paths. What these studies have in common with my study of students in Hamar district is that students relate themselves to a kind of "modernity" that is defined locally. In contrast to the studies by Stambach and Simpson carried out in Tanzania and Zambia respectively, students in southwest Ethiopia do not primarily relate to European or American culture or consumer goods. The distinctiveness of *temara* in Hamar is discussed primarily with regard to their proximity to *gal*, before they are seen as being close to *ferenji*, white foreigners. The lifestyle of students in South Omo is oriented foremost towards an urban Ethiopian highland culture, which of course is connected to a global world. In the unresolved power question on the frontier, students' clothes and appearance become a disputed battle field in Hamar.

> Haila who lived in town and normally wore jeans, t-shirts and sandals emphasized that he wears Hamar jewelry and cloth when he goes to Awasa or Arba Minch to represent the Hamar. In his room, photos showed him not only in a black graduation gown and cap, but also with painted white stripes on his face, a beaded head band, a wrap-around cloth and a tank top. Despite wearing Hamar clothes in the photo, his short hair indicates his status as a school-educated person (fieldnotes 2015).

During my fieldwork I never saw him wearing this "Hamar outfit" and it seems that while in Hamar district he chooses clothes that emphasize his status as a school-educated person, whereas for purposes of ethnic representation outside the district, he wears Hamar-style clothes.

Since 1995, Ethiopia has celebrated the "Ethiopian Nations, Nationalities and People's Day" every December to commemorate the fall of the Derg regime and the beginning of Ethnic Federalism. Many schools join in the national celebration by inviting students to wear dresses typical of their ethnic group and to perform cultural dances and songs in the school compound. Paradoxically, the analysis of students' clothes above shows that the cultural particularities celebrated on this day in schools and public places throughout Ethiopia are not encouraged in school throughout the school year. Many students in Hamar had no "cultural" clothes in town which they could change into on that day. Sometimes schoolboys asked me if one day I could take a photo of them wearing a beaded head band, and schoolgirls wanted me to take a photo of them wearing the *aizí* (goatskin skirt) which they kept in their mother's house (fieldnotes 2014, 2015). These examples show that students appreciate Hamar clothes and jewelry on certain occasions or for a photograph, but that these clothes are no longer part of their daily life in town where they mark their status as students by wearing different clothes. This situation is typical of urban Ethiopia, while it creates tensions in Hamar district which students try to bridge, as the following event shows.

> After the attack on Dimeka in May 2015, a Hamar government official collected a group of older male students to walk on foot, without "modern" clothes and weapons, into the Hamar mountains to talk to the elders. The students were very afraid to leave town and go there. Some even told me how they cried the evening before they left since they did not know what would happen to them. They cited the group leader saying: "If we die, then we die here. This is our land." The students and government employees described how they took off the trousers and t-shirts, which they normally wear, wrapped a cloth around their hips and did not use a vehicle but walked on foot into the mountains. These school-educated people explained that they wanted to demonstrate to the elders that they were "Hamar children".
>
> Only some school-educated young men did not participate in the walk. These were those who could not walk fast and escape easily if need be, and those who had a relationship with a Hamar girl that was not accepted by the elders. These young men did not dare to face their girlfriends' relatives.
>
> The walk became a three-day long journey into the mountains and ended earlier than expected, because some people warned them that they might be attacked. The group decided to return immediately to town but some of the elders gave them a date when they should return for further talks. Back in town, the students were exhausted, complained about sore legs and changed their clothes immediately (fieldnotes 2015).

The way these school-educated people changed their clothes to demonstrate that they were "Hamar children" can be described as an attempt at reconnection. They wanted to show their kin relationship with the elders by behaving like "their children" and dressing

in the style of agro-pastoralist youth. This act carries political meaning and shows how a change in clothing turns into a political act.

Only by wearing clothes recognized as "Hamar" clothes, and by approaching the elders on foot, and not on motorbikes or cars, does the group of students and school leavers dare to enter a territory that for several months has been a no-go area for "people with clothes". In the conflict, student's clothes became a symbol of contested belonging. Students wearing town clothes were occasionally beaten on their walks through the bush and were accused of having become *gal*. Conversely, the examples presented in this chapter show how schooling and town put pressure on students and punish them if their style of dress deviates from the common style of the school. These conflicts over physical appearance represent political tensions which agro-pastoralist students have to navigate through their bodies.

4.3 Adapting to Life in Town

How students experience adaptation to an urban lifestyle and how they move back and forth between the urban school and the agro-pastoralist environment will be analyzed in this chapter. By looking at the living conditions of students in town, what they eat and drink, and how they participate in social life both in the town and during visits to their homesteads, such as on the occasion of dances, I show how students negotiate connections and disconnections between the rural and the urban environment.

4.3.1 Moving Between Student Hostels and Rural Homesteads

When I asked some students to show me around the hostel compound in Dimeka, I was guided through a metal gateway into a broad empty space with almost no grass and trees. Just beyond the entrance was the *Save the Children* office and the office of Women and Children's Affairs. Behind this single-story office building stretched an open space, which sloped slightly upward. The boys' dormitories were on the left of the offices and on the top of the hill. In between was a dining room. The girls' dormitories, the kitchen, the store and the hostel administrator's office were to the right. Pit latrines were behind the dormitories and students collected water from a pump at the river, which was a few minutes' walk away.

The dormitories were equipped with metal bunk beds for around ten to twenty students per room with some beds using mosquito nets. While many girls decorated their beds with crocheted blankets, not every mattress in the boys' dormitories had sheets. In most dormitories was a table, two benches and sometimes a locker with separate shelves for students' personal belongings. Many lockers were broken, and the space was not sufficient for each student to have their own shelf. Students also kept personal belongings in and under their bed or

with friends in town houses. Some of the building's broken windows were covered with cardboard and the light bulbs in the dormitories were connected to the electric grid in 2014. Although a dining hall existed, I did not see students using it for meals. Instead, they picked up food from the cooking place and ate it in their rooms. Talking with students about the hostel, they described it as "modern" life and explained that they came to see "modern" life in school (fieldnotes 2014, 2015).

Figure 23 Student Hostel, 2015

The architecture of hostels and schools differs from Hamar houses. Schools and hostels are assemblages of rectangular buildings with corrugated iron roofs, iron windows and doors that can be closed and locked. In these rooms, people can walk upright, and the walls are made of wooden stakes and plastered with clay or built with cement bricks. Hamar houses are round buildings with grass thatched roofs. People bend and lift their legs to enter the house through a small entrance, which normally has no door but is blocked with a thorny branch to keep animals out when people leave the house.[56] Hamar houses are made of wood and might be plastered with clay and cow dung, have a cooking fire and a platform under the roof to store personal belongings. In most houses, people cannot walk upright and sit on cowhides or plastic mats on the floor. Many houses are encircled by a wooden fence, enclosing an area in which goats and sheep and sometimes people spend the night, and which girls sweep in the morning after the animals have left for grazing. Moving to a hostel is therefore a change to a new environment for students to which their bodies adapt.

On a Sunday evening I walked back to Dimeka with two hostel students whose homesteads I had visited over the weekend. As we approached Dimeka one of them said he was glad to be back in town, as he will now sleep on a mattress. He

[56] Some school-educated youths wanted to close the open houses and put wooden doors in the entrances and told their parents to lock them.

> explained that he is no longer used to sleeping on a cowhide and his bones were aching after these two days in a Hamar house (fieldnotes 2015).

At that moment, I was not sure if he was joking, but on other occasions students also told me that they are no longer used to living like the Hamar. When they go home, students are often given an extra cowhide or a plastic mat placed apart from the others. Lydall (2010:324) states that students coming to Hamar homesteads are treated like guests and like people from northern Ethiopia. I also observed how students visiting their homes sat apart from the others and were served special food and drinks. During a visit to his home, an older male student refused to drink water scooped from holes in the river sand but wanted to be served only pump water by his mothers and sisters, while all his younger and older siblings drank water from the river (fieldnotes 2014). This special treatment of students is sometimes also a way of helping them to readjust to rural life.

> In Jinka hostel, many schoolboys told me how they observe that their bodies constantly adjust to the different climate in the hills and the lowlands. For instance, some hostel students observe that the hair on their arms grows in Jinka and falls out in the hot lowland areas. Students from a neighboring group of Hamar said that after spending some months in Jinka, they get sick when they visit their families, since they are no longer used to drinking water from the river. Particularly during the rainy season, their stomachs get sick for some time until they readapt and can drink the river water again without problems (fieldnotes 2014).

The way hostel students in Jinka talk about their visits back home shows how far away they feel from an agro-pastoralist life when they are at school. The longer they stay in town, the more their bodies get used to the urban environment and the more painful it is to readapt to an agro-pastoralist lifestyle with a different climate and different water. This painful re-habituation happens not only when students travel from hostels in the highlands to agro-pastoralist lowland areas, but also when schoolchildren move from agro-pastoralist areas to hostels in the highlands. In my interviews with people from South Omo who have been to school since the 1970s, I heard how going to school was a painful experience in the beginning. The schools were often located in a cooler climate and schoolchildren had to adapt not only to the colder temperature, but also to new food.

4.3.2 Struggles with Food

The food provided in hostels for agro-pastoralist students is oriented towards food common in the Ethiopian highlands, so that the schools' implicit agenda of Amharization also plays out in student meals. It is not only the unfamiliar food that students have to get used to, but also its quality and its availability. When I visited hostels, many conversations with students were about food, which is a daily concern for them, since the hostels do not always provide meals, and, when they do, the quality cannot compete with that of home-

made food. The variety of food in student hostels was very limited. For breakfast, a piece of bread and tea was offered, and lunch and dinner consisted mostly of *injera* (sourdough-risen flatbread) with spicy and non-spicy *shiro* (chickpea sauce). Sometimes macaroni with oil and onions and sometimes thick porridge were provided instead of *injera*. Meat was only served at Christmas and Easter, when a cow was slaughtered in the hostel (fieldnotes 2014, 2015). While some students said they got used to eating *injera* and spicy food over time, others complained that it gave them problems. Many students described the hostel food as "burning their stomachs".

> When I went with a student who suffered from repeated stomach ache to see a doctor, he was diagnosed with chronic gastritis. The doctor ordered antacid and recommended not to eat sour food, adding by the way that gastritis is common among hostel students (fieldnotes 2015).

For most students it was impossible to afford food outside the hostel so that they often suffered sickness and hunger. What students and town dwellers who grew up in agro-pastoralist homesteads missed most was milk, since it is very expensive in town. A government worker told me that he had to send his wife and two children back to live in his father's homestead, since they were complaining they were hungry and his salary was not enough to buy them milk in town (fieldnotes 2015). For students without a salary, it is even harder to afford milk.

While images of starving people are often associated with rural areas and drought-affected regions, I was surprised to find that most agro-pastoralist students in hostels, colleges and universities suffered from hunger. They not only missed their familiar food made of maize and sorghum, milk products and meat, but also good quality food. The huge quantities cooked in hostels are quite different from the food cooked at home or in restaurants. The amount of food available in agro-pastoralist households can also be affected by a poor harvest and unpredictable droughts, but its nutritious value and its careful preparation, as well as the variety of dishes made with maize, sorghum, beans, pumpkin varieties, wild plants and goat and cow products, make it tasty and nourishing,

Figure 24 Girl cooking sorghum crumble in a homestead, 2014

and this food does not give young people the problems they are struggling with in hostels.[57]

Figure 25 Teacher baking injera *at a rural school, 2014*

People who went to school some decades ago often said to me that students today should be happy that they have food provided by the government and do not need to cook for themselves, as earlier generations of students had to (fieldnotes 2013). However, nowadays students have the feeling that they need better and more regular food to prevent recurrent sickness and hunger and to be able to concentrate on their studies (fieldnotes 2014, 2015). Students try to earn pocket money to cook food for themselves or to buy additional food. Relatives occasionally bring fresh maize, milk and green leaves, such as moringa and cabbage, to students in Dimeka, but students in Jinka and in towns further away are too remote for such gifts. Some students became active and went to the education offices to demand better and regular food. While they found that some hostel workers tried to help them, and sometimes even paid for food out of their own pockets, with other workers they wondered where the money budgeted for student's food went (fieldnotes 2015).

Being hungry and sick was a main reason for not going to class or leaving school. Teachers in Dimeka observed that hostel students often do not come to class when they do not get breakfast in the hostel (fieldnotes 2014). After national exams, a hostel student told me that not only were the exams hard, but also no food was provided in the hostel for four days during the examination week. Hunger made him only want to sleep but he also strived to pass his exams (fieldnotes 2015). There were several reasons given for the lack of food in the hostels, such as that the budget was not yet allocated, firewood for cooking was not available or that the cooks had not been given their salary and therefore refused to work. In one hostel I visited before the school year began, I met many students waiting for school to start. However, the budget for food had not yet been sent to the hostel, so that the students went hungry for several days and thought of leaving the hostel before teaching had started (fieldnotes 2013).

[57] Strecker et al. (1994) recorded the preparation of a variety of meals in Hamar in the film "Sweet Sorghum".

These examples show the paradoxical conditions of compulsory schooling. While the government pressures parents to send all of their children to school, which often means living in hostels, the students suffer hunger and sickness due to the lack of food and its quality in the hostels. Thus, the goal of schooling and its promise of diminishing poverty is not fulfilled in student hostels; rather, these institutions are known for making students struggle. I asked many students if they thought of leaving, but they said they are told in school that their lives will become better in the future and they are advised to learn hard in school. Government workers explained to me that they got the same advice when they were in school and hoped for future rewards (fieldnotes 2014, 2015).

If students stay in school, they have to become used to eating *injera* and spicy food over time, since it is the main food cooked in towns. However, a small distinction in people's socialization remains observable when one considers whose fingers are able to fold the *injera* smoothly and elegantly around the stew, and whose fingers are used to modeling cooked sorghum. The process of adapting to food in the town and in the rural homesteads goes in both directions, when students move between the town and the countryside.

> Two Hamar boys who traveled to Addis Ababa told me independently from each other how they did not like the taste of milk in Addis, which comes packed in plastic. They described it as having no taste and almost tasting like water. Conversely, a Hamar boy who had stayed for some years in Addis Ababa no longer liked the taste of milk when he came back to Hamar. His brothers teased him for refusing milk in Hamar and being disgusted if there were flies in it. However, the boy slowly learned to like milk in Hamar again (fieldnotes 2014).

These changes in taste show how young people who move between town and countryside are pressured to get used to food in hostels and homesteads. Beyond personal preferences and the availability of food, students face dilemmas when they want to follow religious food and drink restrictions, which will be discussed in the following section.

4.3.3 Distinctions in Drinking

Another field where I learned how boundaries between students and Hamar are created is the consumption of *parsí*, home-made sorghum beer.

> A visit to the market in town normally includes a stopover at a *parsí oono*, where one can buy a tin of home-made *parsí* (sorghum beer) for two Birr and where people sit, drink and chat together. One afternoon I was invited by two siblings whose homestead I had recently visited to join them in the open yard of a town house selling *parsí*. When some students passed by
>
> the place and saw me sitting among people from the homestead, they laughed and refused to join us, saying that they do not drink here (fieldnotes 2015).

I wondered about this reaction since I had been drinking *parsí* with the same students in their homesteads, where they did not refuse the drink, but appreciated it. The place where it was consumed in town seemed inappropriate to them. Drinking *parsí* is a very social event, since it is offered to guests in rural homesteads, served at work parties and ceremonies, and people normally share a calabash, drinking and handing it to the next person.[58] By excluding themselves from the social meeting around *parsí* in town, students created a boundary between themselves and rural people visiting town. I observed a similar kind of boundary-making on another market day.

> When a young man who lived in town met his mother at the market, he invited her for *parsí* and sat next to her in the place where it was sold, but did not participate in the shared drink and chatting. After some time, he stood up, saying: 'I gave her money for *parsí*, now I can go'. It appeared to be a duty for him rather than an enjoyable social act, since he also advised me, when I met people who I had visited in their homestead, to just give them money for *parsí*, but not to join them or drink.
>
> When I later went to a homestead with him, he did not drink what everyone else drank, but got a separate calabash of *parsí*, which was made with pure honey and not mixed with sorghum. He drunk it almost invisibly in another house, separated from the other guests (fieldnotes 2013).

In this case again, it was not the light alcoholic drink per se, but the kind of drink and the place where it was consumed, and among whom, that students set themselves apart from rural people. A common reason why students stop drinking *parsí* is conversion to Protestantism, which forbids drinking alcohol. However, most Hamar consider *parsí* not only as a drink, but also as a food, since it contains fermented sorghum and is sometimes the only food served all day long; even children nip from it. The refusal of Protestant students to drink *parsí* in their rural homes was often described as an offence against sociality and an insult to the host who had spent days preparing it. While some students gave up drinking alcohol completely, most only stopped drinking *parsí* in town, but drunk it happily in rural homesteads.

Religious food prohibitions also cause dilemmas for Hamar who convert to Orthodox Christianity. They are allowed to drink alcohol but are forbidden to eat animal products on Wednesdays and Fridays and during fasting seasons. The meat they eat needs to be slaughtered in an "orthodox" way, by cutting the carotid artery of the animal horizontally, and not in the way the Hamar slaughter, by sticking the knife into the artery (fieldnotes 2015). Maria Niebling describes the dilemmas of a student in Hamar who stopped drinking milk after he converted to Christianity. When he lived with his relatives during school holidays, they worried about him, since he refused to drink milk which

[58] On different ways of drinking in highland and lowland Ethiopia, see Abbink (1997).

constitutes an important part of the diet. His father asked him to reconsider his faith and Bazo finally stopped fasting (Niebling, 2010:10).

Living according to Protestant or Christian Orthodox eating rules proves to be very difficult in Hamar homesteads, since on some days, in the cattle camps or during initiation, *parsí*, milk, blood or meat is the only food available. Its rejection not only leaves students hungry or thirsty, but also constitutes a refusal to accept the care provided by hosts, mothers and fathers. While I observed how some students tried to be really strict and did not drink the alcohol offered during initiation and marriage celebrations, others consumed it happily. Students who refused the food which the Hamar appreciated were often accused of having become *gal*.

Ironically, many teachers in rural schools appreciate *parsí*. They sometimes ask their students to bring them *parsí*, or they visit homesteads with freshly made *parsí* (fieldnotes 2014, 2015). Government workers with a higher salary often prefer bottled beer, which is served in restaurants where everyone has their own bottle, and sits on plastic chairs around tables. The beer or soda is often consumed together with plates of *injera* and various stews, while *parsí* is drunk from shared calabashes while sitting on cowhides or small wooden chairs (fieldnotes 2014). The consumption of food and drink and the localities where these are consumed mark social distinction. For instance, school-educated people on Mount Kilimanjaro prefer drinking Coca-Cola and not home-made banana beer at weddings. The first is associated with "modernity" and the second with "tradition". While some officially refuse "traditional" drinks, they sometimes sneak in to secretly sip from it (Stambach, 2000:69–72). What these examples of (in)appropriate drinking and eating practices show is that they entail not only questions of consumption but also social closeness, distance and distinction.

4.3.4 (Dis)Connections at Dances

Children and adolescents who spend most of their time in town are not only geographically and physically separated from their relatives, but also socially. When visiting homesteads, I observed how students sometimes needed time to warm up again with people who are not in school. Young people living in hostels make friends with each other, with classmates, and with town dwellers, and spend more time with these friends than with people in rural homesteads. This interplay of students' closeness and distance with the countryside can be studied through social and leisure activities like dances. Among agro-pastoralist youth, dances are very popular and social events for which they meet on dancing grounds at night and at initiation ceremonies.

> During my stays in homesteads dances took place every second night, if it did not rain. The children and adolescents in the homestead started between nine and eleven o'clock in the evening to walk in groups through the bush to the dance ground. The dances had several levels and while younger children were present

> during the first levels, they later got chased away to go home and sleep. Girls, older boys and young men remained for the last levels of dancing, where men and women got to dance closer with each other.
>
> Not knowing the dances and songs, I first stood at the side of the dancing ground to watch. I was often accompanied by a town student who joined in the dances sometimes but did not participate continuously like the other young men.
>
> When dancing together, boys and girls need to know their kin relation with the other dancers, since it is considered forbidden *(qáis)* to dance for instance with a brother, sister or engaged partner. Trying to figure out the rights and wrongs of choosing dance partners, a student laughingly told me that once he went to the dances in Hamar clothes without his pants and t-shirt. A girl did not recognize him and picked him for dancing. Later his friend told him that he had danced with the girl he was going to marry. The two had already performed the *waqáti qaɗa* ritual after he leaped across the cattle and got initiated, so that they should not have danced together, since it is taboo for a couple to talk and interact with each other at that phase in life. However, his Hamar clothes were misleading and she did not recognize him, nor did he recognize her, since he does not spend much time around the homestead (fieldnotes 2014).

To adequately participate in the dances and in many situations of social interaction in Hamar, it helps to know people personally, or the ways in which one relates to them. However, if students make a mistake this can be forgiven, for they live in town and say themselves that they do not know the details of Hamar customs. Hutchinson describes how Nuer girls forgive students for not being able to dance as well as non-students (Hutchinson, 1996:292). This lack of training is illustrated in the following example.

> During the night of a leaping across the cattle ceremony, a senior student who has lived in town for several years participated in the dancing. The next day he complained about his sore muscles, although he had only danced and jumped to a few songs, and did not dance for hours like most of the other dancers. He explained his physical pain by saying that he was no longer used to dancing like that, although he emphasized that he can do it. After a night in the homestead, where he slept on a thin plastic mat on the ground, he longed to get back to town, to sleep on a mattress and to eat *injera* and meat. He called a motorbike to pick him up on the way back to town and thought of asking the driver to bring along some *injera* (fieldnotes 2013).

Although most students I met could not afford a motorbike, and would probably not reject Hamar food in favor of *injera*, these examples show how spending many years in town makes student's bodies and their attitudes to life in the countryside change, so that they become distinct from their agro-pastoralist peers. Students often emphasized that there is no dancing in town, but a movie theater showing Amharic and American movies and

soccer (fieldnotes 2014). They learn to move back and forth between the town and rural homesteads, but they sometimes have difficulties in fitting into the respective styles of social life and envision a future different from the rural environment in which they grew up.

4.4 Dissociation from Rural Life

Distinctions between students and their rural environment have been described in other studies on boarding schools and students in Africa. Simpson summarizes students' identity at the Catholic mission school in Zambia as follows:

> The desire for education is a desire to become Other in all kinds of ways (Simpson, 2003:191–192).

The distinctive identity of students is not only an effect of schooling, but also an incentive to go to school. Stambach (2000:108–110) describes schooling as "a factor in imagining new possibilities" and acquiring "symbolic wealth" and cultural capital. Thus, the desire for schooling and the longing for change are bound together. This has the paradoxical effect that schooling is expected to change children and society, but when it does so, it is accused of bringing transformations in a way that is not intended or wanted.

4.4.1 Students' Longing for a Different Life

Complaints that schools bring new ideas from "outside" and alienate children from their rural environment are often met by suggestions to localize schools and to embed schools more into the local environment of the students. However, the paradox lies in the fact that schools aim to educate children for a life that is different from life in the countryside, and schools are attractive because they constitute places offering access to knowledge and a lifestyle which are not provided at home. For instance, students at St Antony's in Zambia describe their longing for difference by calling their school "Half-London":

> If only 'Half-London' could be transformed into 'Whole' London or, even better, New York! The students of St Antony's longed to be different, to live differently, to escape from what they perceived as the self-inflicted failure and the moral morass of Zambia to what they imagined to be the truly 'civilized' West.
>
> In their refashioning of selves, however, students revealed that they were willingly caught within at least part of the contested discourse. In their ambivalence towards their Africanness, they exposed the distance they desired to place between themselves and their rural origins. Their blackness was indeed often read by them as a curse. They put their trust in the 'civilising mission' to provide an avenue of escape. They longed to be transformed into 'jacked-up' intellectuals, modern Christian gentlemen who could succeed in urban life (Simpson, 2003:189).

Not only are students in Zambia and in southern Ethiopia inspired by a "civilizing mission" and a desire to become different from their rural origins, through schooling and town life, they also start to see their parentage in a different light.

> They became, I [Simpson] would argue, strangers to themselves. St Antony's thus manufactured distance through the creation of difference and distinction.
>
> Several students told me how their experience of mission secondary life had deeply affected the way they saw the lives of their parents, brothers and sisters who had failed to get into school. Indeed, some explained that a visit home became a painful experience, when they saw, as if for the first time, the misery of the lives around them.
>
> The message of the school was that their life would be quite different, if they applied themselves. They could climb the ladder out of this misery (Simpson, 2003:83).

The promise of school is that student's lives will become different from their past and present, and from other young people who are not in school. This desire for social mobility is found not only in the boarding school Simpson describes but also in southwest Ethiopia. Many students staying in hostels have mixed feelings about their chances for social mobility. While they endure struggles in school, they are enthusiastic about the new environment which they get to know in town. These experiences leave traces not only in the students' appearance, bodies, tastes and lifestyles, but also in the way they imagine their future.

4.4.2 Divergent Future Aspirations

Scholars have analyzed students' visions of the future in African countries (Adick, 2003; Spöhr, 2010) and their hopes and aspirations at the beginning of the 21st century, when many school-educated young people struggle to fulfill their hopes of getting the jobs they aspire to (Honwana, 2012; Jeffrey et al., 2008; Mains, 2011; Martin, Ungruhe, & Häberlein, 2016; Stambach & Hall, 2017; Steuer et al., 2017). Comparing these studies, we see how schooling shapes young people's ideas of a "successful" future in similar ways across different countries and times (Häberlein & Maurus, 2020). In the following section, I look beyond students' future aspirations by comparing them with how young people who learn outside school or leave school after a couple of years envision their future. This comparison reveals the dilemmas faced by young people aspiring to a future that is hardly compatible with the possibilities and needs of rural livelihoods.

In an article on continuity and change in young people's visions of the future in South Omo, I have demonstrated how schooling changes the time concepts that underlie young people's visions of the future (Maurus, 2016). I found that young people who are educated in agro-pastoralist households, or who go to school only for a couple of years, envision a future life similar to the contemporary agro-pastoralist way of life, with the

same work and gender roles taught them by their parents. In contrast to this vision, hostel students aspire to a future different from agro-pastoralism. The imagined future life paths of young people point in different directions; while imaginations of the future among those who have not been to school stress continuity, students look for change and a transformation of their lives and of agro-pastoralism. Below, I will look at the distinctions in young people's visions of the future as they correlate to different learning contexts and lifestyles.

When I talked about the future with young people who had not been to school, or only for a couple of years, and who live in rural homesteads, I observed that they envision future activities, gender, and age roles that resemble those of their older relatives. In a homestead that was three hours walk from the next town, I asked a girl, aged around 18, what she wanted to do later on, and she explained:

> Now I am *anzá* [an unmarried girl]. Later I will marry and I will become *gol* [a married woman]. I will bear children. I will grind flour, work in the fields, and collect firewood and water. I will cook and care for the house and when guests come, I will serve them coffee (fieldnotes 2014).

She describes the ideal life path of a Hamar woman who passes through several life-stages with different work, responsibilities and rights (cf. chapter 5). Even if not asked, unmarried girls talked to me about their upcoming status changes from girls *(anzá)* to married women (*gol)*. Describing their future as having children who suck at their breasts, they describe their future as mothers and their roles in managing a house where guests come for visits.

In conversations with boys, many emphasized that they will leap (*ɓula*) and marry (*keema*), meaning that they will become initiated through a ritual in which they leap across the backs of a row of cattle and thereafter get married and become a *dɔnza*, an elder (cf. chapter 5). Schoolboys who lived in agro-pastoralist homesteads while going to a nearby rural school also pictured their future as elders. Asked about his future, a schoolboy described the daily activities of male elders:

> In the morning while drinking coffee a *dɔnza* [elder] calls *barjó* [good fortune to bless the country, animals and people]. Then he works in the fields, he eats and has a rest, and he works again in the fields. In the evening he looks at the cattle and goats in their enclosures (fieldnotes 2014).

This continuity of agro-pastoralist social life contrasts with older schoolchildren's visions of the future. When I asked Haile, aged around twelve, who was the youngest son in his homestead and took care of the goats and sheep, if he wanted to go to school later on, he nodded. Talking about the future, he distinguished between the future of a child who has been to school and a child who has not.

> If I go to school, I will do *gal* work. If I don't go to school, I will herd cattle and goats (fieldnotes 2014).

While he sees his future in herding cattle and goats if he does not go to school, he links the future of a schoolboy with the world of *gal*, which in his eyes is not related to cattle and goats but to different jobs. Studies of images of the future among secondary students in Africa also describe the way they distance themselves from rural livelihoods (Adick, 2003; Lesorogol, 2008; Spöhr, 2010; Stambach, 2000). In Hamar, work outside the agro-pastoralist economy is associated with the work of *gal*, which points, for instance, to jobs in the public or private service sector. In contrast to this, herding cattle and goats and working in the fields is attributed to a "Hamar" future. Learning in schools and living in town makes children aspire to a future life with white-collar jobs and not manual, subsistence-oriented agro-pastoralist work.

In a questionnaire applied to hostel students in Jinka, not one of the 50 students who participated and who were mostly in grades 11 and 12 mentioned that he/she wanted to herd cattle and goats or to become senior men and women in the future. Instead, they expressed the wish to go to university and to become leaders and administrators who support their country and their community. One student wrote: "After school I lead my country, I support my family and I manage myself." Another stated: "I want to be health professional to manage people and whole of Ethiopian citizens and to manage them in a good way." (Questionnaire 2014). These visions relate to the country of Ethiopia. The students emphasize the role of good citizens and their responsibility and importance to contribute to development and change, which follows the discourse of civics education and shows that schooling correlates with nation building.

However, in personal conversations with students, they mostly said that they wanted to finish school, go to university, maybe go abroad, and become a doctor, pilot or engineer. As a *temari* and a "learned" person, they consider themselves as knowing more than pastoralists and therefore cannot go "back" to pastoralist life. Students come to see pastoral life as "backward", while for non-students herding animals and ploughing the fields is a vital future vision. Consequently, the distinction between rural young people and students is expressed not only in daily life, appearance and lifestyle, but also in future aspirations, where the future of students and the future of agro-pastoralists are depicted as two different life paths.

The linearity of progress and change which students envision in their life is what Mains identifies as an effect of mass schooling in Ethiopia since the mid-twentieth century (Mains, 2011:68). However, the reality agro-pastoralist students encounter during their schooling is marked by daily struggles. Students often told me that their motivation to stay in school was the hope of future rewards and a better life. This desire for a bright future is often in contrast to what most students encounter after school.

In urban areas, many young men with secondary education line up for jobs for which competition is very high. Due to shrinking employment options in the public sector since the early 1990s and an increasing number of people with secondary education, the neoliberal labor market does not provide enough jobs that are appropriate for young people's educational background (Mains, 2011:33–34). A phenomenon called "educated unemployment" challenges politics, not only in Ethiopia but also in India (Jeffrey, 2009) and other countries where the unemployment rate among young people with secondary education is high (Honwana, 2019). Despite these widely known problems, education promises the possibility of a bright future, while at the same time students struggle with unemployment (Stambach, 2017).

A dilemma for agro-pastoralist households and young people is deciding which investment in education – schooling or education in agro-pastoralist households – will secures a better life in the present and in the future. Ideally, schooling can support and improve agricultural activities, and in many countries the curriculum has an agricultural component (Stambach, 2000:41–44). However, studies of education among nomads observe that nomadic children often have to decide which kind of knowledge they want to acquire: the knowledge taught by teachers in schools, or the skills and knowledge learned "on the job" in the household economy (Dyer, 2010:64). These two kinds of learning equip young people with distinctive skills, shape their bodies in different ways, and lead them into different future lives, which are often incompatible.

Decisions for and against schooling are also debated among farmers. Alber (2012) describes how parents in northern Benin decide to send some of their children to school and to educate some at home, since the children educated at home are more likely to stay with their parents and to care for them in old age. Schoolchildren more likely migrate to towns and will no longer be able to help in daily life and work at home. These educational decisions demonstrate that the international requirement to send all children to school creates dilemmas for individuals and households trying to secure their present and future livelihood (Häberlein & Maurus, 2020). "[I]mages of the future (may) affect what happens in the future; and, still more important, […] images of the future (can) constrain the present at least as much as do images of the past" (Wallman, 1992:2). Thus, decisions about young people's education anticipate the future of children and society, which in Hamar district is shaped on the one hand by the visions of a developmental state, and on the other by securing an agro-pastoralist livelihood.

4.5 Living Like Hamar or *Gal*?

Although the distinct lifestyle of students from Hamar can be temporary and symbolic, since many young people leave school and return to their agro-pastoralist homesteads, an increasing number of young people stay in school. Over the years, they adapt an urban lifestyle which distinguishes their appearance, bodies and tastes from their agro-

pastoralist kin. This new social group of school-educated Hamar is more closely related to the Ethiopian state for which they want to work. The result is disconnections and conflicts between young people who have been to school and their kin who have not attended school, and demands adaptation from students moving between different social fields in the countryside and in town.

In the case of South Africa, the process of urbanization has been analyzed in terms of relations between "townsmen" and "tribesmen", as well as "School Xhosa" and "Red Xhosa" (Mayer, 1971 [1961]). The "School Xhosa" are a product of missions and schools and are distinguished by their appearance and their values from "Red Xhosa", who smear butter and red ocher on their clothes and bodies, are more conservative, and do not attend church. The two groups are described as antithetical. While "Red Xhosa" organize themselves around principles of seniority and a peasant life with cattle, in which poor and rich people have the same lifestyle, the "School Xhosa" aim at social and cultural climbing, speak about "getting on" and "becoming more 'civilized'", for which "the educational ladder is a potent symbol" (Mayer, 1971 [1961]:207). The "School Xhosa" are given the nickname "bats" or "which-side-which-side", since they are neither like birds nor like animals but from two worlds (Mayer, 1971 [1961]:315). Depending on where they are, the "School Xhosa" downplay the other side, which makes older "Red Xhosa" mistrust them as insincere. Over time, Mayer observed how the countryside became more unattractive in colonial South Africa and the power of the "Red Xhosa" diminished when more money was needed to make a living in the countryside (Mayer, 1971 [1961]:312–315). Similar processes of urbanization and the creation of distinctive social groups related to schooling can be observed in Hamar, but the group of students in Hamar district is still smaller than the number of young people who do not go to school or who leave school.

During the conflict in Hamar, the life of school-educated people became a point of violent dispute, with the result that they tried to bridge the gap between them and their rural kin symbolically by taking off their "modern" clothes and appealing to the elders in Hamar clothing and by traveling on foot. Thus, the dispute over how young people live, what they learn, and how they relate to Hamar and the Ethiopian state, is fought out through their bodies. The crucial question here is whether *temara* are still considered as Hamar and act like Hamar, or whether they have become *gal* and turned against Hamar. Besides their appearance, students' distinction and belonging is violently contested when they reach the age of initiation and marriage, where long-lasting social bonds are created and issues of social reproduction are debated. The following chapter delves into the dilemmas of students' social (dis)connections by looking at disputes over their initiation, marriage and corresponding rights.

5 “Harmful” Culture and the “Right” to Education – How Initiation, Marriage and Schooling Create Gendered Dilemmas

Schooling intersects with life-course events, such as marriage and initiation, which touch the heart of social organization, and which became a sensitive topic that fueled the violent conflict in Hamar in 2014/15.

5.1 Conflicts Over Hostel Students

> One afternoon I was in an interview with a hostel staff member in Dimeka, when another female worker entered the office. She told us that the parents and brothers of a schoolgirl had come into the compound and demanded their daughter back. She asked, what she should do. My interlocutor and two older schoolboys, who assisted me in translating, advised the woman to take the parents to the police station. The police would tell the parents that their daughter had the right to go to school and that she would therefore stay in the hostel. The hostel staff and students worried that if they did not involve the police in this case, the relatives might come at night and take their daughter secretly out of the hostel. The police would make the parents sign a paper to say that they agreed to leave their daughter in school. If the parents did not follow this rule, they might be put into prison (fieldnotes 2014).

This was not an isolated case in Hamar district, or in South Omo. There were frequent attempts by parents and brothers to get their daughters and sisters back from the hostel, with the police, teachers, government officials and students trying to keep the girls in school.

The police also intervene when young people decide to leave school and get married. In Maale, brides, their parents and husbands have been fined or imprisoned because girls leave school to marry, move to their husband’s house and spend some months in bride seclusion to acquire “traditional” knowledge (Thubauville, 2012; Thubauville, 2013). Felix Girke recalls how during his fieldwork in the early 2000s Kara parents went with guns to the hostel in Dimeka and demanded that their children be given back to them (personal conversation 2015). In Aari, teachers told me that if students in their class drop out to marry, the teacher is made responsible for not watching and advising the girl and her parents properly. Consequently, the teacher loses some points in his performance record, which can hinder his promotion and further qualification possibilities (Interview 2015).

In these conflicts over marriage and school attendance, different interests clash: while compulsory schooling implemented by government officials and supported by the police tries to keep children in school, parents and youths often prefer marriage over schooling. In these battles, schooling and certain forms of marriage are not seen as compatible, but as exclusive opposites that are carried out in such a way that girls have to decide between schooling and marriage. In this chapter, I take a closer look at initiation and marriage practices in Hamar in order to understand how these conflict with the implementation of compulsory schooling. Thus, this chapter reveals how young people's decisions for schooling and against an arranged marriage are built upon different notions of "right" life courses, which are gendered and foresee or reject certain life stage rituals, such as initiation and marriage.

Notions of ideal male and female life courses exist in Hamar, which are addressed in national policies that try to end "harmful cultural practices", such as certain types of marriage. Taking national legislation and gender differences in life courses into account, this chapter analyzes conflicts over bride theft and schooling, as well as male dilemmas in connection with initiation and marriage. Diverse understandings of universal and individual rights, based on gendered ideas in respect of social relations and life courses create dilemmas, especially in connection with schooling and marriage. Not only the promotion of compulsory schooling and individual rights, but also institutions such as student hostels provide young people with opportunities to leave their rural homesteads, stay in town and go to school – even without their parent's consent. The student hostel constitutes a crucial space for analyzing gendered and generational conflicts over schooling and marriage, since it enables young people to evade an arranged marriage and to negotiate various life-course possibilities.

5.1.1 Children Running Away or Being Given to the Hostel

In the hostel in Dimeka, 241 students registered in the school year 2007 E.C. (2014/15 G.C.), out of which 69 were girls (Dimeka hostel 2015). Almost all of these girls left their rural homesteads shortly before they were expected to relocate to the home of their arranged husband. Thus, instead of moving to their assigned husband's homestead, many girls went to the hostel. A common question for hostel students was whether they had "run away" (*gobidi*) or "were given by their father" (*imbá imbidi*) to the school. The answers I heard were not always straightforward. In some conversations, girls emphasized that their father gave them to the school, while in other situations they told me that they decided themselves to go to school and ran away to enter the hostel. When I asked some hostel girls why they had run away, they often asked back: "Isn't school good? Do you not like schooling?" When I said that I liked school, just as much as I liked Hamar, they often replied that they had given up (*garidi*) with Hamar. They further explained that they had stopped doing Hamar work, such as grinding flour and working in the fields (fieldnotes 2014). These conversations illustrate that not only parents and

government officials decided that girls should attend school, but that girls also decided themselves – even against the will of their parents and prospective husbands – to go to school and live in the hostel.

Figure 26 Hostel girls, photographed at their request 2015

The girls' self-description of giving up Hamar customs, ways of marriage and manual labor reveals ideas of a life course for schoolgirls that differs from Hamar girls. Government officials often told me that many hostel girls avoided going back to their former homestead, since most of their relatives were not happy about their decision to go to school, and the girls feared that they would be forced to marry and not be able to return to school. Therefore, the hostel administrators allowed girls to stay in the hostel during the summer holidays (July to September) when boys had to leave the hostel. Most boys went back to their parents' homestead or stayed with relatives or friends in town, looking for jobs to earn some money, for instance by working in road construction (fieldnotes 2015). While a girl's marriage in Hamar mostly implies an end to her schooling, a boy's marriage often does not influence his schooling career. However, as I will discuss below, the marriage and initiation of schoolboys is also disputed in Hamar.

Girls leaving their homesteads and relocating to town provokes more violent conflicts than in the case of boys, who also leave their homesteads to go and live in hostels in town. Some hostel boys told me that they were fed up with herding and wanted to learn

in school. Others said reading and writing were fascinating and they wanted to learn. Some hostel students had lost one or both parents, and reported that they were not treated well in their relative's homestead and were heavily beaten, so that they had run away to enter the hostel (fieldnotes 2013, 2014, 2015).

Thus, hostels provide young people with access to an alternative life beyond agro-pastoralism but not independently from it. Hostels are not only places where children from dispersed settlements stay to go to school, and from where they return to their homesteads after school: many hostel students express the desire to stay in town, get an office job and not return to herding cattle and working in the fields (cf. chapter 4). However, in practice many students return to their homesteads before finishing school. Furthermore, I noticed that hostels also serve as an orphanage for children who have lost one or both parents, independently of whether they have an agro-pastoralist background or not.[59]

Their different social backgrounds and the extent of their relatives' support allow young people to make different decisions about leaving or staying in hostels. While many boys leave hostels and return to their homesteads due to sickness and a lack of food, those young people who have conflicts with relatives, or few relatives with whom they want to live, often stay in schools and hostels due to a lack of alternatives and despite the struggles this involves. Young people register in hostels mostly in their early to mid-teenage years, which coincides with the common age of marriage for girls. While boys tend to be around ten when they enter Dimeka hostel, girls are often around 15 when they arrive. Even though both boys and girls leave school again, more boys manage to finish school and proceed to college or university. In 2014, I was told of only two girls from Hamar who went to college and worked for the government (fieldnotes 2014). The reason for the exceptionally low number of female students and graduates in Hamar is not only their lower school enrollment or school performance, but also the phenomenon that many girls leave school when they get married.

5.1.2 Missing Girls at Home and in School

Many political debates in Hamar addressed the issue of girls' school enrollment, and government officials put pressure on parents to send more daughters to school. While some girls attended classes in rural schools, girls from Hamar hardly ever went to schools in town. Moving to a hostel in town implies that young people live without parents or guardians, since hostels employ administrative managers but no social caretakers and teachers do not stay in the hostel. Coming from a country in which parents, teachers and

[59] The definition of which child counts as an orphan varies. Often the lack of one legitimate parent turns the child into an orphan. Different notions of legitimate childhood and parenthood will be discussed in section 5.3. When the government dissolved an orphanage in Jinka, some of the children were placed in hostels (fieldnotes 2014).

institutions for young people have supervisory responsibility, I was surprised that the lack of supervision of minors was not addressed in conversations about low enrollment in an area where living in a hostel is almost the only way to continue schooling up to grade eight or twelve. Parents whose children stayed in town did not seem to worry about their sons as much as about their daughters. It is common for boys in Hamar to live away from their homesteads when they herd animals in distant cattle camps, where young men and older boys look after the younger boys. For girls, the extent of parental supervision is different.

In the film "The Women who Smile" (Lydall & Head, 1990), two young men tell how they try to always have an eye on their sisters. They describe their responsibility towards their sisters as "herding" them like goats, to ensure that they will not be "stolen" and get married without their parents' consent. If a girl is stolen, her father will punish her brothers for not watching over her properly. These different norms in respect of supervising children according to their gender, particularly in the case of marriageable girls, influence decisions concerning young people's access to schooling.

When I asked school-educated people why many parents refuse to send their daughters to school, they cite parents as saying: "We miss them" (fieldnotes 2014). This reveals not only their emotional feelings for their daughters and worries about their well-being in town, which is often depicted as an immoral place, but also the social and economic entanglements of girl's marriage and schooling and the lack of returns for their natal kin when girls go to school. Disputes over marriage and schooling reflect processes of power negotiation between men and women, young people, parents, siblings, in-laws and the state, in which all actors pursue different interests. To disentangle gendered implications of marriage and schooling in Hamar, I will briefly describe below ideals in respect of male and female life courses in Hamar to provide the background against which compulsory schooling and its corresponding life course, as well as life-course rituals, such as marriage and initiation, are negotiated between various stakeholders in the arena of schooling.

5.2 Life Courses and Vital Conjunctures in Hamar

Hamar men and women ideally pass through several stages in the course of their lives, each of which gives them a particular status, appropriate work, terms of address, rights and taboos. The transitions between life stages are marked by rituals, which Arnold van Gennep ([1908] 1972) describes as *rites de passage*. Although a description of these life stages risks being very schematic, and Jennifer Johnson-Hanks (2016) suggests replacing it by an analysis of "vital conjunctures", I agree with Erdmute Alber (2016) that keeping the idea of "life stages" is useful. She argues

> that one *could* preserve the concept of the life-stages if one does not take them as concrete, inevitable and, thereby, mechanical steps in the lives of individuals.

> Rather, one should take them firstly as normative ideas about a 'right' and ordered life-course specific to any society. I [Alber] assume that any society has shared ideas about how a 'normal' life-course should be, and the life-stages are part of this assumption about an ordered life. Of course, social change has an impact not only on the 'real' life trajectories of people but also on the ideas about the life-course and the life-stages. Johnson-Hanks, herself presents us a good example for these changes: she argues that it is expected from educated young women to start their mothering careers later on.
>
> These shared assumptions about how life should be are indicators for life-stages, as normative ideas, not as lived practice. [Emphasis in Original] (Alber, 2016:20)

The conflicts over student's changing marriage practices in Hamar district reflect several different normative ideas of what constitutes a "proper" life course; these produce a multiplicity of norms which are distinct but related to each other.

Studying the violent conflict over schooling and marriage for Hamar girls offers an entry point for an analysis of the multiplicities of life-course ideals. In these conflicts, relations between citizens and the state, men and women, old and young, as well as people who have been to school and those who have not are reexamined. Theories concerning life courses and vital conjunctures are not exclusive concepts, since both combine ideals and practices in times of transformations:

> A vital conjuncture is the zone of possibility that emerges around specific periods of potential transformation in a life or lives. It is a temporary configuration of possible change, a duration of uncertainty and potential. Vital conjunctures are particularly critical moments when more than usual is in play, and the futures at stake are significant (Johnson-Hanks, 2016:7).

Decisions about schooling, initiation and marriage involve multiple ways of making the future, which link past, present and future. Thus, such decisions constitute a vital conjuncture, in which not only an individual's future is at stake but which has wider social and economic implications.

5.2.1 The Significance of Recognizing Life Stages

The significance of life stages became clear to me during my fieldwork because I had to learn how to recognize the life stage of a person in order to be able to address them properly. Instead of calling someone by his or her personal name or by using a form of impersonal greeting like "hi", "hello", or "good afternoon", it is common among Hamar speakers to address a person according to one's personal kinship relation with him or her, for instance, mother (*indó*), father (*imbó*), brother-in-law (*sodó*), older brother (*ishímó*) or older sister (*imishó*). There are also forms of address for friends, such as *misó* (hunting friend) or *bel* (bond-friend), which is a friendship named after the exchange of a gift. When someone wanted to get the attention of an unrelated or little known person, they

often used the person's life stage as a form of address by calling an unmarried girl "*anzanó"*, a bride "*utanó"*, an elder "*dɔnzanó"*, and a young man "*ɓórlenó"* (cf. Lydall, 1999). Thus, I had to learn to recognize the life stage of people by their physical appearance, to avoid a faux pas in addressing them.

> One afternoon, a woman I was cooking with shouted out loud when I called her "*utanó"* (bride, young married woman). She pointed at her hair and said: "Is this short hair to call me *uta*? I have got three children!" (fieldnotes 2014).

This strong reaction to my mistake in wrongly addressing a woman who had given birth to three children as a "bride" (*utanó)* taught me to carefully watch people to identify their life stage and to address them respectfully according to their social status.

Classification into life stages was also important for my social status as a researcher. Some of the first questions from Hamar who did not know me were if I was *anzá* or *uta*, if I was married (*kemɓidi*) and lived in my father's house (*imbá oonî*) or if I had moved to my husband's house (*gesho ono*). My clothes and hairstyle gave them no clues about my social status; people who wanted to attract my attention mostly shouted "*anzáno*" and I responded with the female response "*yo*". The different life stages not only determine forms of address, but also go along with rights and taboos. As an *anzá* I was "marriageable" and allowed to participate in nightly dances with the youth, which was not acceptable for an *uta* (bride) or *gol* (older married woman). Married girls and women are also prohibited from touching the udder of a cow, since it would make the cow *míngi* (impure); for fear of harm to the community, *míngi* animals and people are often killed. Since my role as a foreigner was not strictly fixed to a certain life stage and gender role, I went to the dances with girls, but did not dare to milk a cow.[60] These examples from my fieldwork demonstrate how Hamar speakers tried to find out my social status, and thus revealed their understanding of a female life course, its life stages and the corresponding "correct" behavior for me, and between myself and my interlocutor.

5.2.2 The Creation of *Éedi* and *Míngi* Children

Respected life courses in Hamar include the performance of rituals, which intend to guarantee the well-being of people, animals and the environment. This way of life is described as "*barjó goitî*" – the way of good fortune and well-being.[61] When a couple marries in "the Hamar way" and when a woman performs rituals with an older woman before getting pregnant, these acts are said to prepare the way for the creation of "proper" Hamar children. If a child is conceived before the mother has performed the ritual

[60] On the shifting roles and status of female researchers in Hamar district, see also Lydall (1998) and Epple (2013).

[61] For an analysis of the meaning of *barjó*, see Strecker (1988a).

described as "*gúngolo ka*" ("pouring with the calabash ladle"), her child can be accused of being *míngi*, which translates as "ritually impure" or "abnormal", even if its parents are married.

Míngi children are often distinguished from *éedi* (human person) and feared for bringing harm to the community, such as a lack of rain. To protect the community, *míngi* children are often aborted, killed after birth, or expelled from the community by giving them to town dwellers or to an orphanage. Signs of *míngi* children are seen, for instance, in the growth of the first teeth in the upper jaw (Brüderlin, 2012:105–106; Epple, 2010b:183; Lydall & Strecker, 1979b:146–147).[62] Accusing parents of having a *míngi* child can also have social reasons. People with low social standing are more at risk of being subjected to such accusations than more powerful people, since children declared to be *míngi* can serve as scapegoats for misfortune and social tensions, be it due to changes in the environment, sickness or lack of rain (Brüderlin, 2012:105).

Among the students and local government workers are some who were accused of being *míngi* when they were children and who were raised by non-Hamar in town, where they went to school. Thus, the lives of children born in agro-pastoralist homesteads can take different paths which are shaped by ideas of "proper" children, a prosperous environment and a healthy community. To understand the conflicts over young people's life courses in Hamar, I will briefly outline how idealized female and male life courses and their central life-stage rituals, such as initiation and marriage, were often depicted to me. This description sets the background for analyzing how marriage and initiation create social and economic relations between generations that often conflict with a life course created and envisioned through schooling.

5.2.3 Marriage in Female Life Courses

Although a description of Hamar life courses and rituals risks appearing static, and generalizations may hide the diversity of lived practices, some central elements and rituals in male and female life courses that accompany the status change brought about by marriage were repeatedly explained to me. I describe below the ideal female and male life courses and kinds of marriage, as they were presented to me and not as lived practices, which of course vary from case to case.

A Hamar girl (*naanó*) becomes an *anzá* in her teenage years, when her body shows more signs of femininity and when she reaches the age of marriage but still lives in her parent's homestead.[63] Most parents regard the early teenage years as the right time to arrange a girl's marriage, ideally with a man from Hamar, Banna or Bashada who belongs

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[62] An NGO working against the infanticide of *míngi* children in Kara and Hamar is Omo Child.

[63] For Baldambe's description of women's life, see Lydall and Strecker (1979b:128–156).

to a clan (*gertámo)* that is considered marriageable (*t'angáza*) with the girl's clan and often from another moiety.[64] The parents of the man may send a go-between *(motala)* to the parents of a girl to ask for her as a wife for their son.

Besides this kind of arranged marriage, which most parents favor, some men use strategies to "steal" (*diib*) girls in order to marry them (Epple, 2010b:172–179; Lydall & Strecker, 1979a:128–156). Lovers may also elope together; the girl is hidden until their relatives settle the marriage dispute and agree on the bridewealth to be paid to the girl's relatives. The binding ritual which declares a couple as married is called *waqáti qaɗa* (literally: butter rubbing).

> One afternoon in the Dimeka hostel, a schoolgirl told me and her friends how she experienced this ritual. One day, her father called her to come to him and told her to sit down in front of a *maz* (a newly initiated man). Sitting face to face with the *maz*, she fed him with a cooked sorghum dumpling (*múna*). An elder rubbed the couple's arms with cow dung, euphemistically called *waqáti* (literally: butter). After that, she was married (*kemɓidi*) (fieldnotes 2015).

After this "butter rubbing" ritual, the girl is considered to have been married (*kemɓidi*) and the boy has married (*keemidi*).[65] The difference in the active and passive verbs for marriage points at gender differences. "Males marry wives, females become married wives" (Lydall, without year:13). The male role is expressed by an active and the female by a passive verb form. Although it is more common for boys and men to take an active part in marriage, such as "stealing" girls from their parents, and that girls ideally do not refuse an arranged marriage, it is often the parents who are the driving agents of their daughter's marriage and the first marriage of their sons. Lydall (2005b) describes for instance the power of elder women to control their sons and daughters-in-law through their authority to perform rituals during bride seclusion and for the conception of "pure" children. Parents normally arrange and set the date for their children's initiation and marriage rituals.

With the *waqáti qaɗa* ritual, the relatives of the girl, her parents, uncles and brothers, receive installments of the bridewealth payment, such as goats. The presentation of these gifts goes along with the promise that the girl will move to her husband's homestead when she is older. This commitment reaches beyond the lives of the two individuals, since the girl is expected to move to her husband's homestead even if he dies. In this case, she will get children with his younger brother or a lover.[66] The children of

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[64] On Hamar clans and moieties, see Lydall and Strecker (1979b:231); on Banna, see Masuda (2009a51); on Bashada, see Epple (2010b:62–66).

[65] On the ritual in Bashada, see Epple (2010b:177–179).

[66] Hutchinson (1996:61–62) describes a similar marriage custom among the Nuer with "ghost wives". This is based on the "principle of 'communal fertility' through shared cattle rights" and continues a lineage.

these levirate marriages normally bear the deceased man's name to continue his lineage. However, some students I met had started to use the name of their genitor as their second name.[67] Thus, the *waqáti qaɗa* ritual is depicted as binding for the couple even beyond their death. However, some of these marriages do not last, since girls may be "stolen" by another man, or they may leave the homestead and go to school.

Often a period of several years lies between the *waqáti qaɗa* ritual and the moment when husband and wife move together, since girls continue to live in their father's house after the *waqáti qaɗa* ritual. Men who expect their young wives to grow old enough to move to them told me that they wait until "her breasts have fallen", which they take as an embodied sign of maturity (fieldnotes 2014). However, it is often not the men who decide when their wives move to their homestead, but the parents. Some male students who were already married said they had given up asking their parents when their wife would relocate to their homestead, since they had repeatedly been put off by their parents (fieldnotes 2015). Thus, although young men claim to be active in the marriage process, they also depend on the decisions of their parents. Until the parents allow the couple to move together, they should avoid each other and not talk to or interact with each other. During my fieldwork, girls were mostly estimated to be between sixteen and eighteen when a farewell celebration was organized in their father's homestead to accompany their move to their husband's home.[68]

The farewell celebration is the initial phase of the status change from girl to bride and later to adult woman. This process can be divided into the three phases of a *rite de passage:* separation, transition and incorporation (van Gennep, [1908] 1972). The girl's separation is prepared during a farewell night, in which many guests come together in her father's homestead to spend the night singing together for the bride. She leaves the next morning through the gate of her father's homestead, where elders line up to bless her while she leaves. Particularly when she passes through the gate and during the farewell night, many participants cry (Epple, 2010b:179–184; Lydall & Head, 1990). When I attended the farewell of a bride moving to her husband, I was asked beforehand whether I would cry, and afterwards I was asked whether the participants and I cried, so that it seems to be appropriate behavior for such a farewell.

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[67] Names in Hamar, as in wider Ethiopia, consist of an individual first name followed by the father's first name and the father's father's first name.

[68] A husband is normally older than his wife. If she is his first wife, he is mostly between his mid twenties and early thirties at the time of moving together. If she is his second or third wife, the husband might be much older than her.

The songs sung during that night included not only advice to the girl on how to be a good wife, but also lamenting over the loss suffered by her parents, who will miss her when they no longer see her, for instance sweeping the compound in the morning (fieldnotes 2015). Since girls normally live in their father's homestead only for a relatively short time, and spend the rest of their lives in their husband's homestead, where they are also buried, girls are often called "guests" (*shoshi*) in their father's homestead (Lydall, 1998:72).

Figure 27 Friends accompanying new bride to her husband's homestead the morning after her farewell celebration, 2015

Girlfriends, sisters and older brothers accompany the bride to her husband's homestead, where parents normally do not visit her for the first couple of months. During a phase of seclusion in her husband's homestead lasting two to three months, a girl is transformed into an *uta*. This status change becomes physically visible. The bride's hair is cut short and her mother-in-law daily rubs her body with butter and red ocher. The bride stops wearing the skirts of an *anzá* and gets leather clothes and new jewelry (cf. chapter 4). The women in the husband's homestead care for her, since in this transition phase an *uta* is not supposed to work in the field, nor fetch water or leave the homestead.[69] Brides in Hamar often gain weight, which prepares them for their first pregnancy and

[69] For a description of marriage and bridal time, see also Epple (2010b:172–184) and the film from Lydall and Head (1991).

childbirth.[70] During the time of seclusion, the husband is not allowed to interact with his wife and if he tries to get a glimpse of her or approaches her, his mother chases him away. The social separation of a bride during seclusion is also obvious in her sleeping place, since she sleeps in the loft under the roof of the house (*shaalá*) and not on the floor among other people.

One of the important rituals during seclusion is described as *gúngolo ka* ("pouring with the calabash ladle"). With the start of the bride's menstruation, her mother-in-law performs a ritual for the bride using a calabash, sand and water, after which she "gives" the bride to her son (fieldnotes 2015). From then on, the couple is allowed to sleep together and the bride may conceive a "ritually pure" child. If a girl becomes pregnant before she moves to her husband and before the ritual is performed, her child is called "*anzá-naas*", a "girl's child", which is considered *míngi* and often aborted since the *gúngolo* ritual gives the child its own *barjó* and makes it human *(éedi)* (Brüderlin, 2012:45–48; Masuda, 2000:27).

The pre- and postnatal rituals for children, which include initiation and marriage rituals, as well as name-giving rituals for children, have been described as a form of control that seniors exercise over juniors and their reproduction (Brüderlin, 2012; Lydall, 2005b; Lydall, 2006; Strecker, 1988b:205–212). A newly married couple normally shares the house with the husband's mother, father and siblings. For some years, young women might be addressed as "*uta*" and are recognized as such until their hair has grown long. A woman who has three or more children often gets a house for herself and is no longer called a bride (*uta)* but an older married woman (*gol*). An old woman, who can only perform small tasks is referred to as "*geccó*" (old person).

While most transitions in a female life course are fluid, such as from *naanó* to *anzá*, *gol* and *geccó,* the status change from being a girl living in her father's homestead to that of a bride in seclusion and then a fully-fledged woman, is marked by a change of physical appearance, such as the style of clothing, hair, jewelry and the application of ocher. With a new goatskin skirt shaped to indicate the status of a married woman, a girl's new social status as a married woman becomes visible (cf. chapter 4). These pronounced physical markers and codes of behavior shape the identity of Hamar, Banna and Bashada and distinguish them from other ethnic groups.[71] It is the marriage of Hamar, Bashada and Banna girls with a man from a lineage considered marriageable that continues patrilineages through the birth of children and the performance of rituals carried out by elders. When girls choose to go to school, with an implicit refusal of the established ways

[70] Thubauville (2010:131) describes how brides in Maale are also encouraged to eat well and gain weight, but in contrast to Hamar Maale brides may become pregnant during seclusion.

[71] Peller (2002) compares Hamar and Arbore status change rituals and concludes that while the Arbore practice female circumcision to mark a status change, the Hamar use pronounced physical markers and do not circumcise women.

of marriage and especially of marriage with Hamar, Banna and Bashada men, this act threatens male succession, parental authority and the exchange of bridewealth. After this description of marriage processes in female life courses, I will now proceed to outline central elements of male life courses in Hamar.

5.2.4 Initiation and Marriage in Male Life Courses

A male person in Hamar starts as a *naasí* (child or boy), who grows into an older boy and young man, called *ɓórle*, before becoming a *dɔnza* (elder).[72] While girls may be asked if they have been married (*kemɓidi*), older boys and young men are asked if they have leaped (*bulidi*) over the cattle, meaning if they are initiated. Thus, marriage is not such a crucial experience for boys as it is for girls. Boys in Hamar are circumcised around the age of thirteen (Epple, 2010b:100–104; Lydall, 1993:28–31), but I have not heard of this as an important life event and interlocutors never mentioned it by themselves. Instead, the male initiation ceremony described as "leaping across the cattle" or "bull-jumping ceremony" (*whonga ɓula*) figures in many conversations in daily life and I will briefly describe here the main elements of this initiation process.

In the existing literature, the age given for when boys in Hamar and Bashada get initiated varies. Parents in Hamar may delay their son's initiation until he is in his thirties, in order to keep him as a herder and prevent him from starting his own herd through marriage (Lydall, 2005b:161–162; Strecker, 1988b:212). In Bashada, boys are initiated at a younger age, mostly around the age of twenty, but some are also initiated when they are ten or twelve (Epple, 2010b:172–173). In my own study, I found many young men in Hamar district who had been initiated around the age of twenty.

The initiation of a young men stretches over a period of several months, which intersects with school attendance or employment duties. The central element of the ritual, which gives it its name "leaping across the cattle" (*whonga ɓula)*, is when initiated men line up and hold cattle in a row, while the initiate jumps onto the back of the first animal and runs back and forth on the backs of the cattle at least four times. This ritual was performed for Adolf Jensen in 1951 (Jensen, 1959c:337), and nowadays attracts many (inter)national tourists.[73] The initiation ceremony is generally organized individually for each young man in Hamar, Banna and Bashada.[74]

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[72] For Baldambe's description of "A Man's Life", see Lydall and Strecker (1979b:69–127).

[73] Strecker ([1975/76] 1998) made an ethnographic film about "The leap across the cattle".

[74] In Kara, the initiation of young men is organized collectively for several men of an age-set (fieldnotes 2014).

The initiation process for men can also be analyzed in the three phases which van Gennep ([1908] 1972) identifies for a *rite de passage*. In the first phase, the young man becomes an *ukuli* (literally: donkey), who takes off his jewelry, wears a cloth around his hips and a goatskin around his upper body, and carries a ritual wooden stick called *bóoko*. As an *ukuli*, the initiate invites guests to the ceremony at his father's homestead, where relatives and neighbors gather for two to three days to attend his leap across the cattle. After the leap, the initiate enters the phase of being a *maz* (newly initiated man) whose hair is cut and his body rubbed with butter and charcoal. He receives a new name that is chosen after the skin color of the first animal over which he leaped.

Figure 28 Maza *blessing the cattle before the initiate leaps across them, 2013*

For a couple of days or months, he lives among a group of *maza* (plural of *maz*) who adhere to certain restrictions. *Maza* are supposed to eat only animal products, such as meat, blood, milk and honey, and enjoy certain privileges; for instance they demand food from the homesteads they visit. They also help to initiate fellow young men. For an initiate, this liminal phase ends with the *waqáti qaɗa* ritual described above (chapter 5.2.1), where a *maz* eats his first mouthful of food made of grain from the hands of his prospective wife. After this marriage ritual, the young man formally attains the status of *dɔnza*, a married man and elder. Young men often emphasize that after leaping across the cattle and marrying a wife, they have the right to a proper funeral and grave (*duki*) when

they die, and will not be just buried under the dung of the homestead. Through the leap, men also acquire inheritance rights for their children.

Although an initiated man is officially a *dɔnza* (elder), he will be treated as a *ɓórle* (young man) until he grows older, lives with one or more wives, and has fathered several children. In contrast to female status changes, the married status of men is not indicated physically in their appearance. In addition, the prohibition to attend nightly dances only applies to women who have moved to their husbands, and not to married men, who may marry several wives. Older men may marry young women, so that men normally do not live without a wife, but many households are headed by widows (Lydall, 2005b:154–155). When a man is very old, he is called by the same name as an old woman, "*geccó*". While older men depend on the help of their wives in old age, older women mostly depend on their sons and their daughters-in-law, since their own daughters leave the homestead upon marriage and seldom return to live in their mother's homestead. In these household arrangements, girls are important as wives and daughters-in-law.

These brief descriptions of some general elements of male and female life courses show that in a polygamous, patrilineal and gerontocratic society, gender is a decisive factor in the context of decisions concerning marriage and schooling. These notions of "ideal" Hamar life courses clash with the understandings that underlie (inter)national women's and children's rights conventions and which are claimed to have universal validity. The latter emphasize individual decisions in marriage, compulsory schooling for everyone, and marriage only above the age of 18. These international laws, which are supported by national policies in Ethiopia, are aimed at ending certain marriage customs and gender relations which are listed as "harmful traditional practices" (HTP). The outlawing of cultural practices, such as certain ways of marriage, will be discussed in the following section in order to understand the political context of marriage and school disputes in Hamar.

5.3 The Politics of Culture Regarding Marriage and Schooling

Marriages create complex interdependencies between individuals, household members and in-laws which are violently debated in Hamar when girls decide in favor of schooling and against an arranged marriage, or start living with a man from another ethnic group in town. In these disputes, collective and individual interests collide. Thus, the study of how young people decide to get married and/or go to school helps to throw light on the "politics of culture" that shape young people's lives (Stephens, 1995b:20). Sharon Stephens (1995b:23) states that "children stand at crossroads of divergent cultural projects." She argues that we should not depoliticize childhood and schooling, but look at the creation of children's cultural identity, which goes beyond the universal children's right to a cultural identity, and takes place in multicultural and globally connected

contexts. In the case of Hamar, all actors involved in the politics of culture want to support the well-being of young people, but with often contradictory effects.

5.3.1 "Harmful Traditional Practices"

The politics of culture in which young people in Hamar district live and face dilemmas is discussed with regard to so-called "harmful traditional" or "harmful cultural practices". Habtamu Wondimu (2002:830–832) lists 92 "harmful traditional practices" in Ethiopia. Lydall (2010:330) mentioned that the number of practices considered harmful changes over time, and counted four practices in Hamar district in 2007: infanticide, abortion, whipping and female genital cutting. During my fieldwork in 2015, I found a list of 39 "harmful traditional practices" in the office for women's and children's affairs in Hamar district. The list was made for the years 2000-2003 E.C. (2007-2010 G.C.) and many practices were described very briefly, which allowed my various interlocutors to interpret them differently. While many of the practices labeled as "harmful" in Hamar district are also common in other parts of Ethiopia, and in other countries, such as female circumcision, early marriage, arranged marriage, and unpunctuality, some practices are specific to the locality and require local knowledge to be understood, such as the meaning of "*míngi*" and the "*beating of women during jumping*".

Shauna LaTosky (2015:170) criticizes the way lists of "harmful cultural practices" are created, since they do not include the voices of ethnic minority groups in deciding what is "harmful". In the case of Mun (Mursi) women, LaTosky shows how the way the government and some NGOs punish girls and women who decide to pierce their lips and wear lip-plates does not respect the human right to decide about one's body. Instead it constitutes an external stigmatization of cultural practices and cultural definitions of "harm", while in other countries people who pierce body parts like lips, ears, tongues, etc. remain unpunished (LaTosky, 2015:188–189).

I could not find out who created the list of "harmful" practices in Hamar district and who decided which practices should be ended, but I guess it is a combination of (inter)national policies and local government decisions, since there are traces of international policies and their notions of childhood and gender in the list, and knowledge of local practices is needed to create the list. The government's prohibition of certain cultural practices that affect marriage, the role of girls, women and young people and society in general, fueled the conflict in Hamar district. Below, I analyze the list of "Harmful Traditional Practices" in Hamar district.

Harmful Traditional Practices in Hamar district

Decided for the years 2000 - 2003 E.C. [2007 – 2010 G.C.]
Source: Office of Women's and Children's Affairs (2015)
Literal translation from Amharic to English with explanations of discussions added in brackets

1. *Míngi* [Killing of "impure" children/cows/…]
2. Girls' circumcision
   [practiced for instance among the Arbore, not among the Hamar, Banna, Bashada]
3. Beating of women during jumping
   [girls and women who are relatives of the newly initiated man (*maz*) encourage him to whip them on their backs before he leaps across the cattle]
4. Killing one child of twins
   [reportedly not well known among the Hamar and no longer practiced]
5. Abortion
6. Arranged funeral/ *borqotó* [wooden stool] marriage
   [marriage of a girl with a husband who has already passed away, or marriage with the younger sister of a wife who has passed away or cannot bear children]
7. Marriage before girl is mature
   [explained as marriage before 18]
8. Girls being a marriage candidate before right age level
   [early engagement]
9. Not consensual marriage
   [forced marriage]
10. Educating girls is seen as inappropriate
    [short translation: not sending girls to school]
11. Disregarding girls and women
12. Long mourning practices and waste of means
13. Low property rights of women
14. Discrimination of craftsmen (like potters, blacksmiths)
15. Killing of boy if born in *gatta* clan
    [reportedly the first born son of members of the *gatta* clan is no longer killed]
16. Abduction of women for marriage
17. Inherited marriage
    [succession marriage; if husband dies, wife lives with husband's younger brother; levirate marriage]
18. Bridewealth gifts before marriage
19. Exclusion of wife from her husband's heritage
20. Considering a girl/woman who cut one nipple a *míngi* and killing her
21. Wife and husband not eating together
22. Not trusting in scientific treatment, but preferring to go to a traditional healer
23. Sex by force [rape]
24. Scratching skin with sharp tool [scarification]
25. Removal of lower front teeth, regarding it as beautiful
26. Conflicts among different tribes

27. Saving wild animals
    [translated in Hamar district as: killing wild animals]
28. Not allowing young people and women to speak their mind in public places
29. Not using wealth rightly
    [explained as extravagancy of cattle and no proper management]
30. Seeing honeycombs and chicken as inappropriate and not using them as a resource although seeing it as wealth
    [the Arbore avoidance of making honey and using chicken]
31. Polygamy
32. In Kara: cutting ears and not being allowed to eat for 72 hours and paying a fine of 20 goats [after boy's initiation]
33. Burial of body after breaking it
    [Breaking a body's bones to form an embryo position for the funeral]
34. Wife and husband not eating together
35. Shooting bullets at funerals
36. Discrimination of *gomba* [clan in Kara]
37. Not allowing Hamar women to fetch water from the river after newly giving birth
38. Not coming to work on time
39. Not naming children after their father
    [naming children after deceased husband, not after genitor; see also 6. and 17.]

Among these practices listed as "harmful" are customs that different people in Hamar district pursue to varying degrees, or have given up. Nevertheless, the list produces a certain image of culture in Hamar district. A young man from Addis Ababa, who helped me with the translation, was shocked to read about these practices, which he described as common in the "uncivilized" south, while my translators in Hamar relativized many of them by attributing them only to certain groups, or to the past, or they explained them to me in words that sounded less harmful and more like common sense. Interlocutors in Hamar district with a background in law added that some of these practices, such as early marriage and circumcision, are also common in other parts of Ethiopia, for instance in Amhara and Oromia regions. Thus, conversations about, and explanations of, the listed practices reveal different perspectives on culture.

Many practices included in the list explicitly concern girls and women, such as the point that the education of girls is not considered appropriate, or that girls' engagement and marriage happens at a young age. Eight points out of the thirty-nine relate to marriage practices, and four to rituals around marriage. Although most of the practices concern girls and women, some affect men, like the discrimination of craftsmen, and funeral practices. Interestingly, other potentially harmful practices, such as domestic violence, beating of children, women, and young men, or male circumcision are not listed here among "cultural/traditional practices". The question thus remains as to who has the authority to judge what is "harmful", what is "cultural", and what "traditional" and what should be abandoned or maintained in the name of "well-being". In many conversations,

I heard government officials, school-educated Hamar and non-Hamar talking about "bad culture" and the need to overcome "tradition" and "backwardness", in order to become "modern", while during the conflict many Hamar fought for their "culture" and "customs".

5.3.2 Paradoxical Effects of Campaigns to End "Harmful Cultural Practices"

Studies have shown that the banning by law of "harmful cultural practices", such as marriage below 18 years of age and female circumcision, does not make these practices disappear; rather, the ban leads to a transformation of the practices, with often paradoxical outcomes for the well-being of those whom the legislation is supposed to protect, since the ban can reinforce what it claims to diminish (Mekonnen & Aspen, 2010).

In Arbore, the ban on female circumcision led girls to protest against the elders and highlanders, who, in the girls' view, took these decisions without consulting them. Girls protested that they wanted to become circumcised, since they saw it as part of their "culture", and threatened to circumcise themselves if elder women refused to do it (Gabbert, 2014:196–199).[75] Paradoxical effects of campaigns to end circumcision are also documented for Oromia region, where some parents refused to circumcise their daughters, with the result that some girls secretly organized their own circumcision independently of their parents, only informing them after the arrangements were already made. Some girls in Oromia claimed in front of the court that they circumcised themselves so that the accused circumciser had to be set free (Boyden, Pankhurst, & Tafere, 2013:37–38). Thus, neither government policies, nor parents who want to protect girls from circumcision, can completely control young people's decisions regarding their own lives.

Boyden, Pankhurst and Tafere (2013), in their study of female child marriage and female circumcision at five urban and rural sites in different regions of Ethiopia (excluding agro-pastoralist areas), come to the conclusion that

> official efforts to stop these practices have failed to understand and address their underlying rationale.
>
> Substantial effort and resources have been expended in telling people about their 'harmfulness', and a significant proportion of the people whom we interviewed seem to largely agree with the official position. However, practical change falls short of expectations, and prohibition seems to have led to new 'risks' for girls which are related to attempts to circumvent the ban.

[75] In 2014, an attempt to stop female circumcision failed again in Arbore when a group of girls who had not been circumcised before marriage felt harassed by a woman from the highlands who wanted to examine their private parts coercively, so that the girls protested and wanted to become circumcised (personal communication from Echi Gabbert, 2014).

> In particular, if the legal age of marriage of 18 is enforced, and older girls do not have access to contraception and abortion, they risk becoming pregnant and having children out of wedlock, which often results in their being rejected by their families and partners and having to bring up a child single-handedly in adverse conditions (Boyden et al., 2013:41–42).

The paradoxical effects of policies that postpone the age of marriage in order to protect girls, but create new risks for girls and their children, are also negotiated in Hamar district. Here, the pressure to send girls to school and not allow them to marry before 18 has the paradoxical effect that many girls get married at an earlier age than before, in order to evade schooling.

Tariku, a Hamar government employee, describes conflicts over girls' schooling in Hamar and shows the agency of girls who use schooling to avoid marriage:

> Some girls escape from their family and just go to school. When parents give a girl forcibly to a husband, the girl says: 'We don't want to marry. We want to go to school.' And then she goes to Dimeka and appeals to *woreda* chief administrator or to police commander and says: 'I want to go to school'.
>
> This is the awareness. Mostly, the decision comes from an external body. This is the elders, not the girls. Always, the decision comes from the parents. The decisions do not come from the students. That's why you decide yourself. That's the right! The democratic right. You have to decide yourself. But the other persons decide about you: 'Our girls are not going to school'. But they are responsible.
>
> The Ethiopian law says, the parents should be ... each and every, EACH and EVERY boy and girl go to school. The parents are responsible. This is also not [only] the Ethiopian constitution, this is a human right. It's a human right convention, one of the convention: The girls should go to school. [...] That's why the girls escape from the family and go to school.
>
> And then what challenge is now coming? The new happening [is that] at youngest age, the parents give the girls to husband, at youngest age. Because they do not want to challenge with the government officials, local *kebele* administrators, and chief administrator. They want to [be] out of the decision. She has married already, so they can discuss it with her husband. These types of things are now coming. This is new (Interview 2014).

Tariku's observation of current marriage trends in Hamar reveals a change in decision making. While he states that decisions concerning marriage are mostly made by the parents, he observes that young people are becoming more active in influencing these decisions. Some girls vote with their feet against their parent's marriage arrangement and go to town to appeal to government officials about their wish to go to school. According to Tariku, these individual decisions in favor of schooling are a way of claiming democratic and human rights. He also regards it as the parents' responsibility to send all

of their children to school. However, many parents see things differently and feel responsible for arranging the marriage of their children. Parents do not like to argue with government officials about their daughters' schooling. Consequently, some parents marry their daughters off at an early age in order to transmit responsibility for schooling and quarrels with government employees to their husbands. This form of parenting stands in contrast to international and national ideas about the right to decide oneself about marriage, and making schooling compulsory, independently of gender and marriage status. The trend to marry girls at an earlier age is a paradoxical effect of policies aimed at postponing the age of marriage and expanding girl's schooling.

The coexistence of multiple life course ideals for young men and women gives girls in Hamar the option to use schooling and government hostels as an alternative to arranged marriage, and as a way to evade a husband chosen by the parents, or who has "stolen" them into marriage. This trend of girls leaving their homesteads and moving to student hostels in town, instead of relocating to a husband's homestead, provokes conflicts between girls and parents, brothers and sisters, in-laws and government employees. The following section looks closer into these disputes over girls' marriage and gender relations in Hamar.

5.4 "Stealing Girls for School" – Conflicts Over Girls' Schooling and Marriage

> In a conversation about possible solutions for the violent conflict in Hamar, Tadesse, a government official from Hamar, suggested that school-educated men from Hamar should marry Hamar schoolgirls and pay bridewealth to their relatives. He expected that this would enable girls to go to school and please the relatives of the run-away girls (fieldnotes 2015).

The logic behind this idea of compensating the relatives of schoolgirls for letting the girls go to school rests on the premise that a girl's marriage brings her relatives gifts, such as goats and honey. Tadesse's suggestion also shows that when girls decide to go to school, and refuse to marry a Hamar, Banna or Bashada man chosen by their parents, this has consequences, not only for the girls' lives, but also for their relatives. Tadesse's idea made me look closer at the role of bridewealth in the dispute over girls' schooling in Hamar.

5.4.1 Conflicts over Schoolgirls' Bridewealth

Marriage and the exchange of bridewealth creates a web of intergenerational social and economic relations that connects various individuals, so that marriage in Hamar is not a single event involving two individuals, but a long process. Brothers often demand bridewealth from their sisters' husbands in order to be able to pay bridewealth to the relatives of their wives, and parents use animals they receive from their sons-in-law for

the marriage of their sons. In "The Meaning of Marriage Payments", John Comaroff comments:

> In the course of exchanging prestations and rights in women, these units create relationships of affinity and debt with each other, affirming their own internal solidarity and mutual interests in the process (Comaroff, 198015).

This "internal solidarity" with mutual interests is contested when young people from Hamar decide to marry in their own way. The marriage process normally takes several years and goes along with the exchange of bridewealth and the creation of affinity and debt between Hamar, Banna and Bashada individuals and households, who thus affirm their solidarity and create boundaries between themselves and *gal*. These ties are renegotiated when students decide to change their way of marriage and move in with people from outside the common marriage cluster.

When girls go to school, this often means not only a personal and labor loss for the household, but also an economic setback. Baldambe describes a girl's marriage as a "raid" for the father's household:

> When a girl is born, when a man fathers a girl, his girl does not eat honey from other men's beehives, his girl does not go and fight in raids, his girl remains all the time in the homestead. She goes to war when she has grown up and some man takes her. It is the marriage of a girl which is her raid. In this way she brings in goats, cattle, honey, coffee, sorghum. 'May she come down like the leopard skin,' it is said. That means: may she bring abundance like the many spots of a leopard skin. That will be when her man takes her (Lydall & Strecker, 1979b:128).

This narrative compares a girl's marriage with a raid which brings the homestead wealth and abundance. Similarly, Lydall cites an interview with the young man Sago who compares girls with "a bank" because they bring their homesteads and their brothers cattle and goats (Lydall, 2005b:161). Bridewealth in Hamar is not paid all at once but in an unlimited number of installments, whose amount is negotiated each time a man approaches, for instance, his sister's husband, asking for goats, or honey, or whatever he needs at the time. This debt can be passed on to the next generation (Lydall, 2005b:160).[76]

> Some students who were on their way to getting married told me, one cannot say no when an in-law asks for something, since he will remind you that you have married his sister. One can only hope that in-laws will ask according to one's capacity and personal wealth or try to delay the payment (fieldnotes 2015).

[76] Lydall and Strecker (1979b:6) cite Baldambe who explained how in the past, when people were impoverished, the *bitta* advised people to give 20 head of cattle for marriage. During my research I was told that no fixed amount of bridewealth payment exists and it was mostly not cattle, but goats, honey, t-shirts or a gun that was exchanged. Money was not generally accepted as bridewealth in the area around Dimeka, which was different in Banna and Maale (fieldnotes 2014, 2015).

Bridewealth creates long-lasting bonds of exchange, solidarity and social security between different lineages and groups of people. In the complex network of social relations and exchange which crystallizes around marriage (Lévi-Strauss, [1949] 1969), a girl's decision to refuse an arranged marriage and go to school creates social tensions in various relationships, since this affects not only her own life. Schooling and marriage disputes reveal the mutual dependencies between brothers and sisters, parents and children, and in-laws, as well as school-educated and non-school-educated people and the state. All these actors have different interests in girls, whether their schooling or a certain form of marriage, and the disputes over girls' schooling reveal people's different ideas of what is their right.

In Hamar district, girls' schooling may improve school statistics and please government employees, but it affronts many parents, brothers, husbands and in-laws who have an interest in marriage and the exchange of bridewealth. It is worth noting here that girls' schooling and marriage are played off against each other and are constructed as exclusive opposites. For young men who have not been to school, or only for a few years, schoolgirls are not seen as attractive marriage candidates, nor as suitable daughters-in-law for their agro-pastoralist relatives, for they will be expected to work in the homestead. Conversely, schoolgirls are attractive marriage partners for schoolboys, who often told me that they wish to marry an "educated" girl and regard a marriage between "educated" partners as fitting (fieldnotes 2014, 2015).[77]

5.4.2 Retaliations for Stealing Schoolgirls

When girls decide to go to school, this is supported by government workers and the police, while many parents, brothers and husband of schoolgirls try to get them back to marry within the Hamar cluster. Thus, the state is increasingly becoming an actor in the creation of intimate social relations in Hamar. The government, represented by its employees and policemen, strives to get girls into school and keep them there, and I argue that this act is locally compared to men who "steal" girls to be their wives without paying bridewealth.

I have several reasons for forwarding this argument: First, Hamar government employees like Tadesse shared their idea to pay bridewealth for schoolgirls and to marry runaway girls to please their relatives and enable girls to stay in school. Second, schoolboys and government employees had relationships with girls who had left their homesteads to stay close to their lover in town. This entanglement of schooling with relationships between Hamar girls and town dwellers turns the violent conflict in Hamar also into a fight about girls.

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[77] Arii (2016) shows how women in Maale proceed with their schooling even after marriage and having children. This is made possible through the help of household members, such as mothers-in-law who take care of their grandchildren.

In conversations about bride theft, young men and women told me that when a man steals a girl, her male relatives, mostly her brothers, become angry, identify the "thief", go to his homestead with rifles, shoot into the air and threaten to kill him. The same aggressiveness and anger is displayed when they hear about a daughter's or sister's lover (fieldnotes 2014, 2015). In cases of marriage by capture and extramarital relationships, schooling and hostels become spaces where the disputes are not only negotiated between kin but also between the government and the local people. Taking this argument one step further, the shooting at Dimeka could also be read as an attempt to threaten the "thieves" in town in order to get daughters, sisters and wives back.

Moral concerns make it difficult to kill relatives. However, threatening to kill "thieves" makes use of a common and often effective way of sanctioning misbehavior and showing determination to assert one's rights. The fact that in such situations, occasionally people are really killed – usually accidentally – makes this way of claiming rights even more effective. Threatening and intimidating relatives who have violated common rules by shooting, but not necessarily killing them, could also have been a strategy in the shootings and conflict around Dimeka.

In the three day shooting at Dimeka in May 2015, no student was killed, according to what I was told.[78] Among the victims of the conflict were policemen, soldiers, government workers and people in search of work, who came from outside the Hamar cluster and lived in Dimeka. During the shooting, around fourteen policemen were shot, of whom around eight died immediately. A hostel girl was shot in the shoulder while she was in the courtyard of a house in town, and a teacher from another part of Ethiopia got a scar on his forehead from a graze shot that hit him in front of a house (fieldnotes 2015). Thus, the shooting did not cause many victims among civilian town dwellers, who mostly hid in houses made of wood and mud and covered by corrugated iron roofs. The number of victims killed by government forces was not publicly announced and probably not countable, since on the last day of the shooting automatic weapons installed on the back of pick-up cars were used against Hamar fighters who were hiding among trees along the river. Later, vultures indicated their death and the mangled bodies got carried away by the river, which was in flow on that day (fieldnotes 2015). Thus, the dispute over girls' schooling and marriage turned into a conflict between unevenly armed forces. Students were not the targeted victims but their distinctive lifestyle created social tensions and was a reason for the conflict.

Among the Nuer, according to Hutchinson, "conflicts over women [are] the principal cause of violence among themselves", and she cites Nuer men as saying "'it is girls [or women] who bring war'", so that "elopement, impregnation, adultery, and the 'stealing' of wives" were the most common causes of local fighting and feuding in the

[78] Two men killed at the river some days before the shooting at Dimeka had come from other parts of Ethiopia to Hamar district in search of work.

early 1980s (Hutchinson, 1996:159). Similar patriarchal conflicts over girls fueled the conflict in Hamar district in 2014 and 2015, since marriage disputes are entangled with girls' schooling and student hostels. In these disputes young Hamar men in local government positions play a crucial role.

5.4.3 Disputes over Married Schoolgirls

Tariku recalls a dispute over a girl in his neighbor's homestead. One day he got a phone call from a young man whose older sister, who was already promised to a husband, ran away from the homestead and went to the hostel. When her prospective husband heard about this, he went to her father's homestead and took away many animals. The girl's brother then appealed to Tariku for help. Tariku repeated the conversation for me, in which the girl's arranged husband said:

> 'Because she goes now to the Amhara, the *katamá*, the town - people who live in town are called Amhara - now she goes to the school in town. She has not returned back home. Now I want to return our property.'
>
> He [her assigned husband] took all the property [of her parents]. Then there is a big war. […] The girl's brother called me from the village. [He said:] 'What are you doing? Do you help us?'
>
> 'What do I want to help you?' [said Tariku] […] 'I mean, she has a right to go to school.' I said [laughing]: 'She has the right to go to school. We don't stop [her] from going to school. She has [taken the] right decision. She must go to school. She is of young age. She has to learn. When she has grown, whatever she likes, if she wants, [she] marries Amhara or Hamar or *ferenji* [white foreigner] [laughter] or whatever she likes.' […]
>
> He [the girl's brother] said: 'WHAT? You say like that? You oppose our culture. Already she has signed the Hamar boy. Why she goes to school? Please, you have to push [her]. She has [to come] back from school.'
>
> 'I don't want to take that type of action', I said. 'She has a right of going to school. If you want, you return the properties, which you have taken previously. You return them to that guy [her husband]. If you slaughtered or ate it, you refund it.' [laughter]
>
> And then he is shouting at me [laughter]: 'You are talking like Amhara. You are not supporting us. And then [you] belong to the Amhara.'
>
> These types of ideology and then blablabla. What is the case now, I don't know (Interview 2014).

This case in Tariku's village shows divergent ideas about a girl's schooling and marriage, which are negotiated through the exchange of cattle. Tariku suggests that the girl should

remain in school and that her relatives should compensate the husband for the goods which they have already received as bridewealth. For this standpoint, the girl's brother accused Tariku of "talking like Amhara", "opposing Hamar culture" and "belonging to Amhara". In the following I will analyze this conflict and various occasions on which the marriage of girls and their schooling lead to disputes.

Strecker describes marriage negotiations (*keemó ɗalq*) in Hamar as aggressive interactions between wive-givers and wive-takers:

> Once a marriage has been agreed on, the wife-givers unfailingly come 'enraged' to demand bride wealth from the wife-takers, and their aggression must be checked by public social control. They arrive as a group early in the morning, heavily armed with fighting sticks, spears, and guns, and they stop the herds from leaving the kraal. Sitting down by the gateway, they threaten to take by force the cattle and goats which they consider their due, if the owner is not willing to give them freely (Strecker, 2010:99).

In the case Tariku reported, it was not the wife-givers who demanded the bridewealth in an "enraged" and ritualized way, but the wife-receivers who took back the animals that they had previously given during the marriage negotiations. Consequently, the girl's relatives lost not only their daughter, who went to school, but also her bridewealth, and some additional animals which were taken by her husband. This is why the brother wanted to convince his sister to stop schooling and move to her husband's homestead, hoping thus to settle the dispute and get the seized animals back.

Tariku did not take sides with the girl's relatives in his village, but supported the girl's decision to go to school. He emphasized her right to go to school and her right to choose who she would marry, not necessarily a person from Hamar, but possibly a town dweller or a person from another country. This standpoint brings Tariku accusations of siding with and talking like Amhara and not like Hamar. The association of school-educated Hamar with Amhara will be discussed in detail in chapter six. For now, I want to stress that decisions concerning girls' schooling create frictions between Hamar and their government-employed kin.

For most parents in Hamar district, their children's marriage is more important than schooling. Some parents indicate their need to get girls out of school by saying: "We have already eaten the goat. What can we do now? The goat is eaten. What can we give the girl's husband?" (fieldnotes 2014). The answer of school-educated people is often that it is possible to compensate the husband for the bridewealth goat and let the girl stay in school. However, this answer does not always solve the parent's problem of being in debt to their in-laws.

> One weekend, I was invited to a homestead to attend a feast, where a girl's marriage was being celebrated. The girl's parents invited neighbors, local elders, brothers, sisters and the ritual leader to arrive in the late afternoon. A bridewealth

> goat was slaughtered and many people sat together drinking sorghum beer (*parsî*). The goat meat was distributed to all the guests, who praised it and said that it was a very big and delicious goat, so that the marriage was known to many people who ate a share of it. I estimated that the girl whose bridewealth was served to the guests was around twelve years old and her uncle told me that she would continue living in her father's homestead for many years before moving to her husband (fieldnotes 2015).

I was also invited to other feasts that were partly funded by bridewealth gifts, such as goats, or honey which was used to refine sorghum beer, and so I understood that bridewealth and marriage brings people together. When girls leave their homesteads and move to hostels in town, their relatives lament not only that the goat given for her has been eaten, but also that their social relations are upset.

Although Tariku said that young people used to follow their parent's marriage decisions, and that it is a recent phenomenon that girls make their own decisions and escape to live in hostels, empirical examples show that even in the past young people got married in both orthodox and heterodox ways. Young people crossed their parent's marriage decisions even before schools and hostels existed in Hamar district; for instance, girls eloped with men they fell in love with, or men "stole" girls who were already married but still living with their parents. Baldambe, who also "stole" his second wife in 1970 (Lydall & Strecker, 1979a:35), explains several ways of using "magic" to steal girls (Lydall & Strecker, 1979b:131–139). In many conversations I had about marriage, everyone agreed that it was bad to "steal" girls for marriage but that it often happened and men talked proudly about it.[79]

> One afternoon I was invited by an elder to have coffee in his house. His second wife had just given birth to her first child. We sat outside the house in the goat enclosure where the elder narrated vividly how he had stolen his second wife. He visited a friend at the other end of Hamar territory, where he spotted her and observed her for several days. One day she was walking alone to the river to fetch water. The elder grabbed my hand and showed how he took the hand of the girl and rubbed goat feces four times across her palm. He described the girl as very shy. When she returned home and told her father what had happened, the father got very angry. The elder waited some days and then sent a go-between to the girl's father to ask on his behalf for the girl. Her father refused vehemently and sent the go-between away. Several days later the go-between approached the girl's father again and then repeatedly visited him. Slowly the girl's father accepted

[79] Cf. Hutchinson (1996:159–160) who cites Nuer describing themselves with satisfaction as "women thieves".

> bridewealth gifts. Finally, the elder gave 28 goats to the father of the girl who is now his wife (fieldnotes 2014).[80]

Although it appears that girls have little say in arranging their own marriage, they are not completely disempowered. Baldambe (Lydall & Strecker, 1979b:131) explains how girls can steal the headdress of a *maz* and thereby force him to marry her. Nowadays, girls can threaten their relatives by saying they will run away to the hostel if the relatives do not agree with their choice of a husband, and are thus able to influence their marriage process (fieldnotes 2015).

Parents normally arrange not only the marriage of their daughters, but also the first marriage of their sons.

> Before I left Hamar in May 2014 to go back to Germany over the summer, a mother told me that her son might be initiated while I was away. I asked her to tell me more. She smiled and said that she and her husband had found a girl whom their son, who was a schoolboy in town, could marry. When I was talking to the woman's oldest son, who was already initiated, he told me that he did not know whom his younger brother would marry; only his parents knew. The boy who was about to be initiated also knew that his time of initiation was approaching in the coming months, but he was waiting for his parents to tell him when and he did not know who his bride would be (fieldnotes 2014).

These conversations show that young men and students also do not know with whom and when their parents arrange their marriage and organize their initiation. However, marriage decisions based on notions of patriarchy and polygamy give more options to boys than to girls, since women officially marry only once, but men can marry two or more wives, whom they can choose.

After this schematic analysis of interdependencies through marriage ties, I would like to turn to an emotional aspect of marriage and care. Parents in Hamar often said that they miss their sons and daughters when they go to school. While advocates of schooling mostly interpret this in economic terms, as a reference to the loss of labor and bridewealth, I argue that it entails emotional aspects, too. Parents worry about how their children are managing to survive in school and how they are getting on in town. For instance, Girke describes towns from the perspective of the Kara:

> The *katama*, the "city," a term applied to the local market villages as well as to larger, more distant towns, is described as a dirty, violent, immoral place, where 'everything costs money, no-one will give you anything for free.' (Girke, 2015185).

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[80] In other conversations about the theft of brides, I learned that this was an exceptionally high number of goats.

This characterization of towns in contrast to agro-pastoralist homesteads is also common among the Hamar, where towns are often understood as the "immoral" opposite to agro-pastoralism.[81] Thus, when children leave agro-pastoralist homesteads to go to school in town, their parents and siblings miss their company in their daily life, and parents often worry about their children's well-being in town. Communication between children in towns and parents in rural homesteads was rarer before the mobile phone network started to reach parts of Hamar district around 2010. The refusal to send girls to school is also based on worries about their living conditions, company and safety in town.

> One day, I asked a hostel coordinator in a larger town for an interview, when he told me to meet him at a restaurant in the afternoon. Entering the hotel, I encountered many girls and young women wearing revealing clothes, make-up and extraordinary hairstyles. I learned that the hostel coordinator ran not only the student hostel, but also the hotel, which turned out to be a place for sex workers (fieldnotes 2014).

While I met many hostel coordinators who were concerned about the well-being of students and who were tired and frustrated because they could not cater for the needs of the students as well as they would have liked to, the environment of hostels, schools and towns and the caretakers there did not always appear reliable to parents, which made them reluctant to entrust their children, and particularly their daughters, to these men. To understand this refusal of schooling, we have to look beyond the narratives and ideals of schooling into actual practices and experiences of schooling.

5.4.4 Paradoxical Perspectives on the Harmfulness of Marriage and Schooling

Policies such as the listing of "harmful cultural practices" depict a lack of schooling for girls as "harmful" and a loss for the girl's lives, but also as a hindrance to the development of countries on the African continent. This "gender effect" in schooling has even motivated international corporations, such as Nike, to invest in girls' schooling in the Global South (Moeller, 2018). These global discourses and national legislation in Ethiopia often accuse "harmful traditions and culture" of hindering girls' schooling. However, empirical examples from agro-pastoralist South Omo show that the local conditions of schooling and the environment of schools is often rather unsafe and harmful to girls, and that their experience of school often differs from the universal ideological claims in favor of schooling.

Patriarchal ideas about girls are not only prevalent in rural, agro-pastoralist areas, but also in towns, where students depend on earning money in order to fill their stomachs and be able to buy clothes and hygiene products which are appropriate in town and

[81] In reverse, town dwellers often regard argro-pastoralists as the opposite to the "civilized" town.

minimize stigmatization. This can lead schoolgirls to become dependent on "sugar daddies" or be pressured to have relationships with teachers, which can also be harmful to their health and well-being, in addition to the lack of food in student hostels. Yet dominant discourses attribute harmfulness to "tradition" and "backward culture", rather than to "modern" institutions such as schools, hostels and towns.

Many Hamar schoolgirls leave school before sitting the final national exams, so that they are unable to access the formal job market or government employment which could provide them with a salary. Some schoolgirls start living with traders in town and work in shops and as saleswomen at the market. These girls and young women are often referred to as *dúrpi*, fat, for they often gain weight, which distinguishes them from agro-pastoralist girls and women. Some of these young women go to school at the same time as working in petty trade.

When schoolgirls from Hamar form relationships with men in town, this is not considered to be equal to a Hamar marriage. When children are born without the expected rituals of marriage with a *t'angáza* (cf. chapter 5.2.3), these children are not affiliated to a male lineage, which would relate them to the Hamar. Thus, disagreements about schoolgirls' marriage are also disputes about their children's belonging, the continuity of Hamar lineages, and the social security network of households.

When girls marry men in different parts of Hamar, Banna and Bashada territory, this enables households to diversify their social network. If the harvest is meagre in one part of the country but good in another part, or if animals are stolen or sick in one part of the territory but healthy in another part, relatives can support each other (Lydall, 1994:213).[82] Security networks also reach into towns and include not only relatives but also bond-friends in other ethnic groups, including among the *gal* (Girke, 2010; Strecker, 1976b:57–59). However, when it comes to choosing marriage partners, many Hamar prefer to marry their daughters to people who own cattle and goats.

Many low-rank government employees and town dwellers have no animals, or only a few, and thus little means to pay bridewealth installments to their agro-pastoralist kin in the form of goats. For instance, a teacher from another part of Ethiopia told me how Hamar elders called him "*qámɓi*", a poor person, who has neither animals nor many relatives, which makes him a less desirable marriage partner for Hamar in-laws and not a satisfactory husband who can care well for wives and children, for instance by being able to buy them milk (fieldnotes 2015). However, some schoolgirls prefer to live with a man who provides access to life in town. When girls choose marriage partners outside Hamar lineages, this threatens young men who herd cattle and aspire to get married in order to become independent from their parents. After this discussion of conflicts about girl's

[82] Although this marriage pattern was also explained to me as weaving a net across Hamar, Banna and Bashada, in the marriages I observed, some girls of the household married further away, while others married in the neighborhood of their father's homestead (fieldnotes 2015).

marriage and schooling, I will look in the following section into men's interest in marriage and schooling.

5.5 Men's Dilemmas in Connection with Initiation and Marriage

In an interview about girls' schooling with Abraham, a non-Hamar NGO worker, Gele, a senior Hamar student, intervened and presented a male perspective on Hamar marriage and schooling:

> This daughter [if she goes to school] will be out of the marriage of the culture. Otherwise, if she is married […], the husband cannot let her go to school. Because guys when they marry the Hamar lady, the Hamar boys they have income. He has income. Before this lady comes to his family home, this guy is nothing in his family. He has no share. He is just living a simple life with the cattle. When he married this lady, when he is staying with her at his family home, this guy he has "shared" with her, his fathers and his mothers and all his family. After that he will also take her to his uncle's family and his best friend's place and he earns goats. They will give goats and sheep and other things [to the newly married couple]. They have much more presents. If he has a small family, he will get more than 1000 goats (Interview 2013). [83]

What Gele explains here is that schoolgirls are seen as marrying "out of the culture", which implies a loss for Hamar men so that many husbands do not like their wives going to school. Gele explains that in a "cultural" marriage, the girl helps her husband to become independent from his parents, since after marriage the couple acquires livestock of their own. A newly married couple visits relatives in order to receive animals and start their own herd. A man alone cannot collect these assets and gain the right to get a share of his kin's property, but the couple, and particularly the wife, can demand gifts from kin (Lydall, 2005b:165–166). Thus, young men depend on having a wife in order to grow up and "become someone". Men's dependence on wives and their dilemmas in schooling and marriage will be the topic of this final section of the chapter.

In the conversation with Gele, I continued to ask about the changes for men, when their wives go to school.

> Sabrina: When a man gives his wife to school, he has not this power?
>
> Gele: He has not this power. Since the lady will find a modern style instead of this guy, the people do not allow to send their wife to school. But if both are educated, they are studying, they can live together, or they can agree and they will preserve their culture and traditional way and she will get married later after her education.

[83] I estimate that the number of goats actually received is much lower.

> Sabrina: If the husband and the wife go to school, it's no problem?
>
> Gele: If she's not married, no one needs her. She can go to school and she can study there (Interview 2013).

Gele argues that girls who go to school start a "modern" life, reject their arranged and illiterate husband and hinder him from becoming independent from his parents and acquiring livestock of his own. Thus, girls' schooling and their rejection of marrying herders threatens young men who depend on marriage to become more independent from their parents. If girls are not married, Gele does not see any problem in letting them go to school. However, when they are married, their schooling becomes problematic for their husband. As Tariku mentioned before, Gele sees marriages between school-educated girls and school-educated boys as a favorite way of marriage. However, around 2014 the number of schoolgirls was still less than that of schoolboys, so that initiation and marriage cause dilemmas for young men.

5.5.1 The Pressure to Become Initiated

> One day, Tadesse explained how he experienced social pressure to become initiated and marry a Hamar girl. He was working in a leading government position and living together with a school-educated woman who was not Hamar. Gradually, neighbors of his father's homestead started to urge his parents to initiate him. First, the neighbors advised his parents, and later increased the pressure since they no longer invited them for coffee. Villagers also accused Tadesse of being a bad role model, saying: 'If educated people refuse initiation, we will no longer give our children to school' (fieldnotes 2014).

Tadesse found himself in a dilemma. Whatever decision he took concerning his initiation, it would mean a loss. If he continued to refuse initiation and did not marry a girl from the Hamar cluster, he and his close relatives would be increasingly excluded from social life. His rejection of initiation was perceived as a refutation of Hamar culture and he was called a "bad" role model for students. Further, his refusal of initiation would jeopardize the enrollment of further children in school, which he did not want.

In addition, his junior brothers were waiting for him to become initiated, so that they could follow him and become initiated, too. Marriage and initiation normally follows the order of seniority among siblings, so that the timing of marriage is not an individual choice, since younger brothers get initiated after older brothers, and younger sisters marry after older sisters. Students trying to evade or postpone initiation were often reprimanded by saying that they were "blocking the way" for their younger brothers. Thus, schoolboys and government workers experience pressure from their relatives and the wider community to become initiated and marry a girl from the Hamar cluster who is considered *t'angáza* (marriageable).

This plea for initiation and marriage creates dilemmas for many school-educated men, since during their years in school and higher education they have often started a family with a co-student from town, often a non-Hamar girl.

> Tadesse recalls how his town wife, with whom he had several children, did not want him to become initiated since this results in marriage with a younger girl. His town wife went to school, was employed by the government and was Christian. It was not acceptable for her that her husband should marry a second time and a much younger bride.
>
> In this dilemma, Tadesse eventually decided to become initiated, in order, as he said, to "be a good role model" for current and future students and to demonstrate that he does not "oppose Hamar culture". His decision led to a divorce with his town wife. He quoted his ex-wife who said that "in the end he was just a pastoralist" although he had a university degree and a leading government job (fieldnotes 2014, 2015).

Tadesse's experience shows the dilemmas of school-educated Hamar men in dealing with divergent expectations of marriage and the tensions that lie in the creation of social relations between town dwellers and Hamar.

The polygamous social organization of the Hamar makes it not only acceptable but even prestigious for men to marry several wives. It is therefore not considered inappropriate for school-educated men to live with a woman in town, as long as they also become initiated and marry a girl from Hamar, Banna or Bashada. Hypothetically, this gender difference in notions of a "proper" marriage gives school-educated Hamar men the possibility to marry several wives, while women are supposed to marry only once. However, Christian town dwellers disapprove of men with several wives. The cases of Tadesse and other school-educated men show that the decision to accept initiation and a Hamar marriage often leads to a divorce with the women they are already living together with in town. Thus, different notions of what constitutes a "proper" marriage place male students in a dilemma, because they need to choose between an arranged marriage within the Hamar cluster and marriage with a women in town.

Marriages between town dwellers often take place in church or in government offices, if a legal arrangement is made at all. These marriages do not count as proper marriages in the understanding of rural Hamar, but resemble extramarital relationships. A government worker, for instance, did not call his partner in town, with whom he had a child, "wife" *(geshóno)* but talked about her as "*báski*" which means "lover" (fieldnotes 2014). This form of address captures a distinction between relationships in Hamar, which differentiates between properly married couples who are recognized as *geshóno* (wife) and *geshó* (husband), whereas other romantic relationships before or outside marriage are called *báski*. The latter term is also used to refer to relationships between widows and

men (Epple, 2006:349). Thus, relationships between Hamar students and town dwellers might be accepted as extramarital relationships but are not acknowledged as marriage.

Although national law or a church congregation may recognize two individuals as a married couple after a short act of marriage, Hamar custom expects marriage to be a process that involves the community and elders, who perform rituals for the couple and exchange bridewealth over a long period of time, thus preparing the way for Hamar descendants and continuing lineages. This process connects many relatives and households, of which schoolchildren form an integral part even if they want to distance themselves from their relatives.

In her study of the Nuer, Hutchinson describes debates about the emergence of so-called "bull-boys" who are school-educated Nuer men who refuse to go through the rite of initiation. This raises questions about who is a man, who is a boy and what distinguishes Nuer from other people. These school-educated youths rejected initiation and the scarifications of initiated men across their brow,

> in an effort to identify themselves more broadly with other 'black peoples' of southern Sudan and elsewhere in Africa. Although sexually mature and thus equated in some respects with other 'bulls of the herd', these uninitiated adults were not fully assimilated into the category of 'men' […]. Rather, these individuals straddled the categories of 'boyhood' and 'manhood', being dubbed by the scarified and unscarified alike as 'bull-boys' […] – a marvelous oxymoron that clearly conveyed their liminal status (Hutchinson, 1996:270).

Referring to mature but not-initiated school-educated men as "bull-boys" raises questions about the meaning of initiation, age-sets and collective cattle rights, as well as the significance of reading and writing, and belonging to Nuer and to wider Africa. The term "bull-boys" captures the position of school-educated men in their liminal position. Since initiation used to be a prerequisite for boys to become adult men, refusing it makes these school-educated individuals remain in the social group of boys, while at the same time their schooling and age equips them with enough knowledge to be acknowledged as mature adults.

Debates about the initiation of students in Hamar also reveal disputes about the meaning of initiation, its importance for the transition from boyhood to adulthood, and the regulation of access to rights that depend on having an initiated, adult status. In contrast to the Nuer case, in 2015 I did not hear of men from Hamar, Banna and Bashada who completely rejected initiation, but only of men who delayed their initiation into their 40s.

5.5.2 The Significance of Initiation Compared to an University Degree

During his initiation ceremony, Kala explained to me why it was important for him:

> Kala: I am going to join another university. That's my traditional practice, bull jumping. It's another university, another Masters or another PhD for me [laughing] to be Banna right. And I am proud of my culture because every community has their own culture, so Banna have their own culture. That's why I need to practice. I need to see this culture. Being to university has nothing for Banna. The only way to have acceptance is their own university. This is the bull jumping university. It's common for all Banna men to jump over bulls or cattle to get married. If I do have for instance cattle or goats or any kind of wealth and Birr [Ethiopian currency], and if I accidentally die, my family may not use all this.
>
> Sabrina: You have to jump so that the cattle belongs to you and your family. If you don't jump, your cattle is not yours?
>
> Kala: Yes, it's not my family's. And the other [reason] is for my children. I jump over the cattle and I meet a Banna girl. That is the real way to be Banna. And then my children are accepted, they get accepted by the community. Unless [without the leap across the cattle] my son, my children and my wife will not be accepted by the community. That's why. They can't be without the jumping. Because all Banna jump over the bull and they do this bull jumping ceremony. That's why they accept each other, they are living together, they share lots of cattle, they share lots of things, they exchange cattle. That's why (Interview 2012).

In his explanation of the importance of initiation, Kala compares the leap across the cattle with getting a university degree, which does not give him the same recognition in Banna as initiation does. He describes initiation as a way to become accepted in Banna, to integrate him into a reciprocal network of relations, where he, his wife and their children acquire the right to property and inheritance. Initiation and marriage with a Banna girl is what he calls "the real way to be Banna".

Desalegn, a friend of Kala who listened to our conversation and comes from town, confronted Kala with national policies opposing initiation:

> Desalegn: Most of the people at this time they tell you, the government also they aware the societies: 'Please avoid this traditional practice. Let this.' What is your ambition? What is your feeling for this? The government they are also [saying]: 'Loose this culture. It's not good. Please come to civilized.' Like this they aware for all the societies and the village. You are also one of this Banna people. What you feel about this?
>
> Kala: Ok, hm. Some cultures are not bad, some cultures are not bad. For instance bull jumping is very interesting and very important for my community. Not only Banna, Hamar and some communities there. I don't think government has been

> pushing to leave out this bull jumping ceremony. I don't think, it's not the real way.
>
> It's not the correct way. Because bull jumping is very interesting and a very important culture for Banna and Hamar. So I am not supporting their idea. It should be approved not to be ignored. (Interview 2012).

I have not heard of any attempts to stop the initiation ceremony entirely, but the government and many school-educated people advocate changing parts of it, such as the whipping of women during the ceremony. In this and other initiation ceremonies, some school-educated initiates prohibit *maza* from whipping girls and women on their backs before the initiate leaps across the cattle. This prohibition provokes anger on the part of girls and women, who often told me how they like being whipped at initiation ceremonies, and vehemently demand that school-educated initiates accept that they want to be whipped during initiations.

> At one initiation I attended, women ran towards a *maz* who was arriving on a motorbike, forcefully pulled him off the motorbike, sang and danced around him and pushed him to take the wooden whips (*micere*) that the women handed over to him to whip them. Some older men interfered, wanting to talk to the *maz* first, and later the women continued to sing, dance, approach and provoke the *maza* to whip them on their backs (fieldnotes 2015).

During the initiation, not all girls and women get whipped, but only the social category of sisters of the initiate who later proudly carry the scars of their brothers' initiations on their backs. The girls and women decide which *maz* they will approach, and how often, to provoke him into taking a whip and striking them once on their back. In many conversations, girls and women told me that they do not want to stop this custom and that they like it, but many school-educated initiates and the government insist that whipping during initiation should cease (Interviews 2014, 2015).[84]

Besides this modification of the ritual, school-educated men often demand a shorter initiation period. If they are going to school or working for the government, they can hardly stay away for several months to become initiated. Therefore, the preparation period for initiation and the phase of living as *maz* after the leap is often shortened to several days instead of several months for students and government workers. In addition, school-educated men sometimes demand further changes, since they are not comfortable with all parts of the ritual, especially those concerning their bodies.

Some school-educated and initiated men told me how they felt ashamed because they had to leap across the cattle naked, although they were used to wearing clothes (fieldnotes 2012, 2014, 2015). However, even in the presence of tourists who filmed them

[84] For an analysis of whipping in Hamar and Bashada, see Lydall (1994), Epple (2010b:169–170), Lydall and Strecker (1979b:85), Strecker (2010:107–122).

and took photographs, they leaped without clothes, as naked as the day they were born. Some students explained to me that they do not like having their bodies rubbed with butter and charcoal during the phase of being a *maz* (Interviews 2014). In this case, there is a conflict between the ideas of clean and washed bodies that students acquire in school and the symbolic meaning of butter in rituals, which also plays a crucial role when girls become brides. Washing away body paint and red ocher is also described by Comaroff and Comaroff (1997:226–227) in the course of converting the Tswana in colonial South Africa to Christianity. These changing body practices have to be seen in a larger process of "fashioning the frontier" (cf. chapter 4) through missions and schooling.

Another government worker reported that he delayed his initiation because he could not take so much time off his job, and that he finally agreed to become initiated if the time was shortened and if only butter and not charcoal was applied to his body (Interview 2014). These modifications show how the ritual is slightly adapted to meet the demands of school-educated men, but at the same time it remains an exercise to master.

> In a conversation about initiation with female students and male graduates, a girl vividly described how she and an initiate's mother cried and worried when it was time for the new initiate, who came directly from his education in a town, to live with the *maz*. They worried about how he would cope with the situation, since he was not used to the food of the *maza*. Having been to school for many years and not having lived in cattle camps, he was not accustomed to eating no grain but only animal products, such as milk, blood, meat and honey. The student himself said that it was hard for him to deal with the food and the rules of the other *maza*, since they speak another language, in which they say the opposite of what they mean. When he started arguing with the *maza* about their rules, they told him not to disobey. His uncle came to help him in the dispute and gave the *maza* one of his goats to pacify them and make them accept the student in their group (fieldnotes 2015).

These worries and struggles of a student during initiation demonstrate how students grow up in an environment, where they do not socialize with herders, and where their bodies do not get used to the food commonly consumed by herders in mobile cattle camps. This different socialization and habituation affects students' experience of initiation.

When I accompanied young men and boys herding animals, I observed how young boys at the sandy riverbed constructed an obstacle with sticks across which they jumped. An older boy explained to me that they were practicing for their leap across the cattle (fieldnotes 2014). When I asked students about how they could prepare for the ceremony without herding animals, many seemed not to be worried about the leap itself and argued that playing football is also good practice for running across the slippery backs of cattle. Rather, it was the rituals around the leap, such as the period of being *maz*, which seemed unfamiliar to many students and they described this time as being *wócci* – hard and difficult (fieldnotes 2014). Similarly, the liminal phase of girls during bride seclusion was

often described to me as a hard time in which they had to get used to the new environment and the fact that they were no longer girls. Nevertheless, these *rites de passage* earned boys and girls respect for becoming adults and acknowledged Hamar, Banna and Bashada, which was particularly important for the social status of school-educated people during the conflict.

5.6 How To Combine Schooling With a Hamar Life Course?

My analysis of disputes over student's marriage and initiation in Hamar shows that marriage constitutes a vital element for integrating individuals into a network of social and economic relations and recognizing them and their descendants as Hamar, Banna and Bashada. This social and economic entanglement of marriage and initiation conflicts with policies that promote a life course in which schooling is prioritized over marriage and marriage regarded as a relationship between two individuals. The conflict over these different life courses shows that they are not completely separate, but exist in relation and in distinction to each other, and that students find themselves in a dilemma if they want to fulfill the expectations associated with each of them.

Conflicts over marriage and schooling differ in different regions of Hamar, Banna and Bashada. While I heard many disputes over the importance of goats and honey for bridewealth exchanges in Hamar, Kala explained that this is no longer the case in Banna, where parents also accept money as bridewealth, which has also become common in Maale (fieldnotes 2015). Furthermore, initiation rituals have been adapted to school-educated people in Banna more than in Hamar. At Kala's initiation in Banna, the whole ritual was performed in one day and for two initiates at the same time. No *maz* participated in the ceremony, but older men who had already been initiated performed the rituals. At the end of the day, the two initiates officially got married to their wives, whom they had chosen and with whom they were already living. One wife was a schoolgirl from Banna, and pregnant, while the wife of the other initiate was from town and the couple already had a child (fieldnotes 2012).

I discussed this adaptation of the ritual with a school-educated Hamar man whose initiation had lasted several days, and who had waited for his wife to grow up, while he remained dependent on his parents to take the marriage process a step further. He commented that the man from Banna was lucky, since his girlfriend was Banna so that he could marry her (fieldnotes 2014). These different marriage experiences of Hamar and Banna classmates reveal regional variations in initiation and marriage practices, which are often described as the Banna being more open to change while the Hamar are more conservative (Interview 2014). This different degree of willingness to adapt the rituals is often linked to membership of Protestant churches, which is more common among the Maale and Banna than among the Hamar.

Some Hamar students who had converted to Protestantism stressed that they wanted to stop the "old" customs, including Hamar ways of marriage and initiation, and to follow only the way of Jesus. However, Hamar Protestants also considered accepting initiation, explaining that they might be excluded from going to church for some time, but that they would be able to return if they expressed regret and asked for forgiveness (fieldnotes 2015). A school-educated Protestant Hamar, for instance, married in the Hamar way in order to please his relatives. His Hamar wife lived in his father's homestead, where she had children who carried his name but were fathered by other men, while he lived in town with a wife from another ethnic group who was also Protestant (Interview 2015). This way, his lineage continued in the homestead through his Hamar marriage while he lived in town with a woman he had chosen, which was seen by the Hamar as a *baski* relationship.

Other school-educated men left their town wives or were left by their town wives, like Tadesse, when they decided to become initiated and marry a young wife from the Hamar cluster. Some men helped girls from the homestead to slowly adapt to life in town, to dress accordingly, to learn Amharic and to eat the food that is common in town, which enables the couple to live together in town. Other men sent their wife and children back to live in their father's homestead, when they could not afford to buy them milk and their wife complained of being hungry (fieldnotes 2015). Again other men, like Tadesse, waited after their initiation and marriage for their Hamar wife to grow old enough to move from her father's house to his house. He was not yet sure if his Hamar bride would live with him in town or with his parents and siblings in the homestead where the rituals for brides and children take place. He imagined building a double house, with a "modern" rectangular cement building, corrugated iron roof and a TV on one side, and a round Hamar grass-thatched house on the other side where his wife could welcome Hamar guests and serve coffee to the elders (fieldnotes 2014, 2015).

These examples reveal different notions of what is "right" in connection with marriage. On the one hand, (inter)national legislation provides for compulsory schooling as a universal right independently of a person's gender, as well as freedom to make marriage decisions above the age of 18. On the other hand, parents in Hamar claim the right to provide education and arrange a "proper" marriage for their children, which ideally supports individuals and household members in the long run. Schooling constitutes the arena in which these different ideas about marriage and corresponding life courses are negotiated, and where young people face dilemmas in deciding how to meet these divergent expectations.

For girls, a dilemma is often created when marriage means the end of schooling and life in town, while for young men initiation and marriage often implies the end of an already existing relationship with a woman and children in town. Thus, disputes over marriage and schooling in Hamar reveal gendered dilemmas, since marriage does not change the life of men as much as it does that of girls. While male students combine

schooling with marriage and can theoretically marry several wives from different ethnic groups, as long as one wife is from the Hamar cluster and is married in the Hamar way, Hamar girls often have to leave school when they marry, and they are more controlled to marrying men from Hamar, Banna or Bashada.

Julia Pauli (2019) has observed a decline in marriage in Namibia during recent decades, where marriage has become a marker of class distinction. While most people in Namibia today live together without formal marriage, only the elite can afford large marriage ceremonies. In Hamar, this class distinction is different, since it is the agro-pastoralists who prefer to arrange large initiation and marriage ceremonies for their children, while the town dwellers in Hamar district can often not afford prestigious marriage celebrations. Among the Chagga in Tanzania, Stambach (2000:70) quotes schoolgirls as saying: "Education is my husband", which emphasizes the independence schoolgirls aspire to gain through their education, so that they can have an income, a house, a social network and care for their children without husbands. I have not heard similar claims made by Hamar schoolgirls, but schooling is a way for them to gain more independence in respect of marriage decisions and to have a life in town without farm labor. These disputes over girl's and boy's schooling and marriage demonstrate the dilemma of combining schooling with locally acknowledged ways of creating social bonds and belonging that structure life between men and women over generations. The decisions concerning young people's schooling and marriage reveal fundamental questions about authority and the power to decide, which I analyze in the final chapter.

6 “To Whom Do Children Belong?” – Dilemmas of Multiple Claims to Power

This final chapter addresses a fundamental issue underlying the previous chapters. It looks at struggles over power and authority on the frontier of the Ethiopian state that are negotiated through young people and their education and create dilemmas. In the light of the course of several violent events in 2014 and 2015 and their reference to schooling, I analyze how schooling and the positioning and belonging of young people is politically contested. The central question behind this struggle for power is: to whom do children belong? Or framed differently: who is the father of students? Asking about the father of people is not only a question about the relationship between parents and children, but also about their relations with “father state” and the fatherland. Thus, the language of kinship expresses competing claims to power and ownership which different father figures negotiate in the arena of schooling by claiming children as their own. How these multiple claims to power create conflicts in Hamar became obvious to me on several occasions.

6.1 Negotiating Heterarchic Claims to Power Over Children

> In November 2014, while I was staying for a couple of days in Jinka in southwest Ethiopia, some students from Hamar district told me that a policeman had killed a Hamar (fieldnotes 2014).

In the beginning I did not pay much attention to this, since the incident did not seem to be of relevance to my study of schooling. However, on numerous occasions in Jinka and Dimeka I overheard discussions of the case, and I soon learned how it was related to disputes over schooling and competing claims to power, which led me to inquire about what had happened.

> The policeman was a young man and the elder, who was referred to as “the Hamar” was in his fifties when he passed away. After a while I learned that the young policemen was also a Hamar, who was described as “having put on a uniform”. Explanations for the death of the Hamar elder were manifold.
>
> An elderly woman told me that the fight was about a fence. The policeman had said to the elder that all land belongs to the government. The elder insisted that it was his land and an argument started, in which he took out a knife and the policeman took his rifle. Finally, the policeman kicked the elder and hit him around the liver. Shortly after the elder died. The woman claimed to have seen the elder’s body in the health center, his face bloody.
>
> A student explained to me that the dispute started when the policeman came to write down how many children went to school. The policeman asked the elder how many children he had given to school. The elder replied that he had given

> two children to school and kept one child at home. When the policeman asked why he had not given all his children to school, a fight started and the policeman finally kicked the elder who died shortly after.
>
> Another explanation I heard from students was that both men had been drunk and were therefore crazy (*barɗidi)*.[85] Local government officials told me that they did not know the reason for the fight, but that it was just an accident.
>
> The police put their colleague into prison in Dimeka. A group of elders demanded that the policeman should be handed over to them, since they wanted to punish him and compensate the elder's death. In contrast to the elders' request, local government officials wanted the court in town to decide about this case. After the incident a message that spread throughout Hamar was that "when children learn in school, they kill us" (fieldnotes 2014).

This case reveals conflicts over land and compulsory schooling, as well as over the power of different legal authorities, namely elders and state representatives who are related to each other. While the policeman works for the Ethiopian government and it is his job to implement government laws in Hamar district, elders defend the right to make decisions concerning their territory, which they call the "land of Hamar" (Hamar *péeno*) or the "land of the father" (*imbá péeno*).

Due to their superior age, elders claim the authority to rule over younger people (Strecker, 1988b:212) and describe their power to make decisions concerning juniors as *dámbi* which translates as "custom, tradition, social convention" (Petrollino, 2016:301). Besides these claims to power, young school-educated people in government positions claim the power to rule through their jobs. These different claims to power with their corresponding ways of solving disputes are an indicator of the existence of legal pluralism, in which different notions of law coexist beside the state law (Bellagamba & Klute, 2008a). The dynamics of politics in South Omo reveals a "heterarchy" of political actors, in which state and non-state actors continuously try to grasp and distribute power (Klute, 2013:9). In this arena, the role of schooling that turns Hamar children into government workers and changes power relations between generations deserves a closer look.

Through the expansion of schooling and ethnic federalism, appointments to government positions have changed. Administrative jobs which used to be done mainly by people from outside Hamar, so-called *gal*, have been increasingly given to school-educated people from Hamar district. Thus, young, school-educated men and a few women have progressively taken on jobs which mean implementing state law among their relatives. This shift in filling executive positions has taken place in the wider framework

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[85] In Hamar language *barɗá* means "drunk" (Petrollino (2016:299), but it is also used with the meaning of "crazy". Hamar-speaking students often use *barɗá* and the English word *crazy* synonymously.

of an authoritarian regime which is associated in Hamar with Amhara rulers, the imperial conquest and ongoing suppression. Therefore, parents reflect on what will happen to them if their children go to school, "put on government clothes" and work for the government. The dispute between the elder and the young Hamar policeman illustrates these different claims to power and negotiations in respect of possible solutions.

While some Hamar describe the dispute between the elder and the policeman as an accident, others argue that it shows "when children learn in school, they kill Hamar". In the latter narrative, schooling becomes a threat to the Hamar, which justifies countermeasures. The dilemma is that students are relatives and that the Hamar and the government are not separable units, as certain discourses might suggest. In this final chapter, I analyze several events that followed the elder's death and show how the role of schooling and the belonging of children and students both to the Hamar and to the Ethiopian state were violently negotiated. In doing so, I analyze struggles and dilemmas relating to the use of physical force and multiple claims to legitimate power. At the same time, I show how schooling and students form part of ongoing state making on Ethiopia's southwestern frontier.

6.1.1 Claims in Respect of "One's Own" Children

The dispute between the elder and the policeman fueled debates about the belonging of "children who put on a uniform", meaning who work for the government. In the events that followed, different groups within Hamar asked whether children who have been to school (*temara*) are still "Hamar children". Underlying these debates is the question: Who is a Hamar? Or framed differently, what does it need to be a Hamar and to be recognized as such?

> Some days after the elder's death in November 2014, when I walked through Dimeka, an elderly man warned me that there were big issues going on and that I should be careful and not walk around too much in town. A shooting had taken place around 20 kilometers east of Dimeka in the Hamar mountains, in which around six local government officials from Hamar were beaten up.
>
> I visited some of the wounded government workers in their homes. One of them told me that they intended to attend a ceremony in the mountains of Hamar where an ox was to be slaughtered, since no rain had fallen for quite a while. They wanted to participate as guests, but on their arrival they were told: "Go away. We do not want to talk to you. We only want the policeman who has killed the elder. When you give him to us, we will kill him. Then everything will be fine."
>
> Another government worker reported that around a hundred young men came up with whips to beat them. The government workers ran for their lives and sought

> shelter in their mother's homestead or escaped with several people on a motorbike to find a safe place in town.
>
> During my visit the beaten men gathered together in their compounds in town to recover from bruises on their legs, hips, arms and heads, stitched wounds and hurting bones. One of them who escaped the beating sat under a tree in his yard holding a rifle. His cousin explained to me that he had no weapon yesterday, so that he wanted to protect himself now. Neighbors from different ethnic groups who also resided in town passed by to visit the wounded men and some relatives walked from their rural homesteads to town to see their wounded kin.
>
> Orgo, a young man from a rural homestead who was present when his cousins who worked for the government were beaten, told me that he tried to stop the beating. He knew some of the young men who hit the government workers and some were even his friends. He said: "Leave them! These are our children!"
>
> Orgo was not beaten himself. He was around 20 and attending grade three at a school near to his homestead. He did not wear "modern" clothes and he herded cattle in addition to going to school.
>
> After visiting the injured men, I met several hostel students on my way through town. The students described the incident to me, saying that *borleno* (young Hamar men in their twenties and early thirties) stood up and beat *temara* (fieldnotes 2014).

This beating of young men who work for the government reveals tensions with regard to the role of school-educated Hamar in politics and their relationship to the Hamar. While *borle* is a Hamar term for the life stage of a young man, *temara* is an Amharic loan word for students. Despite the construction of two conflict parties referred to as the Hamar or *borle*, on the one hand, and the *temara* on the other, these groups cannot be clearly separated. The case of Orgo shows that not all young people who went to school and attended the ceremony were beaten. Only those who lived mainly in town and worked for the government were hit.

The way close relatives and neighbors of these beaten men cared for them, worried about their well-being and tried to stop the beating, indicates a close connection between these two groups. It shows that a clear division between Hamar and *temara* cannot be upheld. Nevertheless, the beating was framed as a dispute between the Hamar and *temara*, children who have been to school. *Temara* and Hamar government workers are part of social networks across homesteads and towns, since not only their kin from rural homesteads, but also their neighbors and friends in town, came to see them when they were wounded, a common gesture of concern for sick people. The beating shows that students and local government workers constitute a social group whose belonging and loyalty is disputed in Hamar. Those who beat and those who were beaten were roughly the same age, but had different educational backgrounds and lifestyles.

I asked an elder to explain what had happened during the above-mentioned and noted his narrative as follows:

> When I reached there, people were eating meat. The *borleno* who beat the *temara* said that people who went to school and wore modern clothes were no longer '*original* Hamar'. Saying this he laughed loudly and added: 'Those are children! They don't know!' (Fieldnotes 2014).

In his account, the elder disapproves of the beating of the *temara* and stresses his superiority over the young people who claim that *temara* are no longer "original" Hamar. Interestingly, he uses the English word "original" in his account in Hamar to talk about the difference between young people.[86] His description exemplifies the social construction of distinction between school-educated and so-called "original" Hamar. During many conversations with school-educated people I stumbled across phrases in which they said that they were accused of "belonging to Amhara", "having become *gal*" or "having become the government's child" (cf. Tariku's story in chapter 5.4.3).

The linkage of students with the government is also discussed in a study of schooling in Uganda. Lotte Meinert (2009) has analyzed the advent of universal primary education as a critical event, in which parents started to call children "'the government's children, paid by Museveni' (the President of Uganda) to be in school" (Meinert, 2009:3). Like in Uganda in the 1990s, the attempt to implement compulsory schooling in Hamar district constitutes a critical event, where parenthood is debated at a moment when children become "the government's children". The change in young people's education goes along with a shift in parenting practices and raises questions about the belonging of children. The government and parents both claim the right to decide about young people's education. This contest in respect of who has legitimate power over children is discussed in Hamar by raising the question: whose children are they? Framing the question differently, I ask: who is the father of children and who holds legitimate power to decide over them?

To answer these questions, I look at the belonging of children not in terms of identification, but in regard to claiming people as "one's own". I follow the approach of Jeanette Edwards and Marilyn Strathern (2000), who analyze debates about the belonging of children created through IVF and surrogate mothers, as well as people's claims of belonging to a particular place:

> English speakers know that what is claimed as one's own may encompass as much a claim to identity, adduced in ways of belonging to a place or a family, as it does to rights of possession. […] One may claim a person as one's own but not that one owns him or her (Edwards & Strathern, 2000:149).

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[86] In Hamar he said: "*Kidi* original *Hamartei"*.

Claiming people as "one's own", as Edwards and Strathern show, refers to those people who belong to a certain kin group or community at a particular place, and, as I would add, to a state. The conflicts arising from multiple entitlements to claim people as one's own are analyzed below with regard to the use of kinship terms, such as children (*naana*) and father (*imbá*) and their respective rights in decisions concerning young people's education in Hamar.

6.1.2 Songs about "Our Children"

The contested belonging of Hamar students and government representatives was addressed among others in songs and speeches, of which I will give some examples.

> Some days after the government workers were beaten, I was invited to the celebration of a recent graduate who explained to me that this festivity was exceptional, since his relatives had only recently started to celebrate the graduation of their children, to show the outcomes of schooling.
>
> Some of the beaten men came from town to the homestead and celebrated together with relatives, neighbors, teachers and government workers from the nearby school. A goat, which had been bought by the graduate with money from his foreign school sponsor, was slaughtered and sorghum beer and honey wine were served to guests. Many young people in the homestead changed their everyday clothes into colorful shiny t-shirts and trousers, while those arriving from town put on beads. The young men from town led everyone through the program, which they had prepared on printed paper and held up in front of the guests, who were mostly not able to read and write.
>
> We sat in the shade of a corrugated iron shelter and the government workers and their mothers and fathers took turns to make speeches about the benefits of schooling. Some mothers said that if they were still young and were still able to bear children, they would give these children to school. When one of the oldest men present started his speech by saying that there were people in the mountains who did not like schooling and wanted to shoot at the town, one of the older government officials interrupted him and led the conversation back to the point that schooling was good.
>
> After the speeches, people started dancing, mixing Hamar dances and songs with shaking shoulders with Amharic songs coming from a radio (fieldnotes 2014).

At the celebration, the government workers were clearly in control and decided about the program and the content of speeches. The party showed how different styles were mingled with each other. School-educated people put on clothes and jewelry which made them look more like Hamar living in rural homesteads, and young people who had not been to school dressed up in t-shirts and pants that made them resemble students and town

dwellers. Girls and women kept their leather skirts on, and government workers who wore jeans and had short hair demonstrated their everyday dress and lifestyle (cf. chapter 4).

During the honoring of the graduate in his mother's homestead, and the acknowledgement of previous graduates who had had no such celebration, the recent beating of the government officials in the vicinity of the homestead was commented on in a song. A cousin of the graduate composed the song, in which the *anzána* (teenage girls) took the lead in singing and many guests joined in the dancing. One of the leading singers repeated the lyrics for me as follows:

Naana Wonone I (Song, recorded 2014)

"Yeya, naana wonone	Yeya, these are our children
(Name 1) wona gobaina.	(district administrator) ran away from us.
Yeya, naana wonone	Yeya, these are our children
naasa (Name 2) wona gobaina.	the child/son (government worker in the political office) ran away from us.
Yeya, naana wonone	Yeya, these are our children
naasa (Name 3) wona gobaina.	the child/son (government worker in the political office) ran away from us.
Yeya, naana wonone	Yeya, these are our children,
naan (Name 4) wona gobaina.	the child/daughter (policewoman) ran away from us.
Yeya ye	Yeya ye
Yeya naana gobaina	Yeya our children ran away.
(Name 5) wona gobaina.	(scout in the National Park) ran away from us.

The song names people who work for the local government and says that they ran away from us, without telling us that they were beaten (as described above) and ran away to escape to the safety of town. These government workers are referred to as "our children" who ran away from "us". Thus, the song relates the government workers to the homestead by calling them "our children", while at the same time emphasizing that they distanced themselves by running away. The chorus of "our children ran away from us" might refer not only to the fact that they recently ran away when they were beaten, but also that they left and went to school when they were young (cf. chapter 5). Thus, the song plays on the connection and disconnection between the government workers and their relatives in the homestead.

Songs dealing with current issues travel to various dance occasions, in the course of which they get adapted. Some months later, I heard the same melody and chorus at another place in Hamar district with slight changes of text:

Naana Wonone II (Song, recorded 2015)

Singer (S): *Yeya derge polisa*	Singer (S): Yeya, the Derg police
All (A): *Yeya naana wonone*	All (A): Yeya, these are our children
S: *Yeya naana wonone*	S: Yeya these are our children,
(Name 6) *gazann marono.*	(Name 6) blocked one side.
Refrain: A: *Yeya derge polisa,*	Refrain: A: Yeya, the Derg police,
yeya naana wonone.	yeya these are our children.
S: *Yeya naana wonone*	S: Yeya these are our children, (Name 1,
(Name 1) *bazán kadjono.*	district administrator) paid the price.
A [Refrain]	A [Refrain]
S: *Yeya naana wonone*	S: Yeya, these are our children
(Name 7) *naana shanshono*.	(Name 7) sold the children.
A [Refrain]	A [Refrain]
S: *Yeya naana wonone*	S: Yeya, these are our children (Name 2,
(Name 2) *wongá oitono.*	government worker in the political office) chased away the cattle.
A [Refrain]	A [Refrain]
S: *yeya naana wonone*	S: Yeya these are our children
(Name 8) *wongá oitono.*	(Name 8) chased away the cattle.
A [Refrain]	A [Refrain]

Like the first version of the song, the second refers to people who work for the local government as "our children". However, the lyrics of the second do not describe those children as having run away, but associates them with the police of the Derg, the former socialist military regime. It names not only government workers but also people who act in the interest of government policies. Most lines address the prohibition of herding cattle in Mago National Park, where the individuals mentioned helped the government to stop the grazing of cattle in rich pastures along the Omo river. One verse, however, addresses schooling, albeit in an implicit manner, by stating that "children have been sold". When I asked the group of young singers what "selling children" means, a teenage boy answered promptly: "giving children to school" (fieldnotes 2015).

The song links recent political acts of children's school enrollment and herding prohibitions to the Derg regime that ruled from the revolution in 1974 and throughout the

1980s. During my fieldwork, the Derg regime was remembered in Hamar district among other things for its installment of schools and hostels and its forceful conscription of young men into the army (fieldnotes 2015). Thus, the song makes a historic connection between the police of the Derg regime and today's politics. In conversations about the song, students told me that this is wrong, since the ruling government is not like the Derg. Nevertheless, the song relates current and past politics and both versions of the song address issues relating to Hamar "children" and their role in local politics.

Calling relatives who work for the government "our children" expresses a kin relationship and a sense of belonging, but also attributes to them the status of children within the social hierarchy of Hamar. The song plays with two meanings of "child". One notion of child refers to the relationship between parents and their offspring, independently of age, while the second is a reference to the category of young people within the society. In general, children in Hamar, Banna and Bashada are expected to listen to their parents and to older people and respect their authority, since children are said to not know as much as older people, which Epple describes for Bashada as follows:

> It is only by socialization that children mature and learn culturally appropriate behaviour. Thus, seniors have to guard, guide and teach them. Children are thought to continue to misbehave as they grow into adolescents and young adults. Therefore, the expression '*Kissi nasi ne*!' (He is a child) is also used for adults to stress their deficiencies in knowledge, power of blessing, and sensibility of behaviour. Due to these (expected) deficiencies, children, adolescents and young adults do not take sole responsibility for their behaviour and actions, their seniors carry part of it (Epple, 2010c:113).

Calling someone a "child" stresses a knowledge gap and the speaker attributes a lower position to this person. Similarly, when an elder calls *borleno* (young men) "children" (*naana*) because they think that local government workers are not "original" Hamar (cf. chapter 6.1.1), the elder is downplaying the knowledge of young men, making them appear younger and less knowledgeable. Older people's social position, as Epple shows, goes along with the responsibility to correct, advise and educate younger people, since the latter's misbehavior would reflect the inability of older people to guide them properly.

Referring to government workers as "children" is not related to their biological age, since they are young men, mostly initiated and some married and with children. Instead, the term children stresses the kin relationship between them and the group of speakers. The possessive pronoun "our" contains the claim that the government workers belong to the singers, even though they have distanced themselves by running away or acting like the Derg regime. In short, the two versions of the song about "our children" entail ongoing claims about the belonging and loyalty of school-educated children towards their kin, which are also debated in political meetings.

6.2 Political Meetings between Fathers and their School-Educated Children

Local government workers are sometimes sent to advise their fathers and elders about the government's policies, while the elders and fathers see it as their responsibility to instruct their children. How this political constellation shapes the relationship between elders and school-educated children and creates conflicts will be examined in this section. To understand the frictions, I will first describe the context of political meetings in Hamar, and then analyze some occasions, on which government workers appealed to the elders to accept them as their children and to stop a conflict that was in the making.

6.2.1 Political Meetings in Hamar

Existing analyses of political life in Hamar picture politics as if the elders rule without interference from the state. For instance, Strecker's (2013b) analysis of political discourse in Hamar describes meetings (*osh*) where no government representatives are present, but where elders discuss issues of social and political relevance among themselves. The institution known as *osh* includes only male elders as speakers, and there is no participation of women, young people or government officials. In the history of anthropological studies of politics in Africa, political systems have often been studied only in terms of "traditional" authority and kinship, excluding the state as an actor or seeing it as a "polluting" factor (Thelen & Alber, 2017:7). However, even in the periphery of states, such as in Hamar district, the state shapes political actions.

An official institution where government representatives and elders meet in Hamar district is the so-called *gubay*. Analyzing the political discourse in such meetings among the Kara, Felix Girke describes the interactions between Kara elders and government representatives from outside Kara, so-called Habesha, a synonym for the Hamar term *gal*:

> *Gubai,* then, have come to be one of the most important performative sites of Kara-Habesha interaction. They always embody the key feature of the relation between the peripheral lowlanders and the highlanders: a display of power imbalance, already visible in the material setup, well manifested in the procedural order, and constantly implied by verbal acts.
>
> At the same time, the lack of correspondence between claim and implementation paints a very different picture: the administrators are far from home, seriously understaffed, uninformed, badly equipped, unable to understand the Kara if the latter use their own language; they are uncomfortable, sweaty, worried about mosquitos every minute of their stay in Kara; and they are faced with these lean, wellarmed [Kara] men (many of whom wear – with varying degrees of pride – the marks of a killer) who, especially on their home turf, cut an imposing image (Girke, 2015:177).

The meetings Girke analyzes involve encounters between Kara elders, who have participated in numerous such meetings, and administrators, who are mostly new to their job and to the environment of the Kara. Although the government representatives claim the power to rule over the Kara, which is confirmed and not rejected in the discourses at such meetings, the practice reveals a different power distribution. Girke identifies irony as a strategy to bridge power gaps and to keep the question of power unresolved, in order not to open big wounds:

> As it is, it [irony] helps both sides deal with the fundamental uncertainty of who has power over whom, as it allows postponing a resolution of contesting claims, which would likely involve violence (Girke, 2015:178).

While Girke describes a rather weak state presence in Kara, with no permanent police station, but only occasional visits by government representatives from Dimeka and Turmi, he mentions strategies of avoidance and irony to successfully keep a distance between government administrators and the Kara.[87] This binary distinction blurs when school-educated Kara become government representatives and do the job that used to be done by Habesha. In Hamar, this has been the case more frequently than in Kara, and it has led to tensions, in which violence was no longer avoided. It is these meetings between elders and their school-educated children who have become government representatives that I analyze in the following.

> The political meetings of Hamar government officials and elders, which I attended in 2014 and 2015, took place in the shade of trees in rural school compounds.
>
> On the day of the arranged meeting, elders arrived first at such a *gubay*, coming on foot and carrying small, wooden self-made stools (*borqotó*). Some older men also brought wooden sticks. The older men settled in the center of the meeting ground under trees, while younger men sat at the edges of the circle. After a while, the local government officials arrived by speedy four-wheel cars from town, accompanied by policemen. The armed policemen took up positions under trees in the vicinity of the meeting place, from where they observed the scene. The local government officials settled down on school chairs at the edge of the circle, from where they overlooked the elders, who sat on the ground or on small *borqotó*. The seating plan reflected an order of age seniority, with older people in the center and younger people at the rim. At the same time, it distinguished those who sat close to the ground and those who sat at a higher level on school chairs.
>
> Although government representatives were fewer in number, their appearance made them stand out from the group of attendants. Many government

[87] Regassa and Korf (2018:623) describe how the distance between the Kara and the government diminished when the state expanded its local presence through the construction of a private cotton plantation, which is protected by the government.

representatives wore long pants, like jeans, t-shirts or shirts, and shiny wristwatches, and sometimes had bigger bellies, while the elders mostly wore shorts or a blanket, shirts and vests, had braided hair, wore a colorful crocheted hat, or had formed their hair into a clay cap decorated with feathers. These different styles and seating positions, the parked Land Rovers and armed policemen demonstrate different access to resources and claims to power.

One government official made this very clear, when at one of the meetings he kept a revolver under his thigh, which he openly put into his belt, when he stood up to speak, while the elders had left their rifles at home and arrived unarmed or with wooden sticks. [88]

Among the participants were relatives such as fathers, sons, brothers, uncles and nephews who talked to each other with different professional and educational backgrounds. From the edge of the circle, people who did not speak in public listened, such as young men who had not been to school and teachers, health or agricultural workers (fieldnotes 2014, 2015).

In such a *gubay,* encounters between close kin are often avoided, since they carry the potential for a conflict in which elders and their related government representatives fight over different claims to power. On several occasions, I observed that government workers were not send to their home area to implement government policies. On inquiring about the reason for this, I was told that the Hamar do not like to be given orders by their "educated children". School-educated people are mostly sent to work in other parts of the district, so that, for instance, Kara teachers worked in Hamar and vice versa (fieldnotes 2014, 2015). Thus, a distance is created between the Hamar and their school-educated children who have become government workers. However, on some occasions relatives meet during a *gubay.*

Figure 29 Political meeting between Hamar government officials and elders, 2015

[88] In other meetings that I attended, the elders came armed with rifles, so that the government workers had no monopoly of power. The spear of the speaker, which Strecker (2013b:101) describes as a central element of political discourse in Hamar, was not used in the meetings I attended, nor did I see a spear during my fieldwork, which speaks of the change in weaponry that Masuda (2009a) has observed in respect of the Banna.

6.2.2 When Government Workers Claim to be "Hamar Children"

During one of the *gubay* that I attended shortly after the government officials were beaten up, the way these school-educated children relate to the Hamar was debated. In the speeches, several government officials from Hamar emphasized their connection by saying to the elders: "We are your children. Why did you beat us?" In this way, they stress their origin and acknowledge the elders as their fathers, while demanding to know why they were beaten and what they had done wrong. In their speeches, the elders debated controversially whether those children who ran away and went to school were still Hamar children or whether they had become different. Some elders said that the schoolchildren had defeated Hamar and therefore needed to be punished and brought back onto the right path. A student summarized for me how an elder argued in his speech:

> Today children run away. They go to town. Some go to the hostel, some to town. We are the fathers. We fathered them. We beat them, it's our right and obligation. Our children, why do you talk? […] You children, why did you enter school? You have to give us animals as compensation. Why did you call the federal police? It's your country. When something is spoiled, you and we talk together (fieldnotes 2014).

The elder complains that children ran away to school and involved the federal police in a conflict that he considers should be solved only between fathers and sons. Thus, he wants to keep the state and the police out of the issue. He emphasizes that Hamar elders are the genitors of schoolchildren and that as fathers they have the right and obligation to punish their children for running away. This notion of fatherhood and its claim that it is legitimate for fathers to beat their children will be discussed in detail in the next section. Here, I want to stress that the elder regards it the children's obligation to apologize for running away, and he demands that the children should give the elders animals as compensation for running away against the will of elders. The government officials framed the guilt differently and said, because they were beaten and the elders did not prevent it, the elders must apologize and give them animals. Indeed, one of the government officials told me after the meeting, while chewing a piece of roasted goat meat, that he had punished the elders by making them give six goats for the meeting, which were slaughtered, cooked and distributed to the participants (fieldnotes 2014).

Elders complaining about the misbehavior of youth is a typical beginning for meetings called *osh*, which get their name from *oshimɓá*, meaning to intimidate (Strecker, 2013b:101–102). Analyzing the rhetoric of these discourses, Strecker remarks:

> But let us note that the listeners are not really intimidated, and that it is because of their proud rejection of authority that the spokesmen shout so vehemently and complain that people do not listen and do what they want (Strecker, 2013b:102).

Younger people rejecting the authority of older people, and older people complaining about the behavior of young people, is therefore not a new phenomenon. What has

changed recently is that the young people, who leave their homesteads and go to school against the will of their fathers, come to represent the government, which has been kept at a distance for decades.

Disapproval of the children's collaboration with the government and its involvement in local affairs is expressed in the elder's speech, where he complains that young people called the police in a dispute that he thinks ought to be settled by kin. However, the separation between kin and the police cannot be upheld, since people who are kin have become policemen. Thus, the question arises whether school-educated Hamar are speaking to elders in their function as sons or in their function as government representatives, since they incorporate both.

The attempt to reject the rule of the state creates dilemmas when the government consists of one's own children. While it is easier to drive out government representatives to whom one does not feel close, as is occasionally the case with so-called *gal*, it becomes more difficult to reject government officials who are relatives. While the elders claim rights as fathers to rule over their children, the school-educated children feel authorized to give instructions to the elders in their function as government representatives, which creates intergenerational and political conflicts.

6.3 "Who is Superior?" – Paternal Struggles Over the Legitimate Use of Physical Force and Children's Dilemmas

The term father describes relations not only between fathers and children, but also between the state and citizens. In many countries, the state is depicted as a "father" or is called "father state", which expresses a paternal or even patronizing relationship between the state leader and the population. Carol Delaney (1995) analyzed this naturalization and the gender dimension of power in the case of Mustafa Kemal, who founded the Republic of Turkey and was renamed Atatürk, which translates as "the Father of the Turks". Besides the image of some state leaders as the "father" of the nation, fathers also play an important role in polycephalous societies.

6.3.1 Political Roles of Fathers

In Hamar, the term father (*imbá*) refers not only to the genitor of children and the household head, but also to an owner. Expressions that translate literally as the "father of the ox" (*wɔxásа imbá*) or the "father of the house" (*oonísa imbáno*) refer respectively to the "owner" of the ox or the house.[89] Asking about to whom someone or something belongs is done in Hamar by asking: *Imbá háine*? meaning "Who is the father/owner?".

[89] The owner of a house is mostly female, so that in this case *imbá* gets a female ending (*-no*). Nevertheless, ownership is expressed in Hamar through the word *imbá* (father) and not through "mother" (*indá*).

This form of question also works for unknown people in Hamar, who are asked: "*Yaa hai naasíne*?" meaning "Whose child are you?". The answer normally reveals that one is the child of a certain man, for instance Aike *naasí,* "the child of Aike". Thus, the kinship term "child" expresses belonging to a father, who is also understood as an "owner" of the child, or, framed differently, who is authorized to give his children instructions and demand their obedience.

A similar understanding of an appropriate relationship between fathers and children appears in references to the relationship between citizens and the Ethiopian state. In his analysis of rhetoric at political meetings between Kara elders and government representatives, Girke observes that certain expressions are repeatedly used. One of these is the question: "Do we have one father, or two?" (Girke, 2015:175–176). This question asks about the legitimate political authority in Kara and expects the answer that there is only one father, namely the government. However, the question also hints at the existence of other father figures who challenge the state's exclusive claim to power. The presence of several father figures creates political competition.

In this final section, I analyze the competing claims to power made by various father figures who demand to legitimately use physical force against their subordinates. These claims are not only expressed by Hamar parents regarding their children, but also constitute a central aspect in Weber's ([1918] 1946) definition of a nation state. In a first step, I outline the meaning of whipping in Hamar, and then show how the claim to power expressed by whipping juniors conflicts with government claims to power and creates dilemmas for students and government officials living at the intersection of these competing father figures and their use of force.

6.3.2 Paradoxical Guidance of Juniors by the Whip

In Hamar, Banna and Bashada, power hierarchies are discussed in terms of the right to whip (*qan*). A whip, called *micere,* is usually made of wood from the *baraza* tree (*grewia mollis*), which is said to carry *barjó* (well-being) (Lydall, 1994:205). The use of the whip has been analyzed in the context of Hamar society (Strecker, 2010:107–122); with regard to the beating of women in Hamar (Lydall, 1994); and in respect of its role in the education of children in Bashada (Epple, 2010c; Epple, 2012a). Strecker (2010:108–110) shows how the whip serves as a prolonged arm of the herder to keep the goats together while wandering through the bush. Herding is literally called "whipping goats" (*qulín qana*), in which the *micere* serves as a tool to guide a herd of goats, to keep them together and to make sure that no goat is lost. This meaning of "beating with a whip" (*micerenka qana*), which is associated with a form of herding and guidance, is transferred to human relations, where children, young men and women are "herded" with the whip.

Epple describes the role of whipping in children's socialization and in social relations in Bashada as follows:

> Generally, it [whipping] is seen as a means to guide juniors to follow the 'right path', to reintegrate individual wrong-doers (i.e. 'those who have left the right path') back into society and to reestablish peace and harmony among all. Hereby the whipped are protected from harming themselves and others, and the community is saved from general sufferings, such as epidemic diseases or failing harvests - possible effects of disharmony in the society (Epple, 2012a:69).

Whipping in Bashada as in Hamar is seen as a tool to guide juniors and to keep humans, animals and the wider world moving on the "right path". The whip is used to show juniors and animals the way, to bring them back "on track" and to help restore social relations. This guiding function of the whip implies that those who whip know the "right path" and that those who get whipped have wandered off the path and should return to it.

In daily life, the use of the *micere* expresses power hierarchies between parents and children, older and younger siblings, husbands and wives, and between older and younger age-groups. Whipping happens individually or collectively. For instance, during the initiation of new age-sets in Bashada, "older brothers" whip members of their junior age-set, whom they call their "younger brothers" (Epple, 2010b:189–190). In Hamar, whipping mostly takes place in public and is not hidden as a private affair (Lydall, 1994:205). Not only parents whip children, but they also tell older brothers to get a whip for the younger siblings. Hearing this, children often obey without being actually whipped. If they are whipped, the whipping wand is normally used on children's legs or backs, accompanied by admonishments to improve their behavior (Epple, 2010c:115). The whip is "employed with the intention to guide, control and bless children" (Epple, 2010c:109). Many of my interlocutors approved of whipping with a *micere* in general, and complained only when they considered the beating to be too heavy or unjustified (fieldnotes 2014, 2015).

Eva Poluha (2004) has noted that schoolchildren in Addis Ababa see beating by parents, teachers and older siblings as a form of love and care, and that they also differentiate the ways of beating:

> In this way children distinguished between punishments meted out by parents, who did it because they loved and cared for their children, punishments between siblings which were somehow considered legitimate because you knew you received them when you had done something wrong, and not really legitimate punishments by parents, siblings and other relatives which were harsher than the mistake committed. (Poluha, 2004:84)

Thus, children in Addis Ababa, as in Hamar district, do not disapprove of beating *per se* but of certain kinds of beating. Debates about (il)legitimate forms of beating demonstrate an imagined order of who is in a position to exercise power over whom, and in which cases. For instance, in the empirical examples given above, fathers see themselves in a position to beat their children and older siblings claim the right to beat their younger siblings but not vice versa. Claims in respect of the right to beat others express superiority,

but also responsibility to care for others, to watch and guide them, and to bring them back onto the "right path" if they leave it.

This understanding of a father's right and duty to beat his children when they run away to school is what the elder in the public speech cited above articulated. This notion of hierarchy that requires juniors to respect elders was turned on its head on the occasion, where a young policeman beat an elder, who died as a consequence. The outrage this incident created, and the collective beating of young government officials that followed the elder's death can be interpreted as an attempt to reinstall an imagined order of seniority.[90]

However, beating does not necessarily restore an imagined order in which juniors reaccept their seniors, but can lead to juniors deciding to leave their seniors and go to school in town. In a public meeting between government officials and elders, Oita, one of the local government officials, explained the relationship between the elders and his colleagues; a student summarized his speech for me as follows:

> We are all Hamar children. This land is the father's land. Today, the young children herd goats, plough the field. If they don't do it well, you beat them with the *micere*. When you beat them, the children run away and enter the hostel, they learn. Some become policemen, some become leaders. Because they have learned, they bring their education's money to you, although you have not taught us (fieldnotes 2014).

Oita pictures the situation of children in agro-pastoralist households who decide to leave the place when the elders beat them for not working properly. He argues that children leave their homesteads for hostels, because their fathers beat them. When these children later get government jobs, they share their earnings with their relatives, although, as he emphasizes, someone else has done the work of educating them. Oita continues by describing how fathers treat these children who have become government workers:

> When children put on police clothes, they make you angry. Think well about this fight! Don't get up! Your anger makes war. […] You said: Why do they stop our customs? Why do married people run away and stop our customs? Why do children become policemen and leaders? These questions are forbidden. Stop them! Let us all learn together! Let us keep the rules of the government together! Let us keep our customs together! (fieldnotes 2014).

In order to prevent a war, Oita advises the elders to let their children learn in school, to obey government rules and to restrain their anger over these children, while at the same

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[90] Lydall and Strecker (1979b:119–121) cite Baldambe describing how elders beat youth collectively for disrespecting their orders, which is also institutionalized in the inauguration of new age-sets. Epple (2010b:190) interprets Baldambe's description of this ritualized collective whipping of youth as a "warning and at the same time blessing to the new age-set".

time maintaining Hamar customs together with their school-educated children. However, tensions grew in the following months, and students and school-educated Hamar were caught up in the conflict.

6.3.3 Students' Dilemmas in the Middle of the Conflict

> Throughout 2014 and 2015 rumors circulated in Hamar district that young Hamar men (*borleno*) were recruiting a unit to shoot at Dimeka. Proof of the determination of these young men was an attack on the police and teachers on January 15, 2015, where they killed around seven policemen and one teacher in the Hamar mountains and seized many weapons from the police.[91]
>
> In the coming months, young Hamar men occasionally stopped male students who walked through Hamar territory east of the Kaeske river. They told them to stop school and heard cattle instead, and they occasionally whipped students. Some of these whipped and wounded youths left their rural schools and came to town. Many students in Dimeka were afraid to walk out of town on main roads, avoided walking into certain areas, watched their surroundings carefully, and returned to Dimeka immediately when they encountered men who vehemently disapproved of their going to school, even when they were staying at their parent's homestead (fieldnotes 2014, 2015).

These acts of whipping and intimidating students can be interpreted as a way of getting them out of school and leading them back to a life as herders. However, the aim of the students was to find employment and live in town in the future, and that of the government was to achieve schooling for all children by 2015. In this arena of contested claims to power, students experienced beatings from several sides.

> During the peak of the conflict with its shooting at Dimeka from May 26 to 28 2015, I heard on the phone and from people who had left Dimeka and arrived in Jinka about what had happened, and I learned more upon my return to Dimeka some weeks later.
>
> Residents of Dimeka decribed to me how the town of around 2000 inhabitants was encircled, so that they heard shooting from all directions, which lasted for three days. Many town dwellers left their houses at the edges of the city where the fighting took place, to move closer into the center, where they feared fewer bullets. During the shooting between Hamar fighters and government forces, consisting

[91] This attack preceded provocations by government forces and herders, whose analysis goes beyond the scope of this thesis and involves conflicts over land use and herding and hunting rights (cf. Yitbarek (2020:382)).

of policemen and -women, as well as special police and military forces, people on both sides got killed.

No number of casualties was officially announced during my fieldwork and I heard very different accounts of the number of dead and wounded people, which allow no estimation.

After this fight some town dwellers said that policemen got crazy about the loss of their colleagues and accused hostel students of collaborating with Hamar fighters. They blamed male hostel students for giving information and calling Hamar fighters on mobile phones to tell them where police forces are located and to give directions how to attack. The police caught around forty hostel students in Dimeka. They forced some of them to crawl on their knees on stony roads from the Kaeske river uphill to the police quarter. Police forces also beat some students and put them into prison without allowing any medical treatment for their wounds. The students stayed in prison until their school exams took place a few weeks later.

Several students described to me how they experienced these exams. On the day of the national exam, the police encircled the school to protect its security. When they were already sitting in class, the police brought the imprisoned students into the room, whose hands were bound. The classmates recalled how they started crying when they saw how their friends were treated and were forced to write the exams with their hands tied up.

Many students – imprisoned or not – complained that during the weeks before the exams their heads were full of fear and they could not concentrate on their studies while hearing gun shots. In addition, due to the tight security situation, many teachers had left the school some months before the end of the school year and their lessons were not replaced, so that most students did not feel prepared to write exams in all subjects.

At the end of the school term, most students were released from prison and the hostel prepared to close its doors for the summer vacation. I was told that girls were allowed to stay in the hostel during the two months of summer holidays since their relatives demanded that the girls should return to their homesteads. Government officials refused this, fearing that the schoolgirls would be married and not return in the next school year. For many schoolboys, going back to their homesteads also appeared not to be a safe option, since not all their relatives agreed with their schooling and some students had been beaten out of town in the previous months. However, many hostel boys reported that they had to return their mattresses to the hostel and were looking for a place to stay in town.

> When I was about to leave my research site, many students were searching for a room in town, which required money to pay for rent and food, but job possibilities to earn an income were very limited (fieldnotes 2015).

These incidents show dramatically how students got caught up in a violent conflict. The students' question "Where shall we go?" with which I started this study is emblematic of their dilemma. They grew up in agro-pastoralist households and under an authoritarian regime, which fight over power, and negotiate their claims through young people and their education, each attempting to influence young people's future life paths. This power struggle creates various dilemmas for students and local government representatives, but also for their kin and for the government.

While fathers claim the right to decide about the education of their children and to punish children for disobeying fatherly orders, they face the dilemma that this exercise of power does not always make their children return to them but that the children run away from the homestead and turn to another father figure, namely the state. However, students depend on the support of several "fathers", since government aid for hostel students is not provided all year round and is not sufficient to live off without additional assistance. Furthermore, the run-away children remain related to their kin and continue to form part of their sibling group, a relationship that becomes particularly stressed when their younger siblings want to become initiated or marry (cf. chapter 5).

In his speech in front of Hamar elders, Oita pictures the dilemma of school-educated Hamar as follows:

> Today, we children are in town. When we do not come to you and do not leap over the cattle, you don't like it. When we do not make the *gal* rituals, they do not like it. We are everywhere in between. We are struggling. You don't see us [and think about our problems]. In the past, we were children, you beat us, you expelled us. In the past, someone else became our father. It's like this today. We have problems of which you don't think. Stop this fight! (fieldnotes 2014).

Oita describes the life of Hamar students and government workers as a struggle, since they are "everywhere in between". He says that fathers who beat their children expelled them so that "someone else became their father". This second father figure could be a reference to men in town (*gal*) who take in individual students to live with them during school time, similar to a foster arrangement.[92] Another father figure for these children is the state, who provides hostels and jobs for them. The struggle Oita identifies for students and school-educated Hamar lies in the fact that they can please neither Hamar nor *gal*, since both demand different rituals and behavior of them. Some of these dilemmas have been discussed in previous chapters with regard to schooling versus education in agro-

[92] Among the children raised in town are also *mingi* children, who according to Brüderlin (2012:102) are said to become *gal* in town and can therefore no longer harm Hamar.

pastoralist households (chapters 2; 3), different notions of a "proper life course", their corresponding lifestyles and distinctive appearances (chapter 4), and expectations connected with initiation and marriage (cf. chapter 5). In all these matters, Hamar schoolchildren can please neither Hamar nor *gal*, since each group expects different behavior and accuses the *temara* of collaborating with the other side.

In this area of tension, *temara* have experienced paradoxical violence and have been literally beaten by both sides. Some students were beaten, or feared being whipped, for giving up herding and going to school, while others were tortured for being related to the Hamar, and were suspected of collaborating in the shooting at Dimeka, although they were themselves a target of the attack and had often left their families to attend school in town.[93] Thus, students face the dilemma of finding a way to live safely among these fights over power.

6.3.4 Struggles Over the Monopoly of Power on the Frontier

The corporal punishments that Hamar students experience made me reflect on the multiple claims to a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force, which fathers in Hamar claim in respect of their children, and which according to Max Weber is a characteristic of the nation state. Having already described a notion of fatherhood in which Hamar elders claim to legitimately make use of corporal punishment in educating their children, let us now turn to Weber's idea of a state:

> Today, however, we have to say that a state is a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory. Note that 'territory' is one of the characteristics of the state. Specifically, at the present time, the right to use physical force is ascribed to other institutions or to individuals only to the extent to which the state permits it (Weber, [1918] 1946:1–2).

The cases of physical violence described above and their interpretation in Hamar show that this monopoly of power is not granted to the state in Hamar district. The conflict in Hamar reveals a frontier situation, in which the fight over legitimate power is still ongoing. Perceptions of the government are diverse. In contrast to an already cited elder's disapproval of police interference in matters concerning fathers and children, another elder acknowledges in a public speech that the government is the highest authority:

> The government is very good. Our Hamar country is dry. The government built hospitals and schools. Today the government makes little things. We eat together. The government says: Let us become one people. The Hamar break this off. There

[93] That no student was killed in the shooting at Dimeka, although bullets reached the compounds where students and government workers lived, suggests that was a wish to threaten relatives but not to kill them (cf. chapter 5).

> is no one superior to the government. The government has no older brother. His older brother is *barjó* [well-being, God]. The government told us if we break with them, there will be war. I don't know it. I have not learned (fieldnotes 2014).

This elder compares the government's power with an "older brother". In describing the government as "having no older brother except *barjó"*, he attributes great power to the government but he does not regard it as the ultimate authority which a father incorporates. Although he acknowledges that the government builds hospitals and schools, he does not compare this to a "father" who is associated with care and high authority.

The kinship term "older brother" (*ishím)* has connotations of authority, responsibility, decision-making power and the right to punish younger siblings. However, an older brother is not as superior as a father in Hamar but rather his successor and heir. Upon a father's death, his possessions go to his first wife and his oldest son (*djeldafa*)[94] who take the largest share of the herd and distribute the rest to the younger brothers, who often complain about their small share and ask for more, for instance from their sister's husband (fieldnotes 2014). Thus, comparing the government to an older brother leaves room for a superior power, such as a father or *barjo* and hints at a hierarchy of power.

A common question concerning superiority is *Haine gaaróne*? which translates as "Who is superior/higher in rank?" This question is used, for instance, when inquiring which of a number of siblings was born first, and hints at the importance of ranking. Some elders and young men in Hamar turned upside down the power hierarchy in which the government claims to be at the top, saying: *"Mengist wosa baberne. Wedi gaaróne."* This translates as "The government is inferior to us. We are superior" (fieldnotes 2014, 2015). While this opinion could not be expressed openly in Hamar without fearing repercussions, in private conversations it reflects a ranking of claims to power, which many people in Hamar district ridiculed by referring to the government's strong military power. Nevertheless, this military power did not prevent some Hamar from emphasizing their autonomy, claiming their right to self-rule, and gathering young men for a fight against the government in town.

While the elder who acknowledges the government as an older brother warns in his speech about the possibility of war if people do not obey the government, "eat together" and become "one people", he ends his speech by questioning what he said about the possibility of war, pointing out that he has not learned in school and might be wrong. Here, he plays on a common stereotype that attributes little knowledge to people who have not been to school and ironizes the knowledge of elders. Although his estimation proved to be right and a fight started, it remains to be discussed whose rule is

[94] The firstborn son of a married man and his successor as household head is called *djeldafa* or, as Lydall (2005b:153–154) writes, *djalatta*, a regional dialect variation.

acknowledged, how "becoming one people" (*éedi kála*), unifying multiple claims to power, and making peace, can be achieved.

6.4 Dilemmas at the Intersection of Power on the Frontier

The integration of compulsory schooling in daily life and the arrangements between elders, government representatives and school-educated children play a crucial role in this peace process. Although schooling has partly been pushed back in Hamar through the destruction and closing of some rural schools, (inter)national pressure to establish universal primary and secondary education remains strong. The conflicts over children's belonging and the consequences of schooling on children's and agro-pastoralist lives in Hamar district shows that education is a political undertaking.

Student's transformations raise questions about "proper" childhood and "proper" parenthood, which, as Tatjana Thelen and Haldis Haukanes (2010) have argued, need to be considered together. How the expansion of primary schooling changes notions of childhood and parenthood has been described for Uganda (Meinert, 2009) and Northern Benin (Alber, 2010). I have discussed in this chapter how notions of childhood and fatherhood correspond to claims to power over children, and how the conflict over students in Hamar shows not only how the implementation of compulsory schooling introduces new global notions of childhood and parenthood in rural communities, but also how this creates struggles over power between fathers and their school-educated children and between elders and the government. These power negotiations take place within a larger political framework, in which agro-pastoralists and ethnic groups such as the Hamar fight over their positioning and autonomy in the Ethiopian state. Guidi (2012) frames the violent conflict in Wolaita (1999-2000) over the language of instruction in schools as a fight about the place and autonomy of Wolaita in Ethiopia's federal state, since it resulted in the creation of more administrative freedom for Wolaita.

The implementation of compulsory schooling and resistance to it constitute an act of governance in which multiple claims to power are negotiated. School-educated people are related not only to their agro-pastoral kin but also to the Ethiopian government. Young people are a group over whom decisions are made, but who want to decide themselves where they live, learn and what they work. The fights for power and over schooling and children in Hamar district create dilemmas in which individual decisions about education are entangled with larger processes of local, national and global transformation. The dilemmas emerge from struggles over power on the frontier of a state in the making and shape the lives of young people whose decisions about education also influence the process of state making and resistance to it.

7 Conclusion: Dilemmas of Schooling on the Frontier of the State

Compulsory schooling has spread around the world in recent decades, but its implementation has not always turned into a violent conflict, as in the case of Hamar district in southwest Ethiopia. Reasons for this exceptional violent implementation of, and resistance to, compulsory schooling are to be found in its specific historic, economic, social and political context. Schooling in Hamar district is entwined with a process of state making, in which the Ethiopian developmentalist state expands into its southwestern frontier, where agro-pastoralists live and try to resist incorporation into the state. In this context, compulsory schooling constitutes not only an arena, but a political battlefield in the strict sense of the term. Through schooling – its promotion and resistance – relationships are negotiated between the state and its citizen, male and female, old and young, and between people who have been to school and those who have not.

The government, the international community, parents and children claim their respective rights to decide about young people's education and literally fight over them. Being a target of the conflict and at the same time an active participant in the arena, students face multiple dilemmas in dealing with the conflicting powers that try to shape the course of their lives and their future. Young people often find it difficult to decide whether they will go to school or leave school, since they cannot simultaneously meet the expectations of all household members and the government's "modernization" imperative, but are reprimanded by both sides for their behavior. Thus, their lives are shaped by dilemmas in various fields.

The Ethiopian state, together with the international community, is trying to get all children into school, so that a life path with schooling has become an imagined "global good" for every child. This path of schooling is linked to ideas of linear progress in terms of personal and national development. Besides schooling, there are local forms of education for boys and girls, which in Hamar district are oriented towards the raising of cattle, goats and crops, and which take the livelihood of households and the community into account when deciding about young people's education. Compulsory schooling stands in competition to education in agro-pastoralist households and its corresponding life paths.

The (inter)national pressure to enroll all children in school by 2015 in order to attain the United Nations' "Education for All" goal, and to realize the developmentalist agenda of the Ethiopian government before national elections in 2015, created a violent conflict in Hamar district in 2014/15. This conflict reveals a fundamental question: who has the right to decide about the education of young people? Is it the state and its representatives, the international community, NGOs and churches, mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, husbands, or boys and girls themselves?

The fight over the right to decide about young people's education turned into a violent conflict not only because there are multiple claims to power on the frontier of the state, but also because educational decisions affect not only an individual's life but also households, relatives, the wider community and the state. The attempt to implement compulsory schooling and its violent resistance constitutes an "open moment" (Lund 1998; chapter 1.4), in which the course of social transformation and the place of the Hamar within the Ethiopian state is negotiated. In this fight over rights and domination, we see that the Hamar are related to the Ethiopian state and do not live independently from the state, although this relationship is contested. In this specific context of a frontier, the two conflicting parties, pastoralists and state representatives, try to use children and their education to negotiate their relationship and enlarge their spheres of control. Arguing on the basis of different "rights" to decide about young people's education, both parents and government representatives have started to increasingly use force to win the fight.

While parents used to bridge their relationship to the state by "giving" one or two sons to go to school, this is no longer sufficient since the government nowadays requires that every child should go to school in a time of universal school campaigns. What is often forgotten is that education is not only determined by governments and parents, but young people also decide for themselves whether they will run away from their families and move to town to go to school, or leave school. This mobility of young people creates tensions between their kin and the government. Young people who go to school broker the relationship between Hamar and the government, while remaining connected to their kin. In this way, the boundary between "Hamar" and the "government" becomes blurred and hotly debated. Living at the intersection of competing claims to power, students and local government workers find themselves in an area of tension, where their Hamar belonging and their loyalty to the government is questioned, and where they face dilemmas in taking sides.

By studying these dilemmas of compulsory schooling in Hamar, my reserach shows that an analysis of schooling and the conflict in Hamar would be incomplete if it focused only on an adult perspective and left out the role that young people play. Similarly, a study of young people and their education needs to take the wider context into account and look beyond individual lives and classrooms. Therefore, I have integrated the study of young people and their education within the study of history, economy, kinship, gender and politics. The implementation of compulsory schooling forms part of a political project of state making. While schooling is mostly absent in studies of frontiers, which focus on the use of land and natural resources, the conflict over education shows that we need to integrate schooling into the study of state making on the frontier, since young people are a social resource and their education and schooling deeply affects societies. Schooling as a global good often escapes the criticism which other development projects are subjected to. However, schooling deserves a critical approach, in order to see what it actually means in practice for diverse livelihood contexts

and for ethnic minorities. I therefore argue that the study of schooling and childhood should be integrated into the field of political anthropology, since through them we can understand wider transformation processes that affect societies at large.

While studying schooling in Hamar, I have discovered dilemmas of state making in the following fields: Compulsory schooling conflicts with economic needs and the division of labor in a subsistence-oriented agro-pastoralist economy, where various household members divide the work load, and in which young people play a crucial role (chapter 2). When children are in school, they do not contribute much to the household's economy, and they do not learn the same skills that their peers learn in agro-pastoralist homesteads. When many children go to school, households struggle to distribute the work load and secure a living. At the same time, students encounter the dilemma that their kin expect them to contribute to the household's labor or generate income for the household while they struggle to make a living for themselves in town in order to be able to remain in school.

Another dilemma which Hamar students face is that schools set themselves apart from the local environment and often look down on agro-pastoralism. Academic content and lessons taught by teachers occupy little time in rural schools, so that students spend much time waiting in classrooms (cf. chapter 3). Hamar children struggle to understand Amharic and English, the languages of instruction, and to communicate with teachers who are mostly not very experienced in the Hamar language and the local environment. Although students receive little teaching in schools, their experiences of time and space links them implicitly and explicitly to the state and national Ethiopia.

When students from agro-pastoralist homesteads move to town for schooling, they experience pressure to adapt to an urban lifestyle, which distinguishes them from their Hamar relatives at home. This process of transformation is actually an incentive for many young people to go to school. Becoming a student (*temari*) implies a change in appearance and lifestyle, and is locally discussed as children becoming *gal*, a term which translates as "enemy" or "Amhara" and is used to refer to those who claim power over Hamar, such as government representatives. Looking at clothing, jewelry, hairstyles, living environment and the consumption of food and drinks, I have described the creation of a new social group of *temara* who set themselves apart from the agro-pastoralist Hamar, and who become similar to *gal* but remain related to their agro-pastoralist kin (cf. chapter 4). On the one hand, this process is described as "civilization" and an end of "backwardness", while on the other hand it turns schooling into an institution of Amharization that is highly contested and historically associated with the integration of a diverse population in southern Ethiopia into the Ethiopian state ruled by highlanders. The connections and disconnections that schooling creates for children who come from rural homesteads and live and study in town demand high adaptation skills to navigate tensions in their movements between different social fields and correspondingly disparate aspirations for the future.

Social relations become particularly tense when young people leave their agro-pastoralist homesteads against the will of their parents, older brother or husband, and move to student hostels in town. Teenage girls who choose to evade an arranged marriage by going to school create conflicts between those relatives who support letting girls go to school and those who are opposed to it (cf. chapter 5). In fact, besides land issues, girls' schooling was mentioned as one of the main reasons for the violent conflict in Hamar in 2015. While the government outlaws certain types of marriage as "harmful traditional practices" and expects every girl and boy to go to school instead of marrying early, decisions about marriage and schooling affect not only individuals, but include a large network of relatives and households. I have shown that the promotion of girls' schooling is perceived as "stealing" girls, so that the "thieves" are intimidated by violence to make the schoolgirls leave school, come back home and marry.

Students in Hamar find themselves at a crossroads of different notions of "right" life courses, for which the gender of a person matters and implies various marriage options. In the Hamar cluster, marriage constitutes part of a long process involving rituals aimed at creating proper children and continuing lineages, and entailing the exchange of bridewealth, which establishes social and economic relations over generations. Young people who go to school and try to evade this initiation and marriage process face dilemmas, since the various expectations in respect of their life courses appear to be incompatible. When girls agree to be married to herders, this mostly means the end of their school career. When students refuse to get married in the Hamar way, their kin and neighbors accuse them of "blocking the way" for younger siblings to get married and of being a bad role model for younger students, since they do not follow the customs. Thus, students' behavior affects the enrollment of more children in school. When young school-educated men agree to become initiated and to marry a young wife from the Hamar cluster, this often means divorcing a woman in town with whom they might already have children. Decisions about schooling and marriage create dilemmas that are different for boys and girls, but in both cases they can neither lose nor gain completely.

Entwined with divergent notions of "proper" life courses are claims to power. Students' relationships with their fathers and elders become difficult when they obtain positions in the government which require them to give orders to their fathers and elders. Just as the state demands loyalty from its employees, elders and fathers also expect their children to listen to them. These conflicts over legitimate power in Hamar are discussed in kinship terms (cf. chapter 6). The state is depicted as a father and citizens as its children. In both cases, the notion of a father goes along with the right and responsibility to give children and subordinates orders and punish their misbehavior to get them back on the right track, which often involves physical force, as in herding. The question of legitimate power on the frontier of the Ethiopian state is negotiated through children and their education. At the interface of competing powers, Hamar students and government

workers face dilemmas in their position as intermediaries between their agro-pastoralist kin and the Ethiopian state, being literally beaten by both sides.

The political conditions in Ethiopia create paradoxical situations for students in Hamar. One graduate student made the following observation:

> Of course, the Hamar rejected and contested schooling. This is true at some points, because the government and its officials force the community to send their children to school. But when the children get to hostel and start school, officials don't care for the children's health, proper education and right related issues. Even when one student expresses his/her or all students' right, the hostel kicks that student out (Email from a graduate student 2018).

Although supporting schooling in general, the student understands the rejection of schooling in Hamar to some degree. He observes that the government forces parents to send their children to school by arguing that it is the children's right to go to school. However, once the children are in schools and hostels, the government does not sufficiently care for them. Paradoxically, schools promote children's rights but when students make use of their rights and criticize their conditions in schools and hostels, they are kicked out of school and see that these rights are not granted to them by the institution itself.

Many young people are made to go to school and stay in classrooms with an empty stomach, with few teachers and lessons carried out in languages that the students, and even the teachers, do not understand well, which makes schooling appear as a mere strategy of the state to exercise control and create globally acceptable school statistics. The paradoxical process of empowerment through schooling starts with the top-down approach of children's forceful school enrollment and limited political freedom to create a school system that fits the needs of the population, rather than making the population fit the school system. Although schooling is promoted as a fundamental human right and a means to enhance personal rights, the question arises whether one also has the right to decide not to go to school, for instance when the school environment is not a safe space, does not meet one's expectations, and does not provide valued skills and knowledge that help to make a living.

While my research has concentrated on the dilemmas of students in the process of state making on Ethiopia's southwestern frontier, future research could address the dilemmas of those young men who took up arms and fought against their school-educated kin and the government. Because they were hiding from the government and the town dwellers, they were not accessible during my fieldwork, but their perspective would broaden the picture of agro-pastoralist and rural youth who often receive little attention in studies of youth in Africa. My study of children and youth is deliberately focused on students from agro-pastoralist households, since they show *par excellence* that growing up in agro-pastoralist areas in southwest Ethiopia does not take place in isolation from

the rest of the world, but in relation to wider national and international transformations and frames of reference.

The conflict over compulsory schooling in Hamar district reveals fundamental dilemmas of education as a way of future-making. The future of agro-pastoralism seems insecure in times of shrinking land for grazing cattle due to bush encroachment, large-scale industrial farming, infrastructure projects, population growth and climate change. However, the future that schools promise with regard to formal employment, social mobility, poverty reduction and empowerment is uncertain, too. High numbers of school-educated unemployed youth in Ethiopian towns are still waiting for a future that schooling has promised them but failed to deliver (Mains 2011). Consequently, future studies should romanticize neither agro-pastoralist ways of education nor schooling, although both claim to lead youth into a brighter future. My study of dilemmas that young people and their kin encounter between these two kinds of education and corresponding life paths may help to look beyond narratives of "schooling for development" and against "backwardness", and to look at actual practices and multiple kinds of education in and outside school, and their implications for making a living in the present and in the future in times of rapid transformations.

Schooling may open ways into the national bureaucratic system, enabling students to learn Amharic and become familiar with the formal and informal code of conduct in government institutions. However, the conflict in Hamar shows that schooling does not automatically empower ethnic minorities. On the contrary, the role of school-educated Hamar in government offices is disputed in local politics. Working at the intersection of different claims to power, local government workers depend on the support of their kin and on the government, whose top-down policies they have to implement if they want to keep their jobs. Thus, the national political system limits their room to act in the interest of their kin, and creates dilemmas. The life trajectories of first-generation students in Hamar show how schooling and politics reach beyond the local arena and turn into an international issue. The double pressure intermediaries experience from the government and their agro-pastoralist kin became too much to bear for some, so that they quit their jobs for fear of repercussions and threats to their personal safety, and looked for new jobs outside the government. Others could no longer stand the political pressure and left the country altogether, to start a long process of migration away from the Horn of Africa.[95] This international migration, in which young people from Africa try to reach Europe via the Mediterranean Sea, has preoccupied politics in Europe in recent years.

[95] On the migration process out of neighboring Eritrea, see Treiber (2017); on female migration out of Ethiopia, see Nicoué (2018).

Since the so-called refugee crisis in 2015, politicians in Europe have increasingly debated how to prevent the migration of African youth to Europe. They often picture putting an end to international migration by supporting education in African countries, expecting that education will create jobs and economic growth, so that young people will no longer want to leave their country. This case study of Hamar district shows that schooling is not enough to find employment, and that it does not prevent young people from migrating. Indeed, school-educated people often try to realize their dreams of a better life abroad, since their hopes raised in school can often not be fulfilled in their home country.

The history of Ethiopia throughout the 20th century shows how times in which rulers and the government encouraged open political debates alternated with times in which a close network of intelligence agents tightly controlled the population and required citizens to take sides, either for or against the government (Poluha, 2004:11). After socialism and a phase of restructuring the country in the early 1990s, the political conditions in Ethiopia became increasingly repressive at the beginning of the 21st century. This repression created open resistance after the national elections in May 2015, when no seats in parliament were taken by members of opposition parties. After the peak of the violent conflict in Hamar in May 2015, youth protests started in Oromo and Amhara regions towards the end of 2015. The federal government responded to these protests by declaring several countrywide states of emergency, which extended the power of the police and military forces and led to many arrests, detentions and killings.

In February 2018, the Ethiopian Prime Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, resigned after three years of ongoing youth protests. The new Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed, launched groundbreaking reforms that enabled open political debates – for which he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in October 2019. He replaced many members of parliament and invited exiled opposition parties to return to the country. Nevertheless, ethnicity continues to play a crucial role in politics, as shown by the violent acts of ethnic displacement and killings throughout recent years. The Ethiopian state continues to struggle with issues of ethnic separation and national integration, not only on its frontier.

While Ethiopia's reforms since 2018 have brought a shift in the political power center from Tigray in northern Ethiopia to Oromo in central and southern Ethiopia, this political change affects ethnic minorities in southwest Ethiopia, their relationship to the state and its developmentalist agenda only peripherally.[96] I would like to end this study, as I started, with some glimpses into student life after my fieldwork in Hamar.

[96] The journalist Robbie Corey-Boulet (2019) reports from South Omo that government forces detained and beat pastoralists and killed at least 40 people in Salamago district in South Omo Zone during a forced disarmament campaign around the government's sugar factory. Thus, fights over legitimate power continue on the frontier of the Ethiopian state.

> In early 2019, I got the news that in Hamar district a *gal* was found dead and thus government workers left the rural area, the nearby school closed and its students stopped going to school (Email from a student 2019).
>
> While writing this conclusion in autumn 2019, I get the mail of a student who complained about the corruption in the country. He had left the hostel due to sickness, only to find the rural school he attended being closed down a few months later because of the conflict between Hamar and *gal*. Nevertheless, he sat the national exam in the school in town. When the results came out, some students were promoted to the next grade but he found that he was not included among these. Being sick and tired of these "trials and errors" in school, he wrote to me that he wanted to leave the country and come to Germany to get a chance of learning and working abroad (Email communication with a student 2019).

From these emails, we see that the conflict between Hamar and *gal* is ongoing and shapes young people's life paths. While some students proudly announced completion of their studies at universities all over Ethiopia, and their return to South Omo to seek employment, others wrote me that they had to leave school and higher education institutions since the struggles became too much for them (Emails from former students 2018, 2019). Some students found employment with their degrees and others are still waiting for it, since jobs in their field of specialization do not exist in Hamar district. It remains to see how this school-educated generation will make a living. Will they stay in town, waiting to find the jobs that they expect after their schooling, will they decide to return to agro-pastoralism, or will they seek a life abroad? These different possible life paths entail dilemmas for the young generation and their kin, who try to find a way to make a future through and beyond schooling on the periphery of the state, where battles over multiple claims to power are ongoing.

Dilemmas of schooling are also experienced elsewhere, for instance by children with a history of migration and ethnic minority status. With regard to children's right to a cultural identity, Kathleen Hall ([2002] 2009) describes how the children of Sikh migrants in Britain learn to act at times in a British and at times in an Indian way. Agro-pastoralist students in southwest Ethiopia perform multiple identities in their own country, which speaks of the discrimination experienced by ethnic minorities in the school environment, and is coupled with the adaptations and disconnections required of first-generation children in higher education institutions, as analyzed by Didier Eribon (2013).

The dilemmas created by the decision for or against schooling, and its corresponding life courses, are enlarged in Hamar district through the use of weapons on a frontier and the particular political context, in which ethnic diversity is common practice in daily life but contested on the political level that shapes daily interactions. The pronounced heterarchical claims to power make it difficult for people to walk peacefully hand in hand on the path of schooling and agro-pastoralism, or to let each other follow

different paths. To put it differently, conflicts over power neither create a system that respects education outside school nor does it provide education in schools in an accessible manner, which would support local livelihoods and diversity rather than forcing people to fit into national and global ideas of development. The dilemmas of deciding about various ways of education are connected to larger issues of life on this earth. Through their personal decisions, young people negotiate not only their own life courses but also wider transformation processes and future livelihoods.

8 Afterword: Dilemmas in Connection with Making Recommendations for the Future of Schooling

During my research, many people in Ethiopia asked me to write strong recommendations to the government and to NGOs for improving the way in which schooling is provided to pastoralists, and to get funding for textbooks, pencils, exercise books, school uniforms, schoolbags, equipment for classrooms, food, housing and medical care for students. While I always made clear that I was not an NGO employee assessing the situation in order to implement educational projects, but a researcher interested in understanding the broader implications of schooling, I collected and discussed ideas for possible recommendations during my fieldwork. Although many ideas for improving the integration of indigenous and nomadic societies in national school systems exist, which go beyond funding issues, many dilemmas remain.

Before I go into these practical details, I will briefly recall cultural biases with regard to pastoralists in Ethiopia which often impede discussions about their education. In many interviews I conducted, people who work in the field of education put the blame for low school enrollment numbers on the agro-pastoralists, arguing that mobile cattle keeping and a "backward mind" prevent them from appreciating the "benefits of schooling". Research on the education of nomads in other countries demonstrates that the dominant discourse makes mobile herding societies the scapegoats for failed national schooling and development (Dyer, 2014; Schlee, 1982; Schlee, 1984). This narrative that blames pastoralists does not show the whole picture of failed schooling. It silences the way governments offer and deliver educational services in remote areas on the peripheries of the state's territory, or to minorities, and it does not speak about the struggles of students and teachers, or of households that try to support children in school, and which I have discussed throughout my thesis.

8.1 Political Conditions Shaping the Education of Pastoralists

In Hamar district, it is not schooling *per se* that agro-pastoralist parents reject but the requirement that *all* children should go to school at the same time, and particularly that girls should go away to school. They are also not convinced by the quality of schools and their effects on children. Many nomadic societies perceive boarding schools for their children as a cultural and economic threat. Oman is an example where this is not the case but where schooling is perceived as an institution that provides economic opportunities. Among the Harasiis schooling was never intended for all children but for a selected few (Chatty, 2006). Student hostels do not necessarily provoke the resistance of people who live a partly mobile life, very dispersed or in remote areas. In these contexts, boarding schools might be more accepted if they were to take not all children but only a selected few. However, this selective approach contradicts international policies that frame school

education as a universal right for every person, from which no one should be excluded (SDG 4). The dilemma in these educational approaches lies in different attitudes to what counts as a valuable education for young people. Here, universal and local understandings of "right" kinds of education differ.

In the case of Mongolia, nomads form a central part of the state, and nomadic children have been well integrated into the school system since socialism (Penn & Penn, 2006).[97] In Mongolia, the number of girls in school even exceeds the number of boys. Parents prefer to pay for the education of their daughters rather than for their sons, since a girl's work can be more easily compensated for, and girls more reliably bring a return for the household from its investment in higher education (Häberlein, 2007:307–308). In Lesotho, the number of schoolgirls also exceeds the number of schoolboys, for the same reason that their work can be compensated for more easily than the herding that boys do (Kroeker, 2011:84).

In the literature on the education of nomads, these examples from Lesotho, Mongolia and Oman constitute exceptions, since nomadic societies mostly live not only on the geographical but also on the political periphery of the state, and thus on the margins of its distributed services (Dyer, 2006b; Dyer, 2014). These cases show that the integration of pastoralists into national school systems does not depend on practical feasibility, since nomads and nomadic girls can and do participate in national school systems. Rather, the place of many herding societies on the margins of the state and their relationship with the state impedes their access to schooling. This relationship is often marked by an expanding state trying to incorporate nomadic societies on its periphery who try to escape state control (cf. Scott, 2009). These political tensions define how, and to what extent, herding societies are integrated into the national school system. Thus, the "best practice" examples from Mongolia and Lesotho, where herding boys and girls are well integrated into national school systems, cannot be simply transferred to another political context.

8.2 Schooling Beyond Classrooms

States often use schooling as a way to sedentarize mobile people. Caroline Dyer has analyzed this aim as follows:

> [N]omadic peoples' need for externally provided education is driven to a large extent by government policies that, either deliberately or by negligence, are exerting pressures to sedentarise. Sedentary living opens up the possibility of making use of 'mainstream' schools which cater to settled populations. However, the existing model of mass educational provision is rarely sympathetic to nomadic cultures, and

[97] On the education of Nomads in Mongolia, see also Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe (2005); Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe (2006).

> children who attend these schools are less likely to value their own cultural heritage, particularly if their traditional learning patterns, or knowledge, find no place in what they do at school. While formal education may open the way to jobs within the wider economy, for which qualifications are a prerequisite, it may be part of a destabilising process that exerts pressures to bring the values of the ethnic group into line with the values of the homogenizing modern state. In this scenario, 'education' is synonymous with sedentarisation and a delegitimisation of nomadism as an acceptable way of human life (Dyer, 2006a:2).

Against this background, states use compulsory schooling as a way to delegitimize and change a mobile way of life in order to incorporate mobile communities into a nation state and make them fit the national school system.

To avoid this pressure toward sedentarization, mobile schooling is often seen as a solution for the challenges of bringing education to nomads. Schlee (1982:105) argues that mobile schooling turns public services into real services for mobile communities without forcing them to sedentarize in order to gain access to schools. However, attempts to introduce mobile schooling beside permanent schools in Hamar and in South Omo had little success. It has proved difficult to find teachers who want to move and live with pastoralists, since school-educated teachers mostly aspire to live in town. This applies not only to teachers, but also to students. Young people go to school not only to learn reading and writing, but also to gain access to an urban lifestyle, to evade conflicts with kin, an undesired marriage or hard manual labor. Schooling is more than learning in class. Schooling in town goes along with particular potentials and liberties for young people that go beyond mere intellectual outcomes. Mobile schools, where young people stay among their kin and under parental supervision, do not offer these possibilities.

The fact that going to school in town changes children's lifestyle and makes them become different from their agro-pastoralist kin is a source of local dissatisfaction. However, this transformation is a precondition for accessing the formal labor market and government jobs. It is in towns and not through rural schooling that students learn Amharic fluently and adopt urban cultural codes of conduct, which are not explicitly taught in school. The urban environment connects students with wider Ethiopia and the ruling elite, which helps to create social networks that are useful when seeking access to government jobs. Mobile and rural schooling cannot create these links and contacts. Thus, the different lifestyles and learning environments, schooling on the one hand and pastoralism on the other, place agro-pastoralist households in a dilemma which mobile schooling cannot solve. Schooling is more than just providing reading, writing and arithmetic skills, so that it is rejected or aspired to for various reasons.

8.3 Structuring Diverse Livelihoods through National Education Systems

In discussions about alternatives to existing types of schooling and solutions to the conflict, my school-educated interlocutors in Hamar did not want to give up learning in classrooms but saw it as the emblem of schooling itself. A Hamar government official described school as a "way out of darkness" and added that since this door is open, all Hamar children must go through it (Interview 2015). However, this universal requirement that all children from the age of seven should spend their days in classrooms clashes with agro-pastoralist labor demands (cf. chapter 2). If one does not want to give up teaching in classrooms, one could adapt the teaching hours to seasonal and gendered labor needs, and arrange the teaching hours flexibly. Instead of teaching from Monday to Friday and observing national school holidays, it would theoretically be possible to adapt school hours to local and seasonal labor demands, and offer a shifting teaching system that also integrates herding boys who move between cattle camps and homesteads every few months.

However, in Ethiopia the school year follows a national calendar that suits the grain-producing agricultural areas of the northern highlands and schedules summer holidays from July to mid-September. This leads to problems with agro-pastoralist working schedules, not only in southwest Ethiopia, but also, for example, in Gedeo in southern Ethiopia, where the time of schooling intersects with labor-intensive agricultural work. Between August and December, children's participation in the coffee harvest in Gedeo leads to many students dropping out of school shortly after the new school year starts in September, while children have almost nothing to do during the summer holidays (Abebe, 2007:17–18). In Hamar district, flexibility in respect of teaching time is theoretically granted to ABE centers. However, this flexibility only applies to the daily teaching time. It reaches its limits when teachers want to spend the weekend with family and friends in town, or attend teacher training courses in other cities during the summer holidays. Thus, the diversity of local livelihoods, with irregular rainfall and corresponding herding and agricultural work, challenges the organization of a regionally and nationally organized education system. To deal with this diversity, states try to make the population "legible" (Scott, 1998) and, among others, to homogenize them through schooling, but this authoritarian attitude does not work in favor of ethnic minorities and diverse livelihood practices.

8.4 Schooling and Indigenous Knowledge

Reform movements stress the importance of setting indigenous knowledge systems on an equal footing with colonial epistemologies. There are debates about integrating more indigenous knowledge in school curricula not only in Ethiopia but across many countries. Studies focus, for instance, on the decolonization of university curricula in order to

overcome Eurocentric canons and to put Africa at the center of teaching and learning (in respect of South Africa, see Mbembe, 2016; Heleta, 2018). Since Ethiopia was not colonized by European powers, its contemporary situation is slightly different from that of other African countries. However, southern Ethiopia has experienced internal colonialism by northern regimes. Thus, the structural situation of schooling in southwest Ethiopia might also be compared to the schooling of indigenous children, for instance in Latin America (Regalsky & Laurie, 2007) or Canada (Munroe, Borden, Orr, Toney, & Meader, 2013), despite the regional and national differences.

One approach to integrating indigenous communities better in national school systems is to include more indigenous knowledge in the school curriculum. In the case of Hamar district, I wonder why indigenous knowledge should be taught in schools at all, when this knowledge can be acquired in a practical, and not just a theoretical, manner outside school. Schools have knowledge to offer which parents who have not been to school cannot teach their children, such as foreign languages and literacy skills. The different knowledge that schools offer is an incentive for young people to go to school and for parents to send their children to school. Of course, lessons can be understood more easily if the content relates to something familiar and to learners' lifeworlds, but the driving motivation for children in Hamar to go to school is the idea of gaining new knowledge that goes beyond the familiar environment. There is a paradox in the degree to which schools claim a monopoly on children's learning, thus preventing them from acquiring knowledge outside school, while at the same time trying to integrate more local knowledge in school curricula. This speaks of a process that gives schools a monopoly over knowledge, since it tries to "upgrade" this out-of-school knowledge through new school certificates, instead of acknowledging it by giving children time for learning outside school spaces.

8.5 Hegemonies in the Languages of Instruction

The language of instruction in school is a political issue (cf. chapter 3). Expecting all agro-pastoralist children to be fluent in Amharic when they enter school and that they will learn English within four years in order to be able to learn all subjects in English from grade five onwards constitutes an excessive demand for children and teachers in South Omo. The rule that Amharic is the first language of instruction is a reflection of the imperial past and Amhara hegemony. With ethnic federalism, this language policy changed and mother-tongue education has been introduced in most parts of Ethiopia. However, this reform has not reached South Omo Zone. Much work and resources would be needed to develop scripts, curricula, and textbooks and to train teachers in all oral

languages of South Omo in order to implement mother-tongue education.[98] Given the multilingual population, the question also arises in which towns and schools which languages should be taught, since students and teachers have various mother tongues and may move to other localities for education and work.

The conflicts over language in Wolaita show that mother-tongue education can limit students' chances on the job market; they need to acquire substantial Amharic and English skills, which are a prerequisite for jobs outside the district and in higher education (Guidi, 2015). Thus, Guidi suggests keeping several languages in school to enable multilingualism. In the multi-lingual environment of southwest Ethiopia, communication between students and teachers could be made easier if Amharic was introduced as a second language and if teachers were trained to teach Amharic as a second language. This requires overcoming a highland-lowland bias and perceptions of Amharic and highland superiority. Many agro-pastoralist students in South Omo talked to me about Amharic as being of little use since it was only a national language, and they wanted to learn better English since they saw it as an international language that opens doors to the world. Although the curriculum demands it, many teachers do not feel prepared to teach in English and also ask for further English training. These debates about multilingualism and language hegemonies reveal tensions over cultural and linguistic diversity, national integration and processes of internationalization.

8.6 Alternative Radio and Audio Lessons

A possibility I see for making the first years of schooling more easily accessible to children and teachers alike is to introduce audio or radio lessons as a form of pre-school. Mobile phones are often used for music and I also met children who had not been to school listening to music on mobile phones or a radio in Hamar. A mobile audio device, such as a phone, a radio or a tablet, can be carried along to the fields, the water holes and the grazing areas, where mobile phones and solar panels are already in use. Radio programs already broadcast in some local languages of South Omo for two hours a day. Education programs could build upon these existing audio programs and facilities. The audio lessons could contain, for instance, Amharic and English lessons that would serve as a preparation for school and a training for teachers. Such an oral approach would have the advantage that oral languages, such as Hamar and other languages spoken by agro-pastoralists, could be directly integrated into the learning process before scripts for the language and textbooks need to be developed.

[98] Turton, Yigezu, and Olibui (2008) have started this work by writing a Mursi-English-Amharic dictionary. Petrollino (2016) and Takahashi (2015) have published dictionaries in Hamar and English. Mother-tongue education began as a pilot project in six primary schools in Aari in 2014 (fieldnotes 2014).

When I discussed this idea with government officials in Hamar, they agreed it could be one way to deliver education, but they wanted lessons in classrooms to be the main way, arguing that this was the national system into which Hamar children should be integrated (fieldnotes 2015). Thus, mobile audio teaching was not seen as a way to replace classrooms and teachers, but as a way to prepare and complement schooling. Alternative approaches to existing forms of schooling in South Omo Zone have to comply with strict government regulations and control in order to fit into the national system and satisfy leaders. Education projects carried out by (inter)national NGOs and religious organizations are liable to be accused of not following the government system and supporting opposition groups. As a result, some alternative education projects have left South Omo to move to other regions or countries, although the population accepted them and participated in their offers.

These reflections on reforms and alternatives to existing types of schooling in agro-pastoralist southwest Ethiopia show the dilemmas and difficulties of finding "easy" solutions to the struggles of students. Schooling is embedded in local, national and global frameworks and entangled with diverse economic, social and political interests. What is particularly obvious on the frontier of a developmentalist state is the power which the state tries to exercise over citizens through compulsory schooling. This attempt to exercise strict government control, which uses international ideals of schooling as a "global good" to justify its policies, creates dilemmas and meets with both resistance and support among members of the young generation who are trying to find their way into the future with and without schooling.

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Appendices

Glossary

Most terms in the glossary are written and translated according to Sara Petrollino's dictionary (Petrollino, 2016:297–332). Terms and translations added by S. Maurus are marked with *

Hamar	**English**
áigi	fence
aizí	goat hide, sheep hide; also girls' and women's leather clothes*
ánamo	friend; member of the same age-set*
ángi	man, male
anzá	teenage* girl, unmarried woman
anqási	lamb, kid
asíle	red ocher mixed with butter
barɗá	drunk; crazy*
barjó (bairó)	fate, fortune, god, destiny, good fortune, well-being
báski	lover
bel	bond friend
biŋaré	collar made of dik-dik skin for the bride; long twisted strip made of animal skin wrapped around the waist of an initiate (*maz*)
bití	ritual leader
bóoko	carved stick with a round club end; for initiate*
borqotó	headrest, stool
bunó	coffee (husk and drink)
ɓórle	young person, young men*
ɓul	jump; leap*; male initiation*
dámbi	tradition, custom, social convention
diib	steal
*djeldápa**	first son; oldest living brother*
dɔnza	elder, married man
ɗalq	speak, talk
ɗes	know
ɗoi	show
éedi	person, man
éedi naasí	human kind
gaal	struggle

gal	Amhara, enemy
gar	stop, give up, let, leave
geccó	old; elderly man and woman*
gertámo	clan
geshóno	wife
gɛshɔ	husband
giló	ritual
gish	herd (and keep cattle)
gob	run
*gol**	married woman
gúngulo	calabash ladle
gurdá	village; several homesteads*
hámi	field
im	give
imbá	owner; father*
indá	mother
injera	Amharic (እንጀራ): flat sourdough bread; the common food in highland Ethiopia and in towns in southern Ethiopia
ishím	older brother
ka	pour into something, decant, make coffee
kaná	younger brother
kána	younger sibling
kat‘	shoot
katamá	Amharic (ከተማ - ketema): town
keem	marry (for men)
keemó	marriage, wedding
kemɓ	be married (for women)
máa	woman, female
maz	a boy who has been initiated and is going through a series of rituals until he gets married; young men in liminal phase of initiation*
méeshi	evil spirit
míngi	impure, abnormal
mishá	older sister
misó	friend, hunting mate
*motala**	go-between, mediator for marriages*
múna	dumplings made of sorghum or maize flour; in shape of a roll*
naanó	girl, daughter
naasâ	child, boy; son*
naasí	child

nagáya	well, peace
niʔ	come
nitt	send
ooní	house
ootó	calf
otárra	calves
paráɲi (ferenji)*	Amharic: foreigner, white person
parsí	ale-gruel; sorghum beer*
pée	ground, floor, soil; land, country*
qaad	smear with butter
qaɗaɗ	be rubbed, be worn
qáis	forbidden, unacceptable; taboo*
qámɓi	poor, somebody who has no relatives, or cattle*
qan	hit, whip, rain, sneeze, drive, phone call, stumble
qanɗ	be hit
qans	listen, understand
*kebele**	Amharic (ቀበሌ): subdistrict*
qulí	goat
shárqa	calabash (for food)
shed	look
shekíni	beads, bracelets or necklaces made of beads
*temari**	Amharic (ተማሪ): student, schoolchild*
t'angáza	person belonging to opposite moiety (marriageable*)
ukuli	donkey; initiate in first phase of initiation*
*uta**	newly married woman, bride*
uurí	fight, conflict
waadíma	work
waakí	cattle, cow
waakí zéle	cattle enclosure
wána	different
waqáti	butter
*woreda**	Amharic (ወረዳ): district*
wócci	hard, difficult, dry (wood)
wongá	cows
yaatí	sheep

Population Census

National Census of 2007 (Central Statistical Agency, 2010:73–74)

Ethnic Groups (most used spellings)	**Population**
Ari/Aari	289,835
Arborie/Arbore	7,283 (rural: 6,598; urban: 685)
Bacha	2,630
Bodi	6,984
Brayle/Braile	5,002
Bena/Bana/Banna/Banne	27,018 (rural: 25,638; urban: 1,380)
Dasenech/Dassanech	48,072
Dime	873
Hamer/Hamar	46,534 (rural 45,582; urban 952)
Koyego/Kuegu/Kwegu	1,938
Karo/Kara	1,488 (rural 1,356, urban: 132)
Malie/Male/Maale	97,925
Mursi	7,483
Murle	1,453
Nyangatom	25,238
Tsemay/Tsamay/Tsamako	20,045 (rural 19,601; urban 444)

School Coverage in South Omo

The Zonal Education Office in Jinka calculated the following school coverages according to the percentage of the school age population in the school year 2005 E.C. (2012/13 G.C.).

District	**Total number of students Grade 1-8**	**Coverage Grade 1-8**			**Coverage Grade 9-10**			**Coverage Grade 11-12**
		male	female	total	male	female	total	
Banna-Tsamay	7,642	58	48	53,3	9,7	6	8	
Dassanetch	5,911	46	40	42,72	4	3	3,3	
South Aari	48,590	96	81	88,34	16	6	11,3	2
Hamar	4,642	45	16	31,38	4,9	4	4,41	
Maale	25,528	111	112	111,4	25	13	19,4	
Nyangatom	2,771	61	59	60,1	12	4	8,18	
Salamago	5,362	81	65	72,9	15	9	12,4	
North Aari	18,821	127	87	106,7	38	11	24,3	

Work and Life-Stages

The following tables show a brief outline of work and life stages in Hamar, which describe ideal notions of children's life courses. In practice, these stages are flexible since young people always work according to their capabilities, their schooling, the distribution of work among household members, and the season. However, these different phases of the life course and the corresponding work give an idea of young people's age and social status.

Children's First Years

Life Stage in Hamar	English Translation	Explanation
naasí ágili	baby	new born baby
naasí lika (male child) *naanó likono* (female child)	toddler, small child	child who can walk and "plays only" (*yige bish*) without working independently (*waadíma qolê*); children until around the age of seven and schoolchildren in grades one and two

Male Life Course

Life Stage in Hamar	English Translation	Explanation
naasí sháaqa	small child	child aged around seven to ten who herds kids and calves (*anqánabe otarrabe gishaina*)
ɓórlen sháaqa	young teenager	young teenager who herds goats and calves (*qullábe otarrabe gishaina);* boy who starts going to cattle camps
ɓórle	older teenager and young man	teenage boys and young men who herd cattle (*wongá gishaina*) and also live in distant cattle camps; aged from around 14 to mid-twenties or early thirties
ukuli	initiate literal translation: donkey	young man preparing for his initiation by wearing a wrap-around cloth, a goat skin around his torso and no jewelry; mostly young men in their early to late twenties
maz	newly initiated man	man who has leaped over the cattle and is in a liminal phase before marriage

dɔnza	married man, elder	married man who has leaped over the cattle and has married; he might look after the cattle and goats and work in the fields
geccó	old man	old man who no longer does hard manual work

Female Life Course

Life Stage in Hamar	**English Translation**	**Explanation**
naanó	girl	girl up to about the age of ten who helps with domestic chores and with kids, lambs and calves
anzá	teenage girl	teenage girl, possibly already married (*kemɓidi*), but still living in her father's homestead. She might herd goats (*qullán gishaina*) and helps with domestic chores, such as sweeping the goat enclosure (*sikín sa*), grinding flour (*dílin desma*), fetching firewood and water (*núu aka/noqó qolɓa*), cooking (*baxma*), working in the fields (*hámin koia*), or taking care of younger children (*naana gisha*).
uta	bride, newly married woman	newly married woman from about sixteen to the early twenties who has moved to her husband's homestead; during seclusion she does not leave the homestead nor work; as a young woman with one to two children she works in the fields and does domestic work like an *anzá*
gol	married woman	woman who has lived in her husband's homestead for several years and has ideally given birth to three or more children; she takes care of the children, works in the fields and performs domestic work
geccó	old woman	old woman who works only a little around the house and in the fields

Summary

Compulsory schooling has been promoted globally through the United Nation's Development Goals and is widely understood as a "global good". Assuming that schooling minimizes poverty and supports development and social mobility, the politics of "schooling-for-all" is rarely examined critically. However, in Hamar District in southwest Ethiopia the attempt to implement compulsory schooling turned into a violent conflict in 2014/15. This conflict over education, in particular girl's schooling, throws doubt on the universal implementation of 'Western'-style schooling. In this dissertation, I look beyond the ideology of schooling and analyze what it means in practice and how it leads to conflicts in a rural area.

In this case, schooling literally constitutes an arena in which various political actors fight over their claims to power. The conflict shows how schooling is entangled with an ongoing process of state making. The Ethiopian state, which can be called a developmentalist state, tries to enlarge its power on the frontier through schooling and by seeking to achieve (inter)national development goals. Agro-pastoralist societies, which live by mobile animal husbandry and slash-and-burn cultivation, try to secure their existence and co-determination. Students who are related both to their agro-pastoralist kin and to the government, live at the interface of these competing claims to power. This intermediary position puts them in the middle of the conflict and creates dilemmas, which I conceptualize as crossroads and points of difficult decision-making between multiple life paths.

During my fieldwork, in which I witnessed the outbreak of the violent conflict, I focused on the perspectives of young people. The lives of students are affected by schooling but their voices are rarely heard. In a multi-sited ethnography, I follow first-generation children and young people as they move from agro-pastoralist homesteads to schools and hostels in towns. I study education in and outside schools, and understand young people as actors whose lives are interwoven with larger processes that shape them, and which they also co-create.

The dissertation identifies dilemmas of schooling in five fields: (1) in regard to schooling and its effects on agro-pastoralist household economies, (2) in the ideology and practices of teaching and learning in rural schools, (3) in relation to the (dis)connections between urban and rural lifestyles, (4) in regard to marriage and initiation and their underlying gender relations, and (5) in the fight over multiple claims to power.

Looking at these dilemmas, the phenomenon of high unemployment rates among school-educated youth, and the decreasing land that is available for agriculture and pastoralism, the dissertation shows the dilemma of giving recommendations for the future: schooling appears to be one possible path into the future for some children, but not a sustainable way for every child. The conflict raises the question of who has the right to decide about the education of children. Is it the state, the parents, or the girls and boys themselves? My discussion of the dilemmas arising from these decisions shows how young people negotiate competing ways of living which shape personal and global processes of transformation.