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**Doing development and being Gurage:
the embeddedness of development in
Sebat Bet Gurage identities**

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The Development Policy and Practice Discipline
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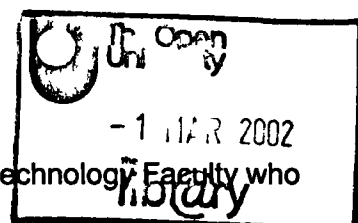
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Abstract

This thesis aims to contribute towards an understanding of the relationship between ethnicity and development in Africa. I examine the complex relationship between ethnicity and communal action in the Gurage People's Self-help and Development Organisation (GPSDO), a federation of ethnically based Development Associations in Ethiopia. I investigate the extent to which concepts such as participation and accountability, used by dominant development discourses to analyse the relationship between development agencies and their beneficiaries, are applicable to ethnically based indigenous development associations. These discourses are juxtaposed with the ways that the development associations, their stakeholders and beneficiaries conceptualise their relationships and the processes and purposes of development. In this thesis, I argue the trusteeship constructed between indigenous ethnically based development associations and their beneficiary communities is underpinned by indigenous perceptions of civic virtue, the rights and obligations inherent in notions of ethnic citizenship. Although concepts such as, participation and accountability are used in Gurage development discourses, their meanings are related to the values and practices embedded in Gurage notions of citizenship. I argue that to understand the relationship between indigenous ethnically based development associations and their beneficiaries, one must first analyse the complex web of rights and obligations that are embedded in their perceptions of what it means to be a good citizen. I argue that ethnicity can act as a resource to be harnessed for development purposes and that the contested values embedded in Gurage ethnic identities act as a point of reference in the construction of trusteeship between GPSDO and its beneficiaries. Furthermore, for Gurages, the processes of development are part of the formation of civic virtue and thus, central to the construction of their ethnic identities.

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Glossary

Allemgana – Walamo Road Construction Association (AWRCA)

Multi-ethnic, although mainly Kistane Gurage, road construction organisation founded in 1961 to link the eastern Gurage areas with Addis.

Arafa (Eid El Adha)

Islamic celebration for which all Moslem Gurages are expected to return to their home village.

Awraja

Defunct administrative unit used in imperial and Derg times covering several Worredas. Roughly approximate to the current zone.

Balebbat

Rural landowner, usually a clan head, appointed by the imperial government to collect taxes and maintain rural order.

Beta Gurage Lemat Deregiti (BGLD) Gurage Houses Development Association

Development Association formed by the Gurage Diaspora in the USA. Currently involved with a compensatory education scheme and has previously supplied educational material to Gurage schools distributed by GPSDO.

Buda

Gurage leather working caste.

Debo

Rotating single sex agricultural labour group consisting of six to fifteen members.

EC: Ethiopian Calendar

Julian calendar. Approximately seven years and nine months behind the Gregorian calendar.

Enamor Development Committee / Association (EDC / EDA)

One of the seven **GPSDO** affiliates formed in 1961.

Enset (Ensete Adulis)

The 'false banana tree'. The main crop of Gurageland and much of southern Ethiopia. This drought resistant plant produces an edible root and stem which are processed into 'kotcho' or 'wusa' the Gurage staple food.

EPRDF: Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front

Ruling party in Ethiopia consisting of a federation of several regionally and ethnically based affiliates established by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in order to broaden its legitimacy.

Fuga

The lowest caste of Gurage artisans. In the past they were carpenters and performed ceremonial functions.

Gabbar system

A Feudal system imposing land appropriation by the Shoan Amhara elite and incorporating a system of tithes payable by serfs.

GPDF: Gurage People's Democratic Front

Opposition party allegedly linked to prominent **GPSDO** officials.

GZDA: Gurage Zone Development Association

Formed in 1998 through the merger of the Gurage Development Association, the Kebena Development Association and the Marako Development Association all founded in 1992.

GZNDM: Gurage Zone Nationalities Democratic Movement

The ruling political party in the Gurage Zone. Before 1998, each of the three nationalities in the zone had separate parties: Gurage People's Revolutionary Democratic Movement, Kebena National Democratic Organisation and Marako People's Democratic Organisation. A member of the Southern Peoples' Democratic Front (SPDF) which is an affiliate of the ruling **Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)**.

House (Bet)

Collection of affiliated clans that inhabited a given territory at a certain point in time. All Sebat Bet Gurages are members of one of the seven houses.

Idir

Burial societies that provide social welfare and financial support in times of crisis such as bereavement and major illness. Most Ethiopians belong to at least one Idir. Usually affiliation to these institutions is based on residence or occupation. However, Gurages have Idirs based on house, clan, sub-clan and family. Currently there is a great deal of research by NGOs and academics into their potential to act as agents of development.

Ikube

Rotating credit associations. NGOs including GPSDO have attempted to harness them for development purposes such as micro-finance projects.

Jafforo

Village or a common main street shared by a village of around 60 households.

Kayewa

see **Yeka**

Kebele

Urban dwellers association. The smallest urban administrative unit.

Listro

Shoe shiner, the archetypal first occupation for male Gurage migrants.

Mahber

Literally association. Usually used to refer to an association that celebrates saints' days.

Mercato

The main open air market in Addis Ababa, which is traditionally associated with the Gurages.

Mescal

The finding of the true cross. The most important orthodox Christian festival for which all Christian Gurages are expected to return to their home village.

Moher Development Committee / Association (MDC / MDA)

One of the seven **GPSDO** affiliates formed in 1961.

Nefura

Gurage blacksmith caste.

Peasant Associations (PA)

The lowest rural administrative unit serving a population of around 5000. Originally established by the Derg to facilitate rural participation in government and later becoming a means of wealth extraction and social control. They are elected committees, which in theory are a form of grassroots government.

Sebat Bet

A confederation of the seven **houses** (bets) inhabiting western Gurageland: Cheha, Enor & Aner, Eza, Geta, Gomare, Indegagn and Moher & Akilil.

Senbete

Informal social gathering after church at which the community share food and tella (beer). Communal issues are discussed. Used as an access point by Development Associations.

Shango

A customary dispute settlement forum. There are several tiers of this institution, which relate to the layers of Sebat Bet Gurage identity. They include: Family, **Jafforo/** village, Sub clan, Clan, House and Sebat Bet – **Ya Joka**

Wolleba

Farming caste. Approximately 95% of the Gurage population.

Workers Party of Ethiopia (WPE)

Political party created by the **Derg** in order to broaden its base of support.

Worreda

Administrative unit containing around 60 **peasant associations** and a population of approximately ¼ million.

Ya Joka (place name)

The supreme **Shango** for Sebat Bet Gurages.

Ya Kitcha

Gurage customary law. Recently 'modernised' and transcribed in a controversial process facilitated by GPSDO.

Yeka (Moher and Kistane Gurage dialects) or Kayewa (other Sebat Bet dialects)

A group that enforces social obligations under the Gurage traditional law. In rural Moher all members of the relevant **Shango** become Yeka. In Enamor and other Sebat Bet areas, only relatives and clansmen participate in Yeka.

Zowa

The practice of removing an item from a person's house to remind them to meet their financial obligations such as **Idir** contributions and fines.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1 Statement of issues

This thesis aims to contribute towards an understanding of the relationship between ethnicity and development in Africa. The thesis focuses critically on the notion of development as practice, which has been defined as intentional efforts to “ameliorate the disordered faults of progress” (Cowan and Shenton 1996 p 7). The thesis examines how, in a particular Ethiopian case study, ethnic identities have been harnessed for, or have directed, communal action that seeks to improve the material or social conditions of existence. In order to understand this process, I examine the relationships constructed by The Gurage People's Self Help and Development Organisation (GPSDO), a federation of Sebat Bet Gurage (the seven western houses of the Gurage, see pp 7-9) ethnically-based development associations, and the communities they seek to serve. I investigate the extent to which the concepts such as participation and accountability, used by dominant development discourses to analyse the relationship between development agencies and their beneficiaries, are applicable to ethnically-based indigenous development associations. These discourses are juxtaposed with the ways that the development associations, their stakeholders and beneficiaries conceptualise their relationships, and the processes and purposes of development.

There has been much academic interest in ethnicity in Africa, which has focussed particularly on the following issues: histories of ethnic identities; the relationships between ethnicity and the state; and the causes and effects of ethnic conflict. However, there is little published research on the relationship between ethnicity and development as practice. Current development discourses stress the importance of engaging with indigenous agencies of development. However, there has been little attempt to

understand the role of ethnic identities within them or to understand the ways in which they and their beneficiaries conceptualise their relationships.

In much of Africa, official discourses regard ethnicity as a threat to the viability of the state and national integration, which are viewed as preconditions for development. Hence, governments and development agencies generally regard ethnicity and ethnic identities, as hampering development. In many African countries, community development organisations openly or covertly based on ethnic identity play a significant role in development and have been integrated into their countries' political systems. However, in Ethiopia the state actively promotes ethnicity as a legitimate basis of association. Currently the activities of ethnically-based development associations, and the nature and implications of their ethnic basis, have been overlooked by the dominant development discourses.

In this thesis, I argue that the relationship constructed between indigenous ethnically-based development associations and their beneficiary communities is best understood as a form of trusteeship (Thomas 2000c), which is underpinned by indigenous perceptions of civic virtue, the rights and obligations inherent in notions of citizenship (Lonsdale 1992). This perspective is different from mainstream approaches, which tend to conceptualise trusteeship in terms of formal relationships and practices such as mechanisms of accountability and community participation in development. Although concepts such as participation and accountability are used in Gurage models of development, their meanings are related to the rights and obligations embedded in Gurage notions of citizenship. Thus to understand the relationship between indigenous ethnically-based development associations and their beneficiaries, one must first understand the complex web of rights and obligations that are embedded in their notions of what it means to be a good citizen. These notions relate directly to ethnic identities as the construction of civic virtue is an integral aspect of the construction of ethnic identities (Lonsdale 1992). As such, the role of ethnicity within these organisations is complex. While ethnicity can act as

a resource to be harnessed and a determinant of collective action, for Gurages, the processes of development are part of their construction of civic virtue and thus, central to their ethnic identities.

2 Background

2.1 Ethiopian ethno-federalism

In many African countries, ethnic identities are regarded as a political threat, which must be suppressed. In the past, Ethiopia was synonymous with ethnic conflict, however, since the assumption of power by the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in 1991, Ethiopia has taken an innovative approach to managing ethnic diversity. In Chapter 2, I argue that the current Ethiopian constitution uses an essentialist conception of ethnicity, and uses ethnic identities as the basis for political empowerment. Under a federal structure largely based on ethnic identity, the country is divided into 14 administrative regions, which officially exercise a degree of autonomy from central government. Furthermore, the state promotes ethnicity as the primary legitimate basis of political organisation and, by implication social organisation. Officially, the languages and cultures of all Ethiopian ethnic groups are promoted by the state, and all ethnic groups have the right to determine their own destinies up to and including the right to independence.

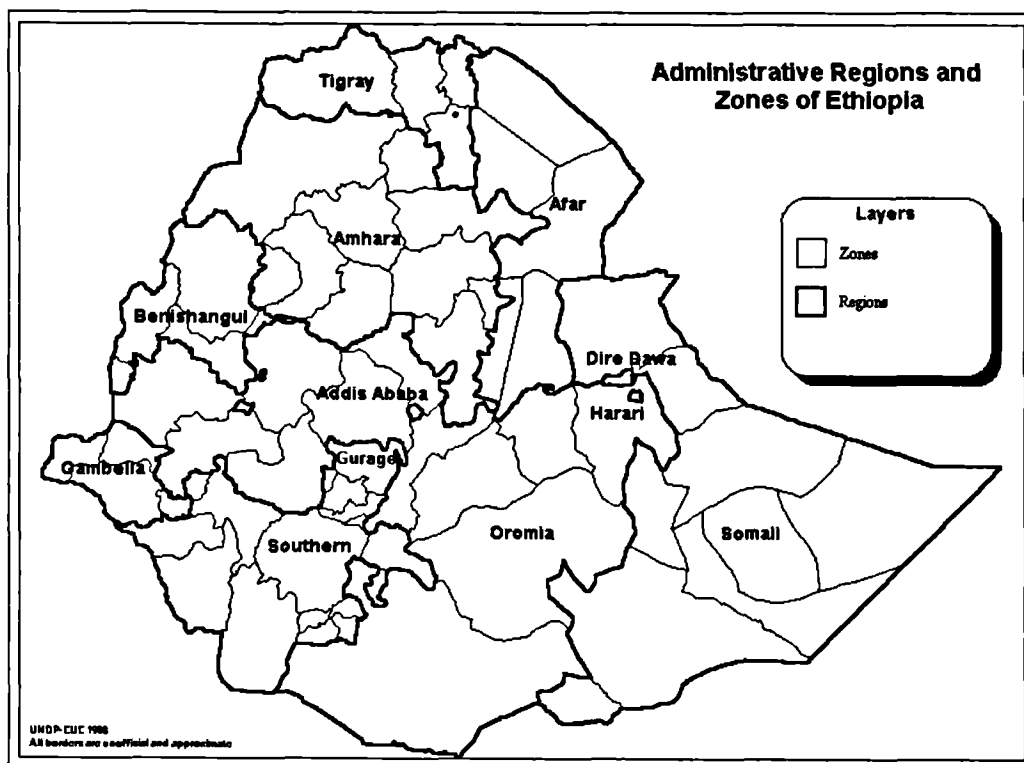
This use of ethnicity as a central organising principle has also been reflected in the state's development strategy, which promotes rural self-sufficiency within ethnically defined political units. In order to achieve this aim, the state promotes ethnically-based development associations across Ethiopia. However, as I discuss in Chapter 3, the organisations supported by the state at present have little autonomy from it, and, as discussed, in Chapter 7, the state has been less than supportive of independent

development associations. Although an evaluation of the nature of ethno-federalism is not the main focus of this thesis, analysis of the relationship between GPSDO and the state has wider political implications, as it contributes to an understanding of nature and motivations of ethno-federalism. In Chapter 7, I outline the current relationship between GPSDO and the state.

At a superficial level, the approach the Ethiopian State has adopted seems to reflect a conception of ethnicity that enables its positive aspects to be harnessed for development purposes. Furthermore, the early 1990s witnessed an opening of political space, which has facilitated the expansion of associational life. Whilst in other African countries, ethnicity is a politically sensitive subject which would make researching the relationship between ethnically-based organisations and development difficult, I expected that there would be a relatively open debate in Ethiopia. Thus, I assumed that, in the current political climate, Ethiopia would provide both examples of ethnically-based development and an open environment for their study.

Ethiopia is the second poorest country in Africa, and, for several decades, it has been synonymous with war, cyclical famine and dependence on foreign aid. The thesis focuses on a long-term, indigenous, Ethiopian success story, which could have lessons for other countries. The Gurage Road Construction Organisation (GRCO) renamed The Gurage People's Self-help and Development Organisation (GPSDO) in 1988 is the oldest and most successful indigenous development association in Ethiopia. As such, it makes an ideal case study to examine the relationship between indigenous development associations and their beneficiaries.

2.2 The Gurage



Gurageland is located in the southernmost part of the central Ethiopian plateau approximately 150 - 250 km south of Addis Ababa. Most of Gurageland is contained within the Gurage administrative Zone of the Southern Ethiopian Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Administrative Region. The estimated population of Gurageland is three to five million with around 2 million being Sebat Bet Gurages (Gabre 1997). In addition, it is estimated that around 60% of Gurages now reside outside Gurageland¹ with Gurages making up around 20% of the population of Addis Ababa (Alemayehu 1999).

According to oral traditions, published by the Gurage Zone Culture Department (Alemu 1999), the Gurages are composed of three distinct groups of people, from Eritrea, eastern Ethiopia and southern Ethiopia, who migrated to Gurageland around the 13th century. These migrants assimilated the indigenous population (Shack 1966 and 1964), a process that appears to have continued, as Gedamu (1972) suggested that the Kistane Gurages

¹ I was unable to verify the accuracy of this statistic, particularly whether or not it accounts for cyclical migration and if it includes women and children.

assimilated other groups such as Oromos. However, at present Gurages believe that their ethnic boundary is fixed.

The first major ethnographic work on the Sebat Bet Gurages (Shack 1966) suggested that Gurages had a uniform culture and social organisation. However, this view was contested by many Gurage intellectuals, notably Gedamu (1972), and was subsequently revised (Shack 1974) to take account of significant differences in culture and social organisation between the Sebat Bet, the focus of Shack's original research, and other Gurage groupings. The Gurages are divided into seventeen houses, often referred to as tribes by informants. The Gurage houses are linguistically linked groups of clans, who inhabit a given territory, with which they are closely associated. According to most authorities, the Gurages have never had centralised political leadership, instead they had a segmentary political system with authority vested in clan heads and elders (Shack 1966; Alemu 1999).

Sebat Bet Gurages are patrilineally organised with exogamous clans, hence there is intermarriage between clans and houses with the wife adopting the clan and house of her husband. There has been much migration within Gurageland, and currently men maintain their original house and clan affiliations. For example if an Eza household relocates to Cheha, they and their male children will remain Eza. This is discussed further in Chapter 8.

The rural economy is based on subsistence agriculture, with the main crop being Enset (Ensete Adulis), the 'false banana tree' which produces an edible root and stem; this is supplemented, in some areas, by cash crops such as chat. However, the population densities are such that it is necessary for almost all male Gurages to migrate to other areas of Ethiopia to generate income (Gabre 1995). The process of male urban migration is examined in detail in Chapter 4.

According to urban and rural Sebat Bet intellectuals, the Sebat Bet confederation took its current form around the time of Amhara expansion at the end of the nineteenth century, and is made up of the seven houses inhabiting the western part of Gurageland, with a population estimated at around 2 million.

According to Shack, before 1875, the Amist Bet (five houses) formed a federation of Cheha, Moher, Geta, Enamor and Eza (Shack 1966). The Sebat Bet came into existence some time after 1889, when Akilil and Wollane joined the existing five (Shack 1966). However Shack's definition of the Sebat Bet is currently contested by many Sebat Bet intellectuals who suggest that at present the Wollane are not considered as Sebat Bet. Shack also excludes the Gomare and Indegagn houses, which are currently regarded as Sebat Bet. Furthermore the Moher and Akilil elders suggest that they have always been one house.

According to GPSDO, Gurage intellectuals and the Gurage Zone government (Alemu 1999) the following houses currently make up the Sebat Bet Gurage:

- Cheha
- Enor & Aner (Enamor)
- Eza
- Geta
- Gomare
- Indegagn
- Moher & Akilil

At the time of writing, these houses were located in the following Worredas (administrative districts with a population of around 250 000):

- Cheha - Cheha Worreda
- Enor & Aner and Indegagn - Enamor Worreda
- Geta and Gomare - Geta and Gomare Worreda
- Eza and Moher & Akilil - Eza and Wollane Worreda

2.3 The Gurage People's Self-help and Development Organisation

The Gurage Road Construction Organisation (GRCO) was established in 1961 in Addis Ababa. The organisation was founded by the urban elite, at the request of rural elders, in order to activate urban-rural linkages within the Sebat Bet Gurage communities to mobilise communal resources for the purpose of constructing roads to connect Gurageland to the national highway system. The organisation has expanded its activities from these original aims to encompass a wide range of rural development activities and, in 1988, the organisation changed its name to the Gurage People's Self-help and Development Organisation (GPSDO).

Currently it acts as an intermediary co-ordinating the activities of seven autonomous development committees or associations based on house affiliations². In the thesis, I refer to these institutions as both sub-committees and development associations because both terms were used by informants; for example, the Enamor Development Association is the same entity as the Enamor development sub-committee. Although their purpose is rural development, the organisations are based in Addis Ababa, and committee members are all Addis residents. An elected executive committee of 14 members, with two members representing each house, undertakes day to day management of GPSDO³. The executive committee is responsible for implementing the overall strategy of GPSDO, decided by the general assembly, to which it reports. The general assembly consists of 55 representatives appointed from each house by the sub-committees.

The seven autonomous sub-committees, each representing a Sebat Bet house, have a similar organisational structure. Day to day management by the sub-committees is also by an elected executive committee of 14 members, who report to a house-based general assembly of 55 members selected by the committee. All work undertaken by the elected

² Moher and Akilil have separate development associations but share representation on GPSDO bodies.

³ The organisational structure of GPSDO changed after the fieldwork. The organisation has appointed a full time, paid Executive Director, who has responsibility for the day to day operations.

representatives in the sub-committees and GPSDO is unpaid and voluntary, and in Chapter 6, I examine notions of voluntarism within GPSDO. In theory, officials must seek re-election every two years, however, as discussed later this has not always been the case.

Since the completion of the road network, the main function of GPSDO has been to coordinate, build the capacity of, and provide technical assistance to the sub-committees. To facilitate this process it, has employed project officers to assist in producing proposals and designing projects. As the registered legal entity, GPSDO initiates partnerships with international NGOs on behalf of the sub-committees. In theory, each house committee meets on a weekly basis, sharing the facilities of GPSDO on alternate days, to discuss ongoing development issues.

In the past, each house sub-committee had a rural sub-committee consisting of elders, representatives of the government and other concerned people, which acted as a point of liaison with the rural community. However, whilst some of these committees continue to function, others have lapsed or are only engaged on an ad hoc basis for specific purposes.

After the construction of the first road, GRCO invested surplus money into a public transport operation to ensure a sustainable supply of funds for future operations. These contributions were supplemented by charging tolls on the road they had constructed, and the organisation was well financed. However, as discussed in Chapter 7, in 1998, the government prohibited the practice of charging tolls, and the activities of the transport operation were constrained. As its main sources of income have been removed, GPSDO is now in financial difficulties. The financial position of the sub-committees and their sources of income vary. Most sub-committees receive ad hoc contributions from urban clan and house based Idirs (burial societies) and the urban and rural communities for specific projects. Some sub-committees also have long-established links with Idirs, which

charge their members a one Birr (nine pence) monthly development levy on behalf of the sub-committee.

The achievements of GRCO/GPSDO and the sub-committees have included:

- The construction and maintenance of over 500 km of all weather roads
- The construction and maintenance of six high schools
- The construction and maintenance of many primary schools
- The electrification of several towns
- Providing several towns with access to water
- Installing telephone services in several towns
- Constructing adult literacy centres
- The construction of seven women's literacy centres and seven kindergartens in conjunction with international NGOs.
- Lobbying all levels of government for services for Sebat Bet Gurageland.

The profile of GPSDO was such that it was invited to participate in the United Nations World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995.

3 Structure of the thesis

In Chapter 2, I review the relevant literature on the meaning of development and the role of development agencies in development as practice. I then explore issues relating to the construction of trusteeship between NGOs and beneficiaries, with particular reference to indigenous development associations. In section 3, I examine theoretical approaches to ethnicity in Africa, and outline the lack of research into the relationship between development as practice and ethnicity. I then look at the uses and limitations of ethnicity as an analytical concept. I conclude the Chapter by drawing together the previous

discussions and presenting an approach to analysing the role of ethnicity in indigenous ethnically-based development associations.

In Chapter 3, I detail my methodological approach. I emphasise the importance of applying analytical concepts in the terms used by informants, and discuss the possible impact of my research on Gurage identities and relationships within the group. The chapter outlines the process of data gathering, and explains the reasoning behind the selection of the case study organisations, informants, and the implications of these decisions.

In Chapter 4, I outline the causes of Gurage migration and discuss the social world constructed by Sebat Bet Gurage migrants. I emphasise the centrality of social networks, and the rights and obligations embedded within them to Sebat Bet Gurage migratory survival strategies. I argue that these relationships, based on an institutionalisation of urban reciprocity and urban rural inter-dependence, are an essential element of Gurage citizenship.

In Chapter 5, I discuss Sebat Bet Gurage perceptions of the purpose of development. I relate these perceptions to their survival strategies and notions of civic virtue. The central argument is that, according to the dominant Sebat Bet Gurage perception, development must facilitate their survival strategies and take the forms of a tangible public good, which is in turn interpreted by their notions of civic virtue.

In Chapter 6, I examine Gurage perceptions of the process of development, and explain the forms of trusteeship constructed between GPSDO and Sebat Bet Gurages. I explain indigenous perceptions of terms such as participation, voluntarism and accountability. I argue that these terms are made meaningful to Gurages by reference to the rights and obligations embedded in Gurage notions of civic virtue.

In Chapter 7, I trace the evolution of the relationships between GRCO / GPSDO and the Ethiopian state. I argue that the survival of the organisation is due to accommodations constructed between the Gurage elite and the imperial and Derg regimes. However, this accommodation has broken down under EPRDF rule, due to a range of factors including, competing models of development and political pressures.

In Chapter 8, I conclude the thesis by drawing together the previous chapters to explain the role of identities in the indigenous Sebat Bet Gurage model of development. I outline the contemporary constructions of Gurage identity, and examine the various roles that identities have played in GPSDO, including the role of ethnicity as a resource to be harnessed for development purposes. I outline how ethnic and other identities have been constructed to make sense of conflicts within GPSDO and its relationships with external forces. I also look at contemporary social and demographic changes, and how these have affected Gurage identities and GPSDO. I conclude by explaining how communal participation in development has become an integral aspect in the dominant constructions of Gurage civic virtue. As such, I argue that under the current constructions of Gurage identities, to be a Gurage, one must participate in development.

Chapter 2

Literature review:

Ethnically-based development associations, development as practice and trusteeship

1 Introduction

This chapter is structured into three sections. Section 2 examines how development and the relationship between agents of development and their beneficiaries have been conceptualised. In section 3, I examine the theoretical approaches to ethnicity in Africa. I investigate why there has been little examination of the relationship between ethnicity and development as practice, and what notions of ethnicity are implicit in the dominant development discourses. I conclude the section by reflecting on the uses and limitations of ethnicity as an analytical tool. In section 4, I synthesise the previous two sections, and examine ways in which the role of ethnicity within indigenous development organisations can be conceptualised.

2 Development

This section examines the literature on the relationship between indigenous development associations and the communities they seek to serve. I begin by examining the meanings of the term development particularly focusing on the notion of trusteeship between the agents and objects of development. I then locate the role of indigenous development associations as agents of development in the dominant development discourses. I then discuss the various practices that the literature suggests are used to construct the trusteeship between development agencies and the community. The section concludes

with a discussion of the role of indigenous development associations in civil society.

2.1 The meanings of development

Development has always been a contested concept. Recent debates have sought to demystify the conceptualisations of development and place them in historical context. This section draws heavily on three particular texts, which have sought to synthesise and take forward the debate, (Cowan and Shenton 1996; Thomas 2000a; Thomas 2000c). Thomas distinguishes three interrelated meanings of development, which are important for this thesis:

1. Development as an evolutionary historical process, particularly the immanent development of capitalism.
2. Development as practice, defined as, intentional efforts to “ameliorate the disordered faults of progress” (Cowan and Shenton 1996 p 7).
3. Development as a vision of a desirable society.

These authors analyse the evolution of the concept of development in its historical context. Thus, for Cowan and Shenton, the modern doctrine of development was constructed to alleviate the social disruption that was caused by and threatened industrial capitalism. Later the geopolitical environment shaped the nature of the debates about the meaning of development. The cold war period was characterised by global competition between capitalism and state socialism, which, as Thomas points out, was reflected in the debates about the nature of development. In this period, the competing models of a desirable society generated distinct forms of development. According to Thomas, in the post cold war period the global dominance of liberal capitalism has led it to become the only point of reference for debates about the nature of development (Thomas 2000c). Critically, these authors suggest that currently the dominant meanings of development are determined by the most powerful development actors, multilateral agencies and those

linked to northern governments. This has led to the dominance of 'development as practice', as development is defined as being whatever is done in the name of development by powerful development agencies. For Thomas, this has led to visions of development becoming little more than techniques and targets, with little understanding of the relationship between evolutionary and purposive development (Thomas 2000c). As debates about practice within powerful sectors in the context of liberal capitalism are what define development, it is difficult for the marginalised to contest these meanings.

Debates about the meaning of the term development are now restricted to disputing the nature of the relationship between capitalism and purposive development and who has the right to perform development on behalf of the marginalised. According to Thomas, "the suggestion that development in its dominant meaning is now somewhat restricted and refers mainly to practice does not mean that debates and disagreements about development have ceased. However, the main axes of debate have shifted from opposition between major theoretical positions or models of social transformation to differences about the form and extent of intervention or which agencies have the right to intervene." (Thomas 2000c p779) Thus, the dominant development paradigms now share a basic assumption about the nature of the relationship between liberal capitalism and development. Debates now focus on the nature of intervention in the market, ranging from those who regard the market as incapable of bringing about development and requiring regulation, to those who regard the role of intervention as being to ameliorate the worst aspects of the market.

The dominant forces that currently drive the development discourses should not be seen as monolithic and all-powerful. Thomas argues that development agencies have adopted concepts, such as sustainable participatory development, and can be influenced by civil society. However, the logic of Thomas' argument would suggest that although development agencies have adopted the language used by civil society this process has

significantly changed the meanings of already contested concepts. This point is discussed below in relation to participation and civil society.

Critiques of the dominant development discourses do not all question the relationship between liberal capitalism and development. However, they generally reject the notion that development agencies in the north should decide how other people should be developed. Anti-development writers contest northern constructions of development goals and processes (Escobar 1992). Whilst people-centred approaches such as that of Korten (1995), are based on a normative vision of development, with guiding principles such as, reducing poverty and increasing freedom. This approach involves redistribution of power and transforming institutions and it is thus, for Thomas, an advance on development as practice (Thomas 2000c). Although Thomas criticises people-centred approaches for being theoretically incomplete and lacking suggestions of how to implement their visions, the central thrust of people-centred development is that theorists do not implement their visions. Rather, it is the 'objects' of development, the beneficiaries, who are the primary agents of social change. As a critique of mainstream approaches, people-centred development provides important reminders of the principles that should guide development interventions. People-centred approaches also focus on the importance of small-scale interventions, and thus provide the beginnings of a theoretical approach to conceptualising localised development endeavour, something the mainstream approaches have failed to do.

For the purposes of this thesis, the salient distinction between the dominant development discourse and alternative approaches is the way in which they conceptualise the nature of the relationship between development agencies and beneficiaries. Thomas suggests that, "both mainstream interventionism and people-centred development concentrate on development as practice. The debate is about whether development should be done on behalf of others or whether people should somehow be empowered to develop themselves" (Thomas 2000c p782).

Although this issue has increasingly been seen as a central aspect of the development process, attempts to theorise the relationship between agencies and beneficiaries are relatively new. Cowan and Shenton apply the term of trusteeship to situations when one agency is entrusted to act on behalf of others. Thomas suggests trusteeship is dependent on the effectiveness and legitimacy of development interventions (Thomas and Allen 2000b). However, the conception of trusteeship outlined by Cowan and Shenton and Thomas is in itself a form of legitimacy, and thus to suggest that trusteeship is based on legitimacy seems somewhat tautological. Furthermore, the terms effectiveness and legitimacy are in themselves complex and ambiguous and require further explanation, particularly regarding, who defines them, who determines whether interventions are legitimate and effective and on what basis, and the nature of the contradictions between these terms.

Thomas suggests that people can only become their own agents of development if they are empowered through promotion by an agency such as an indigenous development association (Thomas and Allen 2000b). In this case, the leadership becomes the trustees. The nature of this trusteeship raises a number of questions, which will be addressed by the thesis, such as: Are indigenous leaders any more accountable than other development agencies? Do they have to be accountable? Who are they accountable to? Does this accountability take different forms related to the local conditions? This leads to a more fundamental question of whether the concepts used by the dominant development discourses are appropriate to analyse the relationships between the various types of indigenous development associations and their beneficiaries. Thomas suggests that the term trusteeship should not be given a universal meaning and should not be applied indiscriminately to all development agencies, as cultural differences must be taken into account (Thomas and Allen 2000b). However, the terms community and culture must be critically evaluated (see sections 2.2.2 and 3) and related to an understanding of how local people construct their own meanings of the term development. The thesis will investigate

how meanings of development and trusteeship are related to indigenous cultures, people's survival strategies and the relationships embedded within them. More fundamentally, the thesis critically examines the meaning of the idea of empowering people to direct their own development through indigenous development associations.

1.2 Purposive development and the role of NGO interventions

This section focuses on NGOs, as the literature on NGOs and development can act as a point of reference in examining the role of indigenous development associations and the nature of their trusteeship. The section critically examines the issues that the dominant development discourses treat as the basis of the trusteeship between NGOs and the beneficiaries of their activities. It focuses particularly on how and if these concepts can be applied to indigenous development associations. The development discourses discussed below were constructed as a means of analysing and to some extent legitimising the activities of international NGOs. Research into indigenous NGOs has been less evident and has tended to follow the debates related to international NGOs. The most accessible literature on indigenous ethnically-based NGOs has focused on Hometown or Ethnic Associations in West Africa with more limited research on the Harambee movements in Kenya and Sudanese Migrant Workers' Associations. In many parts of Africa, these organisations play a crucial role in the social, political, economic and cultural life of the population. According to McNulty, Hometown Associations are the most important element of civil society in Nigeria (McNulty and Lawrence 1996). Whilst in Kenya 90% of the rural population participate in Harambee organisations which operate most schools and provide significant health and other basic services (Barkan 1992). The bulk of research in this area, to date, is by geographers and political scientists with little contribution from development studies. Thus, the focus of research into indigenous, ethnically-based NGOs reflects the orientation of these disciplines and is influenced by governmental policy concerns. For example, Agbese outlines how research in this area has shifted from

emphasis on urbanisation in the 1960s to rural infrastructure in the 1970s with the current focus on civil society and democratisation (Agbese 1996). However, before discussing the nature of trusteeship and indigenous NGOs it is necessary to locate the role of NGOs as agents of development in the dominant contemporary discourses of interventionism. I then go on to examine some key concepts in the contemporary discourses around the relationship between trustees and beneficiaries: participation, accountability and effectiveness.

1.2.1 The role of NGOs in the interventionist approaches

Under both the modernisation and structuralist paradigms, a strong state was considered the primary engine of development. However, the role of the state as the main engine of development has been critiqued from both structuralist and neo-liberal perspectives.

Some strands of structuralism emphasise the negative effects of the elites' dependence on their position in the state. For example, Ake (1993) regards the post colonial African state as the primary source of economic advancement as it dominates economic opportunities. In this context, the state becomes the focus of economic competition and political activity becomes a scramble for access to resources distributed by the state.

The most significant critique of the role of the state in development, in terms of its impact on policy, has come from the neo-liberal perspective that dominated the discourses of major donors in the 1980s and continues to be highly influential. This perspective views the state as inherently monopolistic and self-serving, as it is not subject to the rigours of the market it becomes inefficient and lacks the expertise to judge the market. Its domination of the economy and interference in the market leads it to inhibit the development of free markets, which will facilitate the entrepreneurial instincts of the population, which in turn are believed to drive development. This ideology has taken concrete form in the policies of the IMF and other major international donors. These

policies characterised by Robinson (1993) as the New Policy Agenda (NPA) emphasise rationalisation and contraction of the provision of state services and a reduction in state intervention in the economy in order to increase efficiency. Tied to this is the spread of democratisation to hold the state to account in the areas where it still performs a role. In the context of this retrenchment of the role of the state, the private sector, operating within the free market, is envisaged as performing many development functions.

As discussed above, both undiluted neo-liberalism and structuralism are currently out of favour, and the NPA of the early 1990s has evolved into the dominant interventionist paradigms, in which interventions may be carried out by many types of agency, including the state. Thus, the debate over the advantages of the state and market as engines of development has been supplanted by discussion over the nature of the relationship between the development of capitalism and purposive development to benefit the poor and marginalised. This approach accepts that the market can fail to provide essential services, particularly for the marginalised, and thus some non-market intervention is necessary. The state is considered as having the capacity to provide public services, such as health and education, either directly or creating a regulatory framework and co-ordinating development within civil society including the activities of international NGOs and local NGOs. It has been suggested that NGOs have comparative advantages over the state and private sectors in alleviating socio-economic problems, as they are seen as being more flexible and responsive than the state and unlike the private sector, NGOs are driven by values rather than profit. However, the perception that NGOs have a comparative advantage over the state is also highly contested. Edwards suggests that, "there is increasing evidence that NGOs and indigenous NGOs do not perform as effectively as had been assumed in terms of poverty reach, cost-effectiveness, sustainability, popular participation (including gender), flexibility and innovation [and that] there is no empirical study which demonstrates a general case that NGO provision is cheaper than public provision" (Edwards and Hulme 1995 p6).

1.2.2 Participation

The next two sections address the role of the interrelated concepts of participation and accountability in constructing trusteeship between indigenous NGOs and their beneficiaries. The discourses on accountability and participation address the issues of who defines the goals and methods of development, who should benefit from development and how they should benefit. These discourses have tended to gravitate towards the contested concept of participatory development, which has become the 'hallmark' (Wood 1997) of NGOs. The participation discourses serve as a means of legitimisation and differentiation for NGOs, as they reflect a belated acknowledgement that many previous attempts at development failed. The dominant development discourses perceive the participatory approaches as more effective as they aim to harness local skills and knowledge. Furthermore, they are more likely to be sustainable and perceived as legitimate as they mobilise communities. Ideologically they may be related to indigenous responses to developmental needs such as Gandhian philosophy and African self-help.

Participatory approaches are based on a conception of development similar to that outlined by Rondinelli: an uncertain, complex process characterised by a lack of knowledge and the need for constant social learning (Rondinelli 1993). This conception of development coincides with the perceived advantages of NGOs outlined above. It is also related to an acknowledgement of the potential contribution that the indigenous knowledge systems and organisational forms, particularly of the marginalised, can make to development interventions. There are, however, a multiplicity of meanings ascribed to participatory development, which reflect both the processes of negotiation of competing interests within development, and the influence of different ideas, such as conscientisation, self-help philosophies and post-fordist business practice. These differences become apparent when one investigates the differing forms that participatory development takes. The various activities labelled as participatory development can be

viewed as a continuum with participation as a process of community empowerment at one end, and participation as an instrumental approach to the use of community resources at the other. Community empowerment challenges socio-economic structures through building the capacity of indigenous agents of development. In contrast, the instrumental approaches involve the use of communal resources to implement externally pre-determined blueprints of development. Between these extremes are a range of participatory methods used by development practitioners to facilitate beneficiary involvement in the process of identifying problems and developing sustainable solutions.

The central areas of debate within this literature focus on the power relationships between development agencies and beneficiaries, particularly, in the context of the constraints placed on NGOs by their relationship with donors. The power differentials relate to differences between development practitioners and beneficiaries in terms of resources, education, status, and knowledge, and are framed by a lack of beneficiary sanctions other than withdrawal. The literature frequently focuses on the means used to reduce these imbalances. Shah and Shah for example suggest that participatory rural appraisal (PRA) functions successfully when both beneficiaries and fieldworkers have been trained in appropriate methods, in order to facilitate shared knowledge and decision-making (Shah and Shah 1995). From an NGO perspective, the focus is on the institutional obstacles to these power reversals. Chambers sites this in the inherent contradictions between linear planning, which implies predetermined outcomes and learning methods as, "preceded by top down planning, however logical, participation becomes submissive: 'they' participate in 'our' project" (Chambers 1995). This methodological contradiction is compounded by the hierarchical structure of development organisations, which inhibits fieldworkers' ability to facilitate power reversals in their dealings with beneficiaries (Chambers 1995). However, there are constraints on the ability of international NGOs to adopt these participatory methods. For example, Dichter discusses how attachments to participatory methods tend to compromise organisations' core management skills. He draws a distinction between the need for survival and effectiveness, which require the same management skills as the

commercial sector, and the value driven aims of NGOs and symbols of good development practice (Dichter 1989).

The assumption that people want to participate is rarely questioned by the dominant development discourses. There could well be contradictions between participatory methods, developed in the west and indigenous knowledge systems and organisational forms that they seek to harness. For example, Wanigaratne sees PRA as an 'alien concept' imposed upon the historically evolved socio-cultural base of Sri Lanka. (Wanigaratne 1997). This approach could be characterised as a selective articulation of culture by interests threatened by the empowerment of the marginalised, however, grassroots activists have suggested that the disruption to patterns of dispute settlement caused by the introduction of participatory methods could also impact negatively on the marginalised (Menike 1997). Whilst the power relations between NGOs and beneficiaries are discussed at length, in the participation literature, there is a tendency to see beneficiary communities as homogenous and interest free. It is implicit in these approaches that social change is dependent on the perceptions and behaviour of the beneficiaries, however, this is rarely related to wider social forces and many of the implications of social change are neglected. This may be partially due to a positive sum approach to the potentially limitless number of stakeholders in the success of interventions. If the unequal distribution of power and property relations rather than technological and capital deficits are seen as the causes of poverty and marginalisation, the gains made by the marginalised will involve a zero sum conception of power as they will be at the expense of the powerful. This is particularly the case in the developing world where the limited size of the economy and the terms of its integration into world markets limits the potential areas for economic gain. However, it is likely that if empowerment of local communities is institutionalised, the authority of decision-makers and the property and power relations that they represent will be questioned. It is also necessary to examine who the primary beneficiaries of interventions are, as it is likely that the structures created

by participatory methods will reflect the differentials in the local power and status hierarchies.

Thus, whilst there is some understanding of the probability that the interventions by international NGOs will create patron client relationships between themselves and beneficiaries, these interventions are rarely examined in the context of the systems of domination and politico-economic culture operating within localised power structures.

The literature on indigenous ethnically-based development associations does not investigate the nature of participation directly, instead treating it as an aspect of spatial relationships embedded in the organisations. These organisations claim to be, and are presented by researchers as, the main means of community participation in economic and social development. However, participation is treated as an unproblematic self-explanatory concept. The forms of participation described in this work tend to reflect local and national power relations rather than challenging them, as the nature and extent of participation vary between different sections of the community. Through self-help schemes, the poorer and more marginalised sections contribute resources, particularly labour, to projects determined by the elite. Barkan suggests that inputs to the associations are defined by the relative skills of the membership, with the elite using their contacts, financial resources and technical skills, whilst other groups, such as the peasantry, contribute labour (Barkan 1992). Decision-making, planning and management tend to remain in the hands of the leadership or state. The disproportionate wealth, status and connections of the urban branches structure these relationships. In most cases external urban chapters contribute the majority of financial resources and are more likely to have access to the connections necessary to lobby the state (McNulty and Lawrence 1996; Pratten and Baldo 1995). This is related to the nature of the specific activities of the associations: the more complex and costly a project, the greater the need for material support and accessing networks of decision-makers (Barkan 1992).

There is a correlation between the social groups responsible for founding or reviving indigenous development associations and those who control them. These organisations are structured to facilitate the participation of educated returnees with bureaucratic links, in terms of imposing their definitions of communal needs and cementing their status and power. Although the local elites may wish to inculcate a self-help mentality within the population, this is a process structured by and institutionalising their control of the key decision-making roles and, particularly for complex projects, is also dependent on the elites' skills, contacts and wealth for success.

The form of participation illustrated above includes aspects from both ends of the instrumental – empowerment continuum. The role of members of the community would appear to be instrumental whilst the elite takes decisions. It cannot be assumed that indigenous development associations incorporate the values of participation embedded in the dominant development discourses, by virtue of being local and indigenous, or by claiming to represent the community. This suggests that the concept of participation is not adequate to understand the nature of the community and the power relations embedded within it. The literature on indigenous ethnically-based organisations investigates the effects of differential patterns of participation on urban rural relationships within the organisations, highlighting differing needs of the urban and rural communities. The urban sectors tend to require welfare and social networks (Lentz 1995; Pratten and Baldo 1995), whereas the rural chapters emphasise the need for education and infrastructure. However, this approach overlooks other impacts of the nature of participation in indigenous development associations. Furthermore, this analysis is based on the assumption of an urban-rural dualism or separation of interests, which could well be artificial (see Chapter 4).

An assessment of this literature suggests that the extent of participation in the decision-making processes within indigenous development associations should be analysed in terms of local expectations rather than western definitions. For example, in the case of

Kenyan indigenous development associations, Cosway outlines how the results of decision-making by the high status groups are presented to the community through meetings to generate consensual agreement. In this process there was a tendency to accept 'traditional knowledge and authority' (Cosway and Anakum 1996). As decision-making structures within these organisations are likely to reflect the hierarchies within the communities, strengthening indigenous institutions may well reinforce the structural conditions that cause poverty and powerlessness (Covey 1995). The impact of this form of participation is seen to be mitigated to some extent by the obligations and rights inherent in reciprocal arrangements expected of successful community members (Mahieu 1990 cited in (Woods 1994)). Whilst appreciating that Africans may have cultural preferences for collective and consensual forms of decision-making (Verhelst 1987), concepts such as traditional or consensual leadership must be problematised and examined in their socio-political and historical context. One of the major gaps in this literature is that there has been little critical investigation of the relationship between indigenous development associations and other indigenous institutions or 'traditional' forms of leadership. Furthermore, there is little investigation of the meanings, nature and implications of the reciprocal arrangements embedded within the development associations. In section 3, I examine constructions of tradition and culture to illustrate their relationship with both interests within the community and the external socio-political context.

1.2.3 Accountability

The second way that trusteeship is seen to be constructed by the dominant development discourses is embedded in the term accountability. Within the dominant development discourses, analysis of the accountability of indigenous development associations tends to be subsumed under a wider debate about the accountability of NGOs to their stakeholders, particularly donors. The accountability of indigenous development associations to the communities they represent is highly problematic, as it is necessary to

understand both the sections of the community they are accountable to and what aspects of their activities they are accountable. These difficulties are compounded by the way that the dominant development discourses analyse indigenous development associations as membership organisations and thus assume that their primary accountability is to their members. This relates to Uphoff's characterisation of indigenous NGOs as the third sector driven by the interests of their members and is a basis of their perceived comparative advantages over state and international NGO based interventions. However, the term membership is highly problematic and seems to have different meanings to researchers and to the organisations they investigate. Organisations such as Hometown Associations use a broader but less tangible notion of community membership, as they conceptualise membership in an ascriptive sense, whereby the whole 'community' is assumed to be members of the organisation. Thus, they claim to act on behalf of the whole community. This causes problems in applying the development discourses to indigenous organisations, as the development discourses have tended to use artificial analytical constructs to distinguish between membership organisations and southern NGOs, whereas many indigenous development associations have characteristics associated with both forms of organisation.

Within the dominant development discourses, there is an assumption that indigenous development associations by virtue of being indigenous are more accountable than other development agencies. However, Uphoff suggests that indigenous NGOs also require internal mechanisms of accountability, citing Michels' 'iron law' that organisations with distinctions of status and education are likely to become oligarchic (Uphoff 1995). Thus, their status as membership organisations does not automatically correlate with their being accountable for their decision-making. However, I suggest that these processes of accountability should be located within local political structures and the impact of local culture should be examined rather than relating these oligarchic tendencies to the nature of organisations. Marzouk suggests that, in Arab countries, the use of 'traditional' models of authority, characterised as hierarchical, centralised and undemocratic, operate as a

means of social and political advancement: "NGOs reproduce the same authoritarian structures that govern ... political and social life in general" (Marzouk 1997). These processes affect the suitability of applying northern terms such as accountability to processes in the south. This view is backed by evidence from Bangladesh presented by Wood, who suggests that indigenous organisational culture is a reflection of wider authoritarian and hierarchical social relations involving the transference of patriarchal multi-stranded ties to an organisational context (Wood 1997). The nature of membership participation in decision-making is likely to take a different form from the formal processes of accountability highlighted in the dominant development discourses.

The literature on indigenous development associations uses a different terminology that reflects the current preoccupation with the role of these associations in civil society. This literature focuses on internal democracy in the associations, however there is a tendency to accept the claims at face value rather than to analyse them. For example, Wahab (1996) suggests that the appointment of officers and decision-making in Nigerian Hometown Associations is democratic, but offers no evidence to support this. According to Pratten and Baldo, a multitude of rival power bases coupled with institutional checks and balances ensure equity within Sudanese migrant workers associations (Pratten and Baldo 1995). Conflicting evidence is provided by McNulty and Lawrence, who contrasts the Nigerian Hometown Associations' self image, as a democratic grassroots local government and the existence of a leadership dominated by an elite comprised of the highly educated and businessmen (McNulty and Lawrence 1996). Similarly Woods suggests that, in Hometown Associations in Cote D' Ivoire, although there is some consultation and downward dissemination of information there is little formal democracy. Instead, the associations are dominated by local notables, whose position seems to be based on wealth and political connections (Woods 1994). This view is reinforced by Barkan, who suggests that Hometown Associations are controlled by local oligarchies, whilst the leadership of Harambees is concentrated with relatively wealthy landowners (Barkan 1992). The dominant view of this literature is that the local elites control the

formal structures of these indigenous development associations, however, there is little analysis of less tangible forms of accountability such as informal pressure and culturally-based expectations. Lentz draws an important conceptual distinction between formal and informal structures of accountability and practice by highlighting how activists can exercise de-facto control of the association by flexibly interpreting the formally democratic structures (Lentz 1995). However, she and others tend to accept uncritically northern notions of democracy and accountability and apply them to southern contexts. There is no attempt to investigate how communities perceive accountability and in which circumstances they would regard it as important.

2.2.4 Effectiveness

The third aspect to the construction of trusteeship between indigenous NGOs and beneficiaries is effectiveness. Analysis of effectiveness by the dominant development discourses tends to be influenced by discussion of the accountability of international NGOs to donors. To the extent that development is seen as a series of targets (Thomas 2000c), the dominant development discourses tend to focus on tangible and quantifiable aspects of effectiveness.

The literature on indigenous NGOs provides surprisingly little analysis of the physical results of their activities. Barkan has analysed the provision of education and health services and concludes that, while they appear to provide universal benefits, there is an increase in end-user charging that may well restrict these benefits to those who can afford to pay (Barkan 1992). This is, however, popular with the poorer sectors of the community as it increases their status and deflects accusations of free loading. McNulty and Lawrence (1996) identify an emphasis on increasing the value of current investments rather than creating new productive capacity within the locality. However, the distinction they outline is blurred, as infrastructure such as communications is vital to the

development of productive capacity. However, it is important to note that some of the projects he describes, such as the installation of telecommunications and electricity, are resourced by a wide section of the community but may benefit the wealthy disproportionately. There is awareness, in this literature, that these associations do not necessarily make the most cost-effective use of the resources at their disposal. Wahab (1996) suggests that the Nigerian home town association he studied, tended to concentrate on symbolic projects, such as spending 25 years building a palace for the local 'traditional ruler', an activity which seems to bear little relation to providing for the needs of the marginalised. Similarly, the tendency identified by Woods (1994) to increase the rate of return on current investments rather than to increase overall productive capacity may well run counter to values, in the dominant development discourses, of helping the most marginalised sectors of communities.

Edwards suggests that there is little evidence of indigenous NGOs performing more effectively than the state (Edwards and Hulme 1995). However, it is likely that if development interventions using indigenous NGOs are seen as legitimate by the beneficiaries, they are likely to be more sustainable than international NGO projects imposed from above. Furthermore, there has been little analysis of beneficiary perceptions of effectiveness, which researchers tend to define as the organisation's history of providing concrete and symbolic benefits to the community. For example, Covey suggests that the legitimacy of indigenous NGOs is dependent on their effectiveness (Covey 1995). It would appear that the authority of the leadership is dependent on its abilities to secure resources through lobbying, contacts and fundraising and whether it can mobilise the community. Generally the effectiveness of the association is dependent on the leadership's somewhat personalised relationships with the state which mirrors the local elite's overlapping occupational and associational roles and networks of contacts.

Mobilising the community as part of the process of development could well be regarded as a form of effectiveness. Alternative conceptions of effectiveness could include less

tangible aspects such as the ability to generate stability and consensus within the community and promoting the self-image of the group. The utility of this approach goes beyond it being a precondition for successful community development as it places an additional emphasis on the values of consensus and social harmony (Verhelst 1987; Ake 1993).

2.3 The role of indigenous NGOs in civil society

The other main issue relating to the relationship between indigenous NGOs and the communities is how these organisations give their beneficiaries a stake in society through their role in civil society. In the dominant development discourses, discussion of the role of NGOs in civil society is subsumed under a wider discourse of good governance. In contrast to the anti-statism that characterised development discourses in the eighties, there is currently a constructive engagement with the state by NGOs through complementary arrangements with each sector focusing on their areas of comparative advantage. This is based on a vision of empowered communities represented by a vibrant grassroots sector with NGOs mediating between competing interests and acting as a bridge between the state and citizens. However, as Covey suggests, there is no automatic correlation between a strong grassroots sector within civil society and strong advocacy role for NGOs (Covey 1995). Within the development literature there are only vague references to the mechanisms that will institutionalise NGO participation in this process.

These approaches presuppose that the state has the capacity or interest to respond constructively and evenly to the demands placed upon it by civil society. It is crucial to investigate the definitions of the state and civil society inherent in these approaches. Wood draws an analogy between contemporary notions of civil society and the central flaws of modernisation theory, both founded on the application of western myths to developing societies (Wood 1997). Universalistic ideas of progress which seem to

underpin the neo-liberal elements of the NPA have been largely discredited in favour of seeing social organisation as socio-historically specific. Pearce suggests that, "the importance of civil society lies not in its use as a descriptive term for some observable reality but precisely in the way it has been used historically to construct different conceptions of the relationship between the state and the associations and groups of society" (Pearce 1997 p270). Thus, civil society is regarded as an unproblematic concept identical to European style corporatism or American pluralism. However, the operation of civil society in Africa can only be understood by examining how the state is culturally and institutionally rooted in society and the forms of domination it uses. For the purposes of the thesis, the role of indigenous NGOs is examined in the context of the African forms of corporatism discussed in section 2.3. This would suggest that the empowerment of the marginalised would take place within the context of complex institutional and normative frameworks that operate to serve the interests of the powerful and diffuse the demands of the powerless. Hodson is aware of the impact of structures of domination and suggests that international NGOs must ensure that the funding of indigenous NGOs is outside state patronage systems (Hodson 1997). It also seems likely that the process of strengthening the role of indigenous NGOs within civil society will disproportionately benefit local elites. This approach also seriously questions the ability of a non-autonomised political elite to act as a disinterested co-ordinator of civil society.

Allied to the emphasis on increasing accountability are moves to localise decision-making to make it more responsive to the needs of communities. This may increase the involvement of communities in decision-making on local issues, however, it is necessary to distinguish between the decentralisation of responsibility and power in a wider context. Schuurman argues that decentralisation is likely to lead to greater marginalisation, as impoverished communities and the bureaucrats working with them are given greater responsibilities for resolving problems rooted in macro factors without the resources to resolve them (Schuurman 1997). Furthermore, if the lack of state accountability to the population is related to the use of the state by elites as a source of accumulation,

localising this process will increase the autonomy of local elites from the central government rather than acting as a means to hold the state to account. For Wood (1997), the central contradiction in the civil society discourse is between strengthening the capacity of civil society to make demands of the state whilst simultaneously reducing the capacity of the state to meet these demands. In this context Nelson and Wright identify a process of appropriation of the concepts of participation and self help by powerful development agencies, such as the IMF, to shift responsibility for welfare onto individuals and particularly women (Nelson and Wright 1995).

In the past, according to Barkan, civil society was overlooked by researchers and governments as its constituent parts were perceived to reflect ethnic and regional cleavages and were thus a barrier to political integration rather than potential agents of democratisation (Barkan 1992). Barkan proposes a neo-modernisation model of development where the institutionalisation of relationships between organised interests and the state is central to the construction of a viable and accountable political system, which is in turn key to securing improved economic performance. He sees a direct correlation between the capacity of local institutions to organise and promote their interests and governmental accountability, as these groups increasingly act as a bulwark against the state. This model is underpinned by a positive sum conception of power as the process of strengthening civil society through enabling local elites to hold the state to account will simultaneously reinforce the state through strengthening its social base whilst not exacerbating ethno-political cleavages. Barkan (1992) mentions the role of the Kenyan government strategies that enmesh the Harambee movements and politicians in networks of patronage in order to shift the emphasis of politicians to community service and thereby reduce parliamentary dissent. However, the effects on the organisations are not integrated into his theoretical approach. Woods (1994) investigates how state policies, particularly in relation to the allocation of resources shape associational life. His analysis of the role of Hometown Associations within civil society in Cote d' Ivoire identifies a central dynamic related to regime control of intra-elite relations. He illustrates how these organisations

were co-opted by the dominant political party at independence and played a central role in providing access to administrative sites of accumulation, which facilitated elite class formation whilst leaving it weak and dependent on its associational and ethnic links. The co-optation of this elite and their associationally rooted power bases plays a key role in institutionalising communal activities, competition for resources, the integration of rural areas and the suppression of ethnic based dissent. Local notables (the organisations' leadership) play a pivotal role in both the vertical integration of their ethnically-based communities and the state, and the horizontal integration of the elite through formal and informal channels. Therefore success for the organisation, measured in terms of resources secured, is dependent on the position of the leadership within the elite and the ability of the association to produce a veneer of unity within their community (Woods 1994).

It seems difficult to reconcile the ends of good governance discourse, a pluralistic form of democracy and strengthening indigenous NGOs as a means to achieve it. The linkages between the Hometown association leaderships and the state are an integral aspect of the current system of domination through distributing resources rather than a means to secure greater accountability to a wider section of society. It is important to note that Barkan's definition of empowerment is based on state accountability to local elites through these organisations rather than developing mass movements with the capacity to press for structural change. Little evidence has been provided of how these organisations can hold the state to account over anything other than parochial issues through securing increased resources for a particular locality. Pratten and Baldo suggest that even economically self sufficient organisations with a degree of autonomy from the state are unable to hold it to account, as they are geographically dispersed, uncoordinated and have differential access to the state (Pratten and Baldo 1995). Rather than influencing policy formulation there is a tendency for them to implement government policy by harnessing communal resources.

The vertical integration of these organisations with the state constrains their ability to become part of a cross-sectoral alliance with other forces in civil society. From a radical perspective, such as Amin (1997) or Wignaraja (1993), these alliances are necessary to broaden the political space in which civil society operates and are the origins of movements with the capacity to make the state more accountable and become agents of social change. However, the perspectives of the current leadership lead to an emphasis on control of distribution relationships within the elite and facilitate patronage vertically rather than challenging these relationships or those of production. This area of research provides little information on relationships between associations, although by implication competition rather than co-operation between groups is institutionalised. Other sources such as Nnoli suggest that these associations play a leading role in provoking ethnic violence in order to further the political and economic interests of the urban elite, to the extent of arming rural populations (Nnoli 1995). Similarly, Lentz found that although they can play a role in diffusing ethnic conflict, they can also engender it (Lentz 1995).

Most of this literature refers to one party rule or transitions to democracy and the models may need to be revised to take account of the impact of multi-party democracy. In the one party ethno-corporatist model outlined by Woods (1994) the interests of the elite and the organisation's leadership are served by preventing the mobilisation of communities on an ethnic basis. Although ethnic competition is diffused by these organisations it is also institutionalised as the basis of association across class and often territorial cleavages. This institutionalisation also plays a role in the ethnic demarcation of territory. However, following the logic of Woods' model (1994), as multi-party democracy provides a more competitive basis for both intra elite relationships and membership of the elite it is likely that it will increase incentives to mobilise communities on an ethnic basis. Agbese illustrates how the salience of ethnicity within Nigerian Hometown Associations varies according to the leadership's perception of its value as a strategy for attaining material ends (Agbese 1996). Lentz (1995) and Woods (1994) suggest that the introduction of competitive elections has also caused divisions within organisations. As these

associations are central to the mobilisation of collective action within communities, they become sites for conflict as rival political factions vie for control and the benefits in electoral terms. The impact of the politicisation (defined as competitive electoral politics rather than in a broader sense) is generally seen to be a critical factor in the success of these organisations. Those that can provide unity and stability are seen both by, researchers such as Lentz (1995) and Woods (1994) and subjects as more likely to be successful, whereas Wahab (1996) and others suggest that the dissipation of energies due to politicisation and factionalism inhibits their effectiveness.

Analysis of this literature suggests that the potential contribution of these organisations to strengthening civil society should be seen in the long term and indirectly through increased education and possibly developing the confidence of the marginalised by broadening participation in decisions affecting their lives. If these associations are to become the root of a democratic civil society, they must develop new forms of accountability. Warren suggests that, through the intervention of facilitators, the communities represented by indigenous NGOs can negotiate the evolution of new institutional forms (Warren, Adedokun et al. 1996). However, this could undermine the class basis of the leadership. As the effectiveness of the organisation is based on the strategic intersection of its occupational, associational and social networks, weakening these social groups may undermine the ability of indigenous development associations to harness resources. Thus, there seems to be a major contradiction between the aims of strengthening civil society and harnessing these groups as development agents. It must also be noted that indigenous development associations are not distributed evenly nor are they equally effective. Barkan (1992) suggests that they are most active in more economically developed areas. It is likely that democratisation based on associations with uneven capacities and uneven access to the state will entrench political marginalisation.

3.1 The main currents in thinking on ethnicity

This section reviews the various social anthropological and sociological approaches taken to ethnicity. Until recently, the theoretical approaches of social anthropologists and sociologists to the study of ethnicity in Africa could be presented as a continuum between the polar opposites of essentialism and instrumentalism. These theoretical approaches constitute methodological assumptions about the nature of ethnicity which are basically empiricist.

3.1.1 Essentialism

The core assumptions underpinning the essentialist or primordialist approaches are that populations are linked by collective conscious and sub-conscious identities, which emanate from primary traits and are an essential aspect of human existence. Thus, individuals will naturally gravitate towards other group members due to this shared psychological core. This approach shares similarities with soviet anthropological theory, which uses Bromley's concept of ethnos, 'a historically formed community of people characterised by common, relatively stable cultural features, certain distinctive cultural traits, and the consciousness of their unity as distinguished from other similar forms' (Bromley 1974). This approach presents social organisation and political activity as reflecting the natural, culturally-based, ethnic divisions within a multi-ethnic society. From this perspective, the primary objective of such research is to uncover the impact of ethnicity on politics rather than appreciating that politics and other social phenomena also impact on ethnicity. Although Bromley accepts that this cultural core can adapt to changing circumstances, it is regarded as an objective aspect of social structure, which influences social organisation and identity rather than reflecting social relations.

The main strength of essentialism is that it describes how people feel about their own ethnic identity. As Turton suggests, ethnic identities are meaningless unless experienced as primordial (Turton 1998). Although essentialism currently has limited academic credibility, variants of the essentialist approaches continue to be influential. These approaches underpin 'common sense' views of the role of ethnicity in Africa and are crucial in legitimising the self image of members of ethnic groups. Elements of essentialism can be detected in the modernisation, neo-liberal and some Marxist accounts of the relationship between ethnicity and development. The work of Anthony Smith, the main proponent of essentialism, mirrors much of the modernisation discourse of the 1960s and 70s as he presents ethnic communities as an explanation for the weakness of the African state, suggesting that, "state making requires, among many other things, a secure base in an ethnic core from which elites can be drawn" (Smith 1996). Ethnicity is presented as a temporary atavistic phenomenon related to pre-capitalist forms of association based on diffused, traditional and particularised ties, which would eventually be replaced by specific, rationally-based interests as a consequence of development. Ethnicity is conceptualised as a divisive problem to be overcome by a strong state as it inhibits the formation of a core national identity.

Essentialism can be detected in the current Ethiopian constitution, which was created by negotiation between mainly Leninist groups 'representing' ethnic constituencies. This constitution divides the country into nine federated states delimited on the basis of settlement by ethnic groups. Article 39 of the constitution defines ethnic groups as "groups of people who have or share a large measure of a common culture, or similar customs, mutual intelligibility of language, belief in a common or related identities and who predominantly inhabit an identifiable, contiguous territory".

The most striking limitation of the essentialist approach is that it describes rather than explains ethnic differences and is thus of little analytical value. As it takes ethnic groups

as ahistorical elements of the social structure, it cannot explain their origins or why certain psychological needs develop into ethnicity rather than other forms of association. It is necessary to see ethnic groups as based on more than cultural similarities. Brown along with many other critics suggests this approach has difficulty explaining why some groups with cultural similarities are antagonistic, whereas other culturally diverse groups have developed strong shared consciousness (Brown 1989). Furthermore, it cannot account for the differing levels of group attachment within or between groups or the multiple and changing identities of individuals within the group.

3.1.2 Instrumentalism

The early work of Abner Cohen is associated with instrumentalism and occupied the opposite pole of this continuum from essentialism. Cohen portrays ethnic groups as created by their members for specific economic and political ends rather than being culturally driven. Thus, for Cohen, ethnicity is characterised as a form of informal political organisation, which invokes cultural values for material reasons. It provides a theoretical shift characterising ethnic identity as a social construct rather than an innate and defining feature of social structure. This approach regards identities as flexible and ethnicity as rooted in adaptations to social change. Instrumentalism enables the investigation of contextual factors and it has therefore influenced the development of the various contextually oriented approaches such as inventionism and constructivism.

Instrumentalism also marked a shift away from regarding ethnicity as operating in isolation from other ethnic groups. For Cohen, ethnic groups use customs and myths from their cultural tradition to articulate political organisation, which they use in struggle against others. Thus, ethnic groups are formed by an increase in interactions between groups in the context of political and economic competition related to urbanisation and marketisation.

Although this approach marked a series of theoretical shifts in the study of ethnicity, it also has a range of limitations. It regards internal processes as unproblematic and interests within the group as homogenous. Thus, Cohen presents the values and interests of the dominant elements within the ethnic group as those of the group as a whole. This approach suggests that traditions are harnessed to articulate material interests, a line of reasoning developed further by the inventionist school associated with Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983). However, although instrumentalism appreciates that ethnic traditions are manipulated, it treats them as historical facts, in contrast to the inventionists who view these traditions as constructs created for specific purposes. For instrumentalists ethnicity can have only one function as the approach only explains one dimension of ethnicity, characterised by Murphree as ethnic sentiment politically mobilised (Murphree 1988). Thus, it neglects non-material motivations and cannot account for the possibility of ethnicity developing autonomy from its material roots leading to situations where ethnic mobilisation is inconsistent with the material interests of the group. It also fails to explain why ethnicity rather than other forms of identity became the medium of expressing interests.

3.1.3 Constructivism

The term constructivism has been applied to a diverse range of approaches to understanding ethnicity, which share an intellectual tradition including Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), Barth (1969), and Anderson (1991). They have applied ontological insights from wider social science to investigate the ways that ethnic difference is constructed. This increasingly sophisticated approach appreciates the strengths and limitations of both sides of the primordialist / instrumentalist dichotomy. As such it has attempted to resolve the seeming paradox of how people are able to use ethnic identity as a means to an end in competition with others, whilst simultaneously considering it as an end in itself. This section will review some of the influences on the constructivist approach

and discuss its contribution to understanding the relationship between ethnicity and development.

The first major influence on constructivism was the approach attributed to Barth (1969), who conceptualised ethnicity as an aspect of social interaction linked to the maintenance of boundaries between groups. In common with instrumentalist approaches, Barth focused on the social functions of the group rather than cultural functions. He drew a distinction between ethnic groups and cultural units, and analysed culture in terms of its role in the process of boundary maintenance. The internal characteristics of an ethnic group are seen as diacritic markers of difference, whose importance flows from their use by members in contrasting their identities with their neighbours rather than as the drivers. Thus, ethnic groups are defined by their boundaries rather than the culture within them. This approach facilitates understanding that the content and personnel of the ethnic group can be fluid as it is part of a long-term social process, which is being constantly remade as groups interact. In these terms, the flexible yet persistent nature of ethnicity can be explained by the varying significance attached to the boundaries, which can also persist latently to be activated later rather than disappearing once the instrumental motivations have receded.

The impact of Barth's work is such that Cornell suggests that it has led much subsequent work to focus purely on the ethnic boundary and, therefore, to neglect the role of processes within these boundaries in shaping the nature and intensity of group attachments and thus the character of the boundary itself and indeed the nature of the social context (Cornell 1996). As Barth privileges processes related to external group boundaries over processes within the group, there is a tendency to regard ethnic groups as homogenous and consensual. According to Yeros "while Barth rejects 'shared culture' as a starting point of inquiry, he returns to relocate the shared aspects of the ethnic group not in its culture but in its moral boundaries" (Yeros 1999 p112). In common with

instrumentalism, there is a tendency to regard internal processes as uncontested and homogenous leaving little appreciation of the negotiations within the group.

In common with instrumentalism, Barth's approach provides little analysis of the constraints on individuals' choice of identities. Whilst there is evidence of individuals and groups changing their ethnic assignment due to circumstantial factors, Allen and Eade (1997) suggest that this process is constrained by the individual's ability to fulfil the criteria of key cultural attributes, related to the social environment and changing over time, which are perceived as a necessary pre-condition for group membership. Banton (1997) adds that this process is also dependent on the perception that it is to the advantage of the dominant group to assimilate new members.

The second major influence on constructivism was the inventionist approach closely associated with Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983). The first variant of inventionism rooted the creation of ethnic groups in the political context of early colonialism with an emphasis on the use of traditions to facilitate a social order based on indirect rule. Ranger (1983) suggested that the colonial administration invented traditions for social control through indirect rule. In this process, some African entrepreneurs manipulated these ethnic identities as the dominant groups used them to exercise control over the subordinate groups (Ranger 1983). This approach marked a positive advance in giving attention to internal competition within the group. However, it was subject to much criticism, as the fluidity and dynamism of African ethnic identities were seen to end in this period and thereafter viewed as static. It also gives primacy to colonialists, who decided which elements of African social structures were traditional and therefore legitimate. Thus, it has been criticised by a range of researchers for presenting dominant Africans as reactionary and manipulative and the subordinate groups as passive. In the light of these criticisms, Ranger subsequently refined his position to give greater weight to progressive and contestable forms of African agency, and he has become closely associated with current approaches to constructivism.

Constructivism's strength is that it has taken onboard previous critiques, has harnessed the insights of Anderson (1991) and applied Gramscian conceptions of the roles of organic intellectuals (Hoare 1971) in the process of identity construction. Constructivism focuses on the processes whereby groups respond to circumstantial factors, acting as agents in their own construction through the use of raw materials such as history, culture and pre-existing ethnic constructions. For Cornell, constructivism provides a conception of ethnicity that is a "contingent, volitional, negotiated phenomenon in which both societal circumstances and creative assertions...play variable and interactive roles" (Cornell 1996).

Constructivism has applied an historical approach to uncovering understandings of ethnicity as a response to social change. Vail's (1993) work was crucial in refining Ranger's early work into a constructivist form, which gave more weight to African agency. He identifies a range of social actors who played a role in the process of cementing, giving new meaning to, or inventing, ethnic authority structures, such as colonial officials and intellectuals, native officials and intellectuals and the mass of the population. This expands on the earlier approaches, which privileged the colonial administrators and intellectuals as the only historical actors. Adaptation was constrained by the interests of the colonial officials, for whom revenue collection and the maintenance of order, (in anglophone colonies), were achieved by using indirect rule through the tribal institutions that served to reinforce tribal distinctions. Markakis (1998) applies this approach to the creation of a Gurage identity, which for him was largely a product of the imposition of administrative structures by Menelik (see Chapter 8). These interests were systematised by the colonial intellectual strata such as missionaries and anthropologists using pseudo-scientific methods of characterising communities. Jacobs (1995) suggests that colonial administrators only recognised hierarchical, territorially linked and patriarchal groupings as appropriate organisational units. This led to the creation of new institutions by the colonial authorities through the selection of leaders, often with no pre-existing legitimacy. These groups and 'traditional' authorities developed into a new elite with increased power and

access to resources and an interest in increasing tribal particularism becoming what Vail (1993) characterises as stakeholders in tribalism.

A crucial role in the process of regenerating ethnic identities was played by the native intellectual strata. Three approaches to the role of the local intellectual strata can be identified: an instrumental characterisation such as Young's conception of ethnic entrepreneurs, intellectuals who consciously attempt to increase group solidarity for specific purposes; the dominant modernisation approach, which characterises the role of this newly educated group as modernising their localities in cultural and economic terms; a third constructivist approach can be developed through applying the work of Lonsdale (1992) and is of particular interest to this research.

The Moral Economy approach outlined by Lonsdale (1992) does not differ significantly from constructivist thought on the role of contextual factors and the fluidity of the composition of ethnic groups. However, he refines the constructivist approach by producing a detailed analysis of processes occurring within the ethnic boundary. The 'internal architecture of ethnicity' is characterised as the moral aspects of culture that are negotiated to serve different interests within the group in order to define their position in the world in relation to an imagined past. Central to this process are debates within the group about the nature of 'civic virtue', defined as an idealised form of citizenship consisting of a moral framework of rights and obligations and conceptions of justice and equality. In changing circumstances, "tribe was the imagined community against which the morality of new inequality was bound to be tested" (Lonsdale 1992 p316). Thus, from the moral economy perspective, "debates about civic virtue in changing times", were central to the construction of ethnic identities (Lonsdale 1992 p331). To make sense of new relationships within and outside the group and to legitimise their positions, the intellectual strata voiced their contestations in the language of tradition and ethnicity. Lonsdale outlines how the various groups interpreted tradition to articulate their competing claims, "what ancestors had taught or were said to have taught, on the relationship between

labour and civilisation were the only measure of achievement or failure” (Lonsdale 1992 p316). This roots the constructions of ethnic identity in debates about economic and social survival in changing times. For the purposes of this thesis, it roots the constructions of Gurage identities firmly in their adaptations and migratory survival strategies, discussed in Chapter 4.

The central thrust of this perspective is that “to debate civic virtue was to define ethnic identity” (Lonsdale 1992 p268). Thus, sectors of the group use comparisons with the morality of other ethnic groups through appeals to past identities to understand ‘what is done by us and not done by them’. In this process, the group defines who it is, who it is not and the proper way of doing things and ordering a community. Framing ethnicity in this way is not simply to include or exclude others, as differentiation is not to exclude others, but a process of making sense of new opportunities by relating them back to real or imagined traditions. Thus, “ethnicity was a question of honour within what have become tribes before it was a weapon of conflict between them”(Lonsdale 1992 p317). This form of constructivism has the capacity to see a range of competing ethnicities, as competing groups vie for political prominence by reconstructing the past in order to redefine the moral nature of group membership such as the nature of civic virtue within the group. From this perspective, there is more than one version of ethnic identity and one should beware of privileging the dominant or most accessible view over dissident views, and strive to place these views in the context of the contemporary external socio-political environment as well as in the context of the previous constructions from which the contemporary constructions are interpreted.

Lonsdale notes that conceptions of civic virtue can have their own logic and may therefore operate autonomously from sectional and material interests (Lonsdale 1992 p317). These values although constructed for specific purposes can gain autonomy from their original purpose and act to modify or provoke behaviour. They can shape communal orientation to development, act to constrain the autonomy of the leadership and key power brokers and

serve as a point of reference in disputes. As Lonsdale suggests “its values have fired but also disciplined ambition” (Lonsdale 1992 p317). This is a significant advance on instrumentalism, which tends to present the moral components of ethnicity as ideologies constructed to serve the immediate purposes of elites. This approach significantly broadens previous definitions of ethnicity and allows an analysis of the relationship between ethnicity and development to go beyond regarding ethnicity as merely a resource mobilised by elites for their own, albeit benign, purposes. From this perspective, the relationship between ethnicity and development can be conceptualised as part of a framework of values about the nature of being a member of an ethnic group. These conceptions of civic virtue influence the conceptions of the purposes of development (Chapter 5) and relationships between the development associations and the community (Chapter 6). This dominant conception of civic virtue is the basis for authority within the group and the point of reference in determining the authority of development interventions (Chapter 6).

Ethnicity is one of a multitude of identities and it is necessary to understand its appeal over other forms of identity. According to Bell, “ethnicity has become more salient [than class] because it can combine an interest with an affective tie” (Glazer and Moynihan 1979 p38). Brown compares the relative power of ethnic appeals and competing affiliations, focusing on the impact of symbolic cultural attachments. He outlines three main criteria used to establish identity, the social environment, emotional security and interest (Brown 1989). Ethnic attachments satisfy the requirements of emotional security by fulfilling the role of an extended kinship group giving the individual a collective position towards other groups. These putative ties are likely to be based on myth and symbolism rather than on any shared history, but are strengthened by more concrete similarities such as language or culture to sustain the belief in common kinship. Psychologists, such as Adam, emphasise the centrality of the psychological need for community and a distinctive identity, which is rooted in pre-existing sentiment (Adam 1995). The power of ethnicity as a social construct can be linked to the use of imprecise symbols to mark ethnicity. The

central role of symbolism in allowing the combination of self-interest with emotive feelings of self-belonging is outlined by Cohen, "symbols are effective because they are imprecise. Though obviously not contentless, part of their meaning is 'subjective'. They are, therefore, ideal media through which people can...behave in apparently similar ways...without subjecting themselves to a typology of orthodoxy. Individuality and commonality are thus reconcilable" (Cohen 1985). Symbolic matters are central to ethnic identity because they allow people to behave differently whilst being members of a community. Ake relates the importance of myth and symbolism to both the colonial past and contemporary insecurity; "if the tenacity by which some Africans cling to certain cultural symbols and a fabricated past seems surprising, one must consider the implications of lacking a sense of self and being lost in a cultural wilderness. More and more people are finding this intolerable and are fighting determinedly not only to assert their cultural identity but also to claim self-determination for it" (Ake 1993). This reinforces the constructivist approach to ethnicity presenting the use of culture as a creative response to environmental factors and helps to explain both the persistence of ethnicity and its relative autonomy from material forces.

3.2 The ethnic gap in the development discourses

Although there has been copious research into the phenomenon of ethnicity in Africa, scant attention has been paid to its relationship with development. In section 1, three types of development were outlined, development as an evolutionary historical process, development as practice and development as vision. The thesis focuses primarily on development as practice, whereas development studies has applied the insights provided by social anthropologists and sociologists to the relationship between ethnicity and evolutionary development. Other than attempts to apply the terminology used by sociologists and social anthropologists to debates about the nature of the state and civil society in Africa, there has been remarkably little research into the relationship between

ethnicity and development. Instead, ethnicity is treated by development studies as the realm of historians, political scientists, sociologists and anthropologists. This is all the more remarkable as one of the defining features of the discipline is its focus on the relationship between development and other forms of identity, particularly gender. Two decades ago Stavenhagen (1984:21-8) suggested that this neglect by development studies is 'not an oversight but a paradigmatic blind spot'. Since then, although analyses of ethnicity have become increasingly sophisticated, the development discourses have yet to even begin to apply these insights to purposive development. For some theories, the concept of ethnicity presents analytical problems that make it easiest to overlook it or subsume it within other explanatory variables. The bulk of the approaches to development take ethnicity for granted, and if they do include ethnicity as a subject of analysis, it is presented in essentialist terms.

Liberal modernisation theories and vulgar Marxism share a similar universalistic analysis of the nature of social change, which imply that northern models of development can be transplanted unproblematically to southern contexts. For the modernisation approach, ethnicity is seen as a temporary phenomenon belonging to a world of traditional, generalised, diffuse, particularised social ties, which will be replaced by specific, differentiated, rational interests as a consequence of the process of development. Any remnants of ethnic ties are seen as a problem for the ethnically neutral state, whose defining purpose is modernisation in economic and cultural terms. This approach is remarkably similar to the essentialist approach of Smith outlined in section 3.1.1. For vulgar Marxists, ethnic attachments are part of residual pre-capitalist social relations. Their continuing existence hampers the development of class-consciousness and retards class formation. More sophisticated Marxist analyses also have a tendency to view ethnicity as an epiphenomenon, and have given less importance to horizontal rather than vertical social cleavages. These analyses tend to focus either on the relationship between race and class, giving the latter primacy and seeing the former as false consciousness

masking the true economic nature of social cleavages, or on the ideological role of ethnicity for manipulative ruling elites.

The Dependency approach, which has refined Marxist and structuralist approaches to development, has concentrated on the effects of international macro economic relationships on the economies of developing countries. Their main emphasis was that these structural conditions gave little room for actors in the peripheral countries. Hence, internal relationships within the periphery have often been overlooked, and even local elites were characterised as collaborating with international economic interests rather than having independent agency and interests of their own, whilst the broad mass of the population is often portrayed merely as victims of an international economic system.

On a practical level ethnicity is a politically sensitive subject in many African countries, a fact which undoubtedly deters much southern and northern scholarship. It is possible that NGO sponsored research also seeks to avoid becoming embroiled in this type of political controversy.

Some research has examined the impact of ethno-political structures and ethnicity on wider development, focusing on the destruction caused by ethnic violence and the divisive impact on national economic integration caused by ethnicity (Allen 1992). For example, Nnoli outlines how ethnic divisions in Nigeria create barriers that inhibit the market and the flow of labour and discusses how a great deal of development activity is based on ethno-political calculations rather than on technical criteria (Nnoli 1995). Inter-regional co-operation is inhibited by the divisive and exclusionary nature of ethnically-based competition. For Nnoli, ethnic competition for resources has "polluted the political process, distorted the economic process and generated tension ... not conducive to foreign investment" (Nnoli 1995 p8). Nnoli takes an instrumentalist approach to ethnicity regarding it as an ideology created by self-serving elites. However, his work is undermined by regarding the politicised and divisive forms of ethnicity as a primary cause of the

weakness of the African state, rather than as a symptom of these problems. Although it is impossible to deny that much damage has been done to African development in the name of ethnicity, the central problem of ethnicity is not ethnic identities but, as discussed below, the way the state has sought to deal with them.

The approaches outlined above share a similar limitation related to their narrow conception of ethnicity, which is related to politically motivated sentiment. This limitation prevents the possibility of examining positive aspects of the relationships between ethnicity and development, as the primary purpose of research from these perspectives is to examine the usually negative impact of ethnicity on national integration. The one exception to this trend came in the late 1980s from Murphree who tentatively outlined an approach, which would allow examination of how the constructive elements of ethnicity had been harnessed for the purposes of development (Murphree 1986). He used a broad conception of ethnicity based on Hyden's notion of the economy of affection: an intermittent system of support located in a network of communal rights and obligations, where economic decision-making is embedded in non-economic conditions. For Murphree as the activities of the post-colonial state are alien to the social and economic conditions of the peasantry, these alternative economic ties can be functional and rational for them. This conception of ethnicity moves beyond the focus on the exclusionary aspects determined by the intervention of political actors. It is economically and culturally-based on day to day relations and for Murphree (1988) this constitutes a broader salience of ethnicity within the informal economy. Although this approach pointed to the possibility of investigating the relationship between purposive development and ethnicity, it failed to produce any empirical research⁴. The proposed use of this concept by Murphree (1988) and later Mombeshora (1990) was limited by a lack of theoretical grounding and emphasis on contingency. This led their work to be essentially proposals for future descriptive accounts of the positive aspects of ethnicity at micro contextual levels. The economy of affection model, which underpins Murphree's approach, describes rather than explains

⁴ This lack of empirical output could also be related to political difficulties in Zimbabwe.

relationships within ethnic groups. It also presents these relationships as an uncontested system of rights and obligations, which serves the basic needs of much the population rather than appreciating that these relationships may reinforce inequality within the group. These criticisms notwithstanding, if the descriptive approach of the economy of affection is supplemented by the theoretical and empirical advances provided by constructivism, a viable approach to understanding the relationships between ethnicity and development can be established.

3.3 Ethnicity and the state in Africa

As previously stated, the crisis of the nation state is the only area where the development discourses have analysed the relationship between ethnicity and development in Africa. A brief summary of these debates will serve to illustrate both the role of the state in shaping the context for the construction of ethnic identities and the relationships between institutions based on ethnicity and the state. Amin characterises the distinguishing feature of the elite in peripheral countries, and particularly Africa, as its inability to control the subordinate terms of the nation's integration within the world economic system (Amin 1997). Brown (1989) suggests that the state's relationship to ethnicity is influenced by its lack of autonomy from the interests of dominant social groups and its degree of influence over society. These are in turn influenced by the interaction between the composition of the elite, national ideologies and the framework of state institutions. According to Ake (1993) the post-colonial African state can be characterised as non-autonomised as it is the primary site of accumulation for elites, which is crucial to their formation as a class. In the context of limited non-state economic opportunities, control of the state distribution mechanisms becomes crucial to economic advancement. In this process, the state itself becomes a focus of class struggle rather than mediating it and politics becomes a scramble for access to resources.

Ihonvbere suggests that, as the state serves the interests of metropolitan capital and the elite, it has little relevance for the existential conditions of the population. This leads to a withdrawal from civil society and the formation of alternative attachments to institutions such as ethnic self-help groups. Thus the state is overwhelmingly dependent on repression rather than ideological forms of domination which further de-legitimises the state and weakens civil society (Ihonvbere 1994). Ihonvbere's approach overlooks how alternative forms of domination can be institutionalised within civil society. A more sophisticated analysis of the institutionalised relationship between the state, civil society and ethnicity is provided by Rothchild's hegemonical exchange model (Rothchild 1985). This sites these alternative forms of institutional attachments within civil society rather than characterising participation in them as a retreat from it. In these networks although the state lacks the capacity to impose its decisions, it has developed mechanisms to manage ethnic diversity, whereby the state and ethno-regional interests engage in a process of mutual accommodation on the basis of commonly accepted norms. Within these institutional arrangements, Chazan focuses on the ethnic balance within the elite and particularly on the pivotal role of ethnic intermediaries, whose position is based on their organisational skills, contacts and institutional base (Chazan 1992).

Thus, the political elite constructs ethno-corporatist structures to diffuse ethnic tensions by managing the process whereby ethnicity becomes a political resource for factions of the elite. At the same time the elite harnesses the inclusive aspects of ethnicity through enmeshing members of ethnic groups in patrimonial networks, ensuring loyalty through the distribution of resources through ethnically-based relationships. The functioning of these mechanisms seems to operate on a normative framework that emphasises equality between groups. Mombeshora (1990) outlines examples where the perception of inequality in political participation led to leaders perceiving it as legitimate to mobilise their constituencies. Nnoli argues that the perception of egalitarian distribution based on ethnicity is crucial for the maintenance of the legitimacy of these structures.

Whilst this conception of ethno-corporatism is somewhat vague and generalised, it illustrates trends that Welsh suggests are widespread and able to adapt to a wide variety of regime type (Welsh 1996). The functionality of these relationships is debatable, as these systems of patronage are often presented as constraining economic development and hampering the evolution of democratic structures, as the obligations embedded within them are widely manipulated by all sectors. However, these ethnic patronage networks can also be seen as a means of integrating geographically and culturally diverse communities with the state. The inclusive aspects of ethnicity cut across other cleavages and could be harnessed for development purposes. In the context of retrenchment of the state, the powerful attachments generated by ethnicity could become a means for mobilising communities through the ethnically-based welfare and trading institutions that already provide significant material and emotional support. The egalitarian and democratic elements of ethnic identity can be harnessed into a normative framework to facilitate and regulate participation within democratic structures.

3.4 The uses of ethnicity as an analytical concept

The constructivist approach regards ethnicity as a conceptual tool located in the observer's mind rather than as an innate quality of social groups. Although both academics and interest groups constructed ethnicity, it has been appropriated and renegotiated by members of ethnic groups and now exists in their consciousness. The power of ethnicity as a concept flows from its constructed nature, as the persistence of ethnicity is related to its status as a flexible subjective construct, rather than an 'objective fact'. This conceptualisation of ethnicity has implications for its use as an analytical category for social research, which can be related to ontological distinctions between the real and the actual. Olsen suggests that we can discuss the ontological status of ethnic categories at a situational level as, "conceptions of ethnicity have actual effects and are therefore real...it is a causal mechanism...even if the idea is not an accurate portrayal of

the world" (Olsen 1998 p10). Similarly, Allen argues that, despite their origins researchers cannot dismiss ethnic labels, as they represent the social reality of the researched (Allen 1994). Therefore, ethnicity will be treated as a valid analytical tool even though this debate suggests caution in its use for research.

Banks produces a similar point in warning of the dangers of the researcher projecting their own understanding of ethnicity onto the subject under the impression that this understanding is coming from the subject. Therefore, according to Banks it is necessary to reposition the analyst and subject, whilst accepting that the concept of ethnicity remains valid (Banks 1996). This leads into Banton's view that it is crucial to distinguish between the actor's and observer's models of social structure in order to understand the significance of empirical research. He describes this as the process of interpreting the actor's practical language by the observer who labels attitudes as ethnic and then conceptualises them in terms of the relationship between attachments and the maintenance of boundaries through the use of abstract concepts. This process of abstraction of ethnicity is based on a distinction between the necessary conditions for ethnicity and the signs taken for deciding if a group meets them. This can lead to contradictions as it is unlikely that the actor and observer will share the same interpretative scheme (Banton 1994). It is necessary to locate ethnicity as the observers perception of the understandings of the observed. In Eriksen's terms, "social scientists... have excelled in creating models of societal formations and cultural systems of classification. At the same time, they have paid much less attention to modelling and understanding the ongoing flow of social life as defined from within - and if they have done the latter...they usually fail to demonstrate the relationship between levels. Addressing the relationship between macro processes and local life worlds...is essential for any proper understanding of ethnicity" (Eriksen 1999 P61)

If one accepts ethnicity as a valid analytical context there are still problems. The tendency to privilege ethnicity, when taken in the context of the multi-stranded nature of collective

identities, has become of central concern to some constructivists. In Eriksen's words, "by isolating ethnicity as a focus for research, one easily loses everything else from sight. This is perhaps the cardinal sin committed by many students of ethnicity" (Eriksen 1999 p45). The empirical implications are highlighted by Agbese in his study of Nigerian Hometown Associations, suggesting that there is a tendency for researchers to label all activities by certain groups as ethnic, whereas in reality the subjects attach a variety of meanings related to other attachments to their behaviour (Agbese 1996). However, it is also necessary to distinguish between how actors present their interests and the processes influencing the negotiation of these interests. Thus, the purpose of using ethnicity as an analytical construct is not to present a positivistic explanation of what ethnicity is but to explain and contextualise the competing understandings of ethnicity and other collective identities coming from within the group. These issues resurface in Chapter 3 where the methodological implications of using constructs such as ethnicity are discussed in greater detail.

4 Conclusions: conceptualising the relationships between ethnicity and development

As illustrated in section 3.2, scant attention has been applied to the relationship between development and ethnicity. The existing research focuses primarily on the negative relationship between politicised ethnicity and the historical or evolutionary aspects of development, particularly the impact of development on state formation and ethnic conflict. However there has been virtually no research into the relationship between ethnicity and purposive development. The various theoretical approaches to ethnicity in Africa can be applied to its relationship with purposive development. Three approaches, based on essentialism, instrumentalism and constructivism, could be used to investigate the relationship between ethnicity and purposive development. From an essentialist perspective development is a form of communal action caused by ethnicity. Thus, people

undertake collective action for development purposes based on ethnicity because of their ethnic attachments. Although this approach is flawed, it could well be the way that participants in indigenous development associations understand their participation. From an instrumentalist perspective ethnicity is an ideology that is mobilised for specific purposes. Although this approach tends to focus on politically or economically motivated ethnic sentiment, it could be used to analyse the extent to which ethnicity is mobilised for constructive purposes such as development. The literature on indigenous ethnically-based development associations either takes ethnicity for granted or uses some form of instrumentalism. Before discussing a proposed constructivist approach to the relationship between ethnicity and purposive development, I will outline the approaches taken in the existing literature.

The bulk of the literature on indigenous ethnically-based development associations treats the role of ethnicity as a basis of association in a superficial manner, with only a small proportion attempting to investigate the ambiguities and complexities of this relationship. As descent is the main determinant of whether these organisations are seen, by members, as ethnically-based, the role of descent in delimitation of communities should be critically evaluated. However, much of this work treats community as an unproblematic concept, implying an ahistoric, primordial and territorially defined homogenous community with fixed boundaries. Woods takes a different view suggesting that although the basis of identity within Hometown Associations is that of the dominant ethnic group within the locality, it is rare for this to have anything but an instrumental basis (Woods 1994). However, he fails to discuss the issue further thereby regarding instrumentalism as a self-explanatory term. McNulty and Lawrence improve on this position, suggesting that contemporary definitions of this concept go beyond the purely territorial by introducing an element of time, reflecting the dispersed nature of the group and how social organisation is underpinned by loyalty to the patrilineal hometown (McNulty and Lawrence 1996). This form of instrumentalism is analytically useful as it implies that these organisations are an institutional form of politically mobilised ethnicity exhibiting its contingent and fluid

characteristics. However, these approaches fail to investigate the uses of ethnicity and are subject to the limitations of the instrumentalist approach outlined above.

Lentz provides a more sophisticated instrumentalist analysis of ethnicity as a basis of association. She outlines the contemporary realities of geographical mobility, multiple group membership, and overlapping cultural, economic and political boundaries. This is contrasted with the primordialist self perception of the members, based on assumptions of common heritage and culture, which are reflected in the organisations' official statutes where membership is restricted to 'indigenous people' defined through birth and marriage. The seeming paradox between contemporary realities and primordial self-image is resolved by the group through the ambiguity of these terms and the flexible interpretation by group members (Lentz 1995). This type of instrumentalist approach to ethnic identity can be used to understand the data contained in much of the other work on indigenous ethnically-based development associations. Competing definitions of the community may be the result of internal relationships within the organisation. Divisions within the founding, often multi-ethnic, educated elites and pressure for inclusion from other classes, particularly 'traditional leaders' and merchants, have often led to the adoption of ethnically exclusive definitions, which have acted to cement cross class alliances. Similarly pressure to overcome divisions related to competing identities, such as kinship and village, can increase the salience of ethnicity within the organisation. Thus ethnicity can be inclusive in class, status and geographical terms whilst being exclusive in non-ethnic terms.

One of the strengths of the literature on indigenous development associations is that it locates the role of ethnicity in a wider political context. Negotiation with the state and other organisations can influence the definitions of the community and the scope of the organisations' activities. There is often pressure not to organise outside the locality or in areas perceived to be controlled by other ethnic groups, as the organisation may be drawn into and 'ethnicise' political conflicts (Lentz 1995). State regulation and informal mechanisms of integration affect the organisations' formal position, as there are often

prohibitions on explicitly organising on an ethnic basis. However, the organisations' responses illustrate the flexibility of their identities, as when ethnic associations were banned in Ghana and Nigeria many transformed into Hometown Associations. External pressure to appear unified can also increase the salience of ethnicity within these definitions of community leading to an emphasis on common heritage to legitimise claims of being representative of a distinct sector of the population. The history of inter-ethnic relations within the locality is also a significant factor in defining the community, as those areas with traditions of ethnic co-operation are more likely to be represented by ethnically heterogeneous associations (Lentz 1995).

The approach taken by Lentz, whilst explaining the process of mobilising ethnicity within the association, has other limitations due to the use of an instrumentalist approach, which regards ethnicity as having only one function. Although she treats the central aspects of the group's primordial self-perception as ambiguous, there is no analysis of the processes of constructing these concepts. In line with the instrumentalist approach, these concepts are regarded as being harnessed for specific ends by elites. There is little investigation of the perceptions of the membership and thus their understandings are presented as passive and open to manipulation by the elite using ethnicity. Furthermore, this approach fails to explore how the group negotiates traditions, as a point of reference, to enable the associations to take advantage of new opportunities. There is little evidence of how these constructions have influenced group identities or whether they have become embedded in the consciousness of the group. In addition to regarding ethnicity as only having one function, these approaches only identify a single conception of ethnicity within the group. There is no information on whether competing conceptions of ethnicity, as the basis of group membership, are articulated by dissenting groups within the community. Thus, the perception of the dominant group of the nature of ethnicity is generalised to the whole group. At a fundamental level, these approaches do not analyse how perceptions of being a member of the ethnic group are related to the activities of the organisation. They focus on the uses of ethnicity, rather than examining how previous constructions of ethnicity can

be embedded into the association. Thus these approaches fail to appreciate how the activities of the group act to recreate ethnic identity or could become a marker of differentiation.

These limitations point to the need to produce a viable constructivist approach to analyse the complexities of the relationships between ethnicity and development within indigenous ethnically-based development associations. The constructivist approach can build upon instrumentalist understandings of how ethnicity is used by the leadership to achieve specific ends, such as mobilising resources, managing internal disputes and positioning the association in civil society. However, it will also provide a theoretical framework to investigate other dimensions of ethnicity. This approach will site the dominant development discourses in debates about the nature of civic virtue within the group. It will allow the key concepts of the dominant development discourses to be redefined in relation to constructions of ethnic identity. Thus, participation in development can be seen as an aspect of participation in the affairs of the ethnic group. Debates about the nature of participation and internal perceptions of participation can be related to meanings of group membership particularly fulfilling the rights and obligations embedded in ethnic and other identities i.e. civic virtue. This introduces a new dimension to the relationship between ethnicity and development, as participation in development activities can become an integral aspect of ethnic identity.

My approach will contextualise the formal structures of accountability of the associations in indigenous culture and social organisation to examine who they are accountable to and for what activities. This approach will also examine two areas of accountability that have currently been overlooked, informal channels of accountability and the expectations of appropriate forms of leadership that are embedded in conceptions of civic virtue. This approach enables an investigation of the relationship between the development associations and the so-called 'traditional' sector, an issue that has been overlooked in the development literature. Contemporary notions of civic virtue are constructed to

legitimise survival strategies by relating them to 'traditions' of the group. Thus, conceptualisations of the effectiveness of development interventions can be directly related to the material and non-material aspects of civic virtue. Indigenous conceptions of effectiveness can therefore include processes of generating stability and reproducing ethnic identities and other issues that cannot be quantified by mainstream notions of accountability. However, this approach accepts that as conceptions of effectiveness are linked to ethnic identity, they can be contested from within the group and that this process is likely to draw upon ethnic 'traditions'. Ethnicity is not, as essentialists suggest an unchanging resource that can be harnessed. Its role is more complex than as instrumentalists suggest, an ideology which can be mobilised and then dissipates. It is a dynamic process, which, whilst contextually rooted, can build upon itself. The process of purposive development by indigenous development associations can be regarded as an element in the construction of civic virtue and is therefore an aspect of how people perceive themselves. The activities of these associations can be seen as an aspect of how people locate themselves as individuals within the group and how the group locates itself in interactions with others.

Chapter 3

Methodology and methods

1 Methodological standpoint

The methodological approach in the thesis is informed by what has been labelled 'postcolonial studies' (Arnfred 1995). The core epistemological assumptions of this approach are similar to the concerns of the constructivist approach to ethnicity outlined in Chapter 2. This is part of the wider constructivist approach to social studies and is strongly influenced by feminism and post-structuralism, and involves deconstructing assumptions embedded in the dominant conceptualisations used by development studies. The supporters of this approach seek to distance themselves from mainstream development studies. However, this artificial dualism seems at odds with their general epistemological position. The aims of postcolonial studies are congruent with those of many anthropologists and sociologists. Furthermore most mainstream participatory approaches to development studies, whilst not purporting to be postcolonial share some of the aims of postcolonial thinking.

The postcolonial approach has two fundamental methodological premises. The first is that data should be placed in a historical and political context. This is hardly a theoretical breakthrough, as most mainstream approaches to social studies would at least claim to do this. The second aspect builds on the first by deconstructing the concepts used in the process of data analysis and placing them in the wider context of neo-colonial north-south relationships. Thus, it can be distinguished from conventional research where "the researcher is firmly placed as the subject with her theories, concepts and hypotheses to be applied and tested in the field" (Arnfred 1995 p3). In line with participatory approaches, the process of research is regarded as a dialogue between the subject and objects. This

approach makes theoretically explicit differences in the methodological approaches taken by a range of academic disciplines. In the case of anthropology, Max Gluckman draws a distinction between data provided by informants providing 'apt illustrations' for hypotheses created by the researcher and theories being generated by the data. In this thesis, I have attempted to use the ways that the informants have conceptualised the relationship between an indigenous NGO and its beneficiaries rather than seeking to impose externally derived categories on their perceptions. However, I am aware that the evidence provided in the thesis is my interpretation of the theoretical constructs used by my informants. According to Arnfred, "the researcher is the conceptualiser, by inspiration from the types of knowledge that she finds in the field" (Arnfred 1995 p4).

In Chapter 2, I noted that researchers must draw a distinction between ethnicity as a way that people make sense of the world and ethnicity as a conceptual tool in the mind of the observer. The postcolonial approach highlights the discrepancy in mainstream development studies between the analytical tools used by researchers and the experiences of the researched. As Mulinari suggests, "definitions of reality are not about what people do, but about what is considered sociologically relevant in their doing" (Mulinari 1995 p44). Thus, the analytical tools used by the researcher become a focus of research, as they may well have different meanings to the observer and the observed. For Swantz this process will involve reconstructing conceptual categories as "knowledge and experience from the ground level of peoples' everyday lives needs to meet the minds that conceptualise, even if it shakes all well worked out theoretical constructs" (Swantz 1995 p23). In the thesis, the salient concepts used by the dominant development discourses to analyse the trusteeship between NGOs and their beneficiaries will be analysed in the context of indigenous social organisation and culture. Rather than following definitions of these concepts applied by northern academics and practitioners, the thesis will highlight and contextualise various indigenous perceptions of concepts such as development (Chapter 5), participation (Chapter 6), and accountability (Chapter 6).

2 The case study and locations

2.1 The case study

The issues researched in the thesis required detailed analysis of the social, cultural and economic networks that underpin indigenous approaches to development. According to Thomas (1998), focusing on a single case study, enables the researcher to examine the inter-relationships within the case in detail. Using this approach enabled me to explore in depth the complexities of the inter-relationships between notions of civic virtue, survival strategies, ethnic identities and development within a group of development associations. My approach is informed by what Yin calls 'embedded single case study' (Yin 1994 pp. 41-44). Although I focus on a single group of organisations there are several units of analysis: GPSDO as an organisation, two of its urban and rural-based sub-committees, and within the two areas, I examined specific locations (as I explain below).

GPSDO as the most successful and oldest development association in Ethiopia was the most obvious choice of case study. However, I also examined other potential candidates. There were very few similar organisations operating in Ethiopia outside Gurageland. I was aware that a range of indigenous NGOs are operating in Oromia. However, it proved difficult to contact them and I was advised that some of them might be linked to opposition political forces. I also considered investigating the ethnically-based development associations that had recently been established across Ethiopia. During a preliminary visit to Ethiopia, I had discussions with leaders of ethnically-based development associations such as the Oromia Development Association, the Amhara Development Association and the Southern Peoples' Development Association (SEPPDA). Although these informants were supportive of any future research, from these discussions it was clear that these organisations were closely linked to the state and not emanating from the beneficiary community.

Three distinct but interrelated models of purposive development can be discerned in Gurageland; state-based development, mainstream development agencies and indigenous development associations. The first model of development is directed by government agencies such as the departments of agriculture, education and health. This approach has been supplemented by the activities of the Gurage Zone Development Association (GZDA), a member of SEPDA. This organisation has built upon the experiences of Tigrayan development associations linked to the Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) and reflects the ideology and practical concerns of the EPRDF government. Currently, it tends to act as an arm of government, implementing the activities of the agriculture department. As such, its activities reflect the aims of current government policy, particularly in relation to facilitating rural self sufficiency by increasing agricultural production through natural resource conservation. The organisation and its partners believe that with maturity, GZDA will reflect the aims of the rural community, however, at present its purposes are to establish a sustainable organisational structure in Gurageland and to implement government policy. GZDA has only recently become active in Gurageland, there was little knowledge of it in Moher and it had been operating for less than a year in Enamor. GZDA is not the central focus of the thesis as it represents an external model of development imposed on the Gurage communities by the government, rather than an indigenous model of development derived from Gurage forms of social organisation and notions of civic virtue. However, there are references to GZDA throughout the thesis, particularly in Chapter 7, as an understanding of its role and orientation assists in analysing the debates about the legitimate forms of development in Gurageland and relationships between development associations and the state.

The second model of development intervention in Gurageland consists of the activities of mainstream development agencies including bilateral agencies, non-Gurage national NGOs and international NGOs. The thesis discusses the internal factors that have contributed to the indigenous Gurage models of development, however, it should be noted that perhaps the most important single contribution to the Gurage orientation to

development was the establishment of a school in the largest Sebat Bet town, by catholic missionaries. More recently bilateral agencies such as Irish Aid and GTZ have established capacity building partnerships with local government and GZDA. Non-Gurage national NGOs such as the Catholic Secretariat have implemented a range of development projects across Gurageland. The international NGO sector including Action Aid and Water Aid has recently begun to implement projects in Gurageland. In the late 1990s, some international NGOs became closely associated with GPSDO through capacity building (PACT) and joint project implementation (OXFAM and Save the Children).

The indigenous approaches to development in Gurageland were pioneered, in the 1960s, by The Gurage Road Construction Organisation (GRCO), in western Gurageland, and the Allemgana – Walamo Road Construction Association (AWRCA), in the east⁵. Both organisations were founded by members of the urban Gurage elite at the request of rural elders and successfully harnessed the obligations embedded in Gurage urban rural linkages through using indigenous institutions such as urban Idirs to mobilise communal resources. Currently the activities and orientation of GPSDO and its affiliates, such as the Moher Development Association and the Enamor Development Association, exemplify this model. In addition to GPSDO and its affiliates, western Gurageland is served by a range of indigenous development associations based on affiliations of clan, village and family. In addition to this many village level development projects are financed by prominent individuals. These institutions have varying levels of formality, with some being ad hoc creations to undertake specific projects whilst other clan-based institutions are more formal and have a long history of providing benefits to the community. Although there are commonalities within this sector, there is also significant diversity within the indigenous models of Gurage development related to the formality of the associations, the nature of their linkages with the community and the scope of their activities. There are

⁵ AWRCA was a road construction organisation founded in 1961 to link the eastern Gurage areas with Addis. This organisation was the subject of Gedamu's Ph.D. thesis (Gedamu 1972).

differing histories of development endeavour in western (Sebat Bet), northern (largely Kistane) and eastern (largely Silte⁶) Gurageland.

The thesis focuses only on development activities within the Sebat Bet areas of Gurageland facilitated by GPSDO and its affiliates. Thus, the term 'indigenous models of development' is applied to development which is facilitated by GPSDO and its sub-committees. The use of the term 'Gurage' in this thesis applies only to Sebat Bet Gurages. The use of these terms should not be taken to imply that analysis based on some Sebat Bet Gurages can be generalised to other groups of Gurages. Furthermore, the organisational structure of GPSDO grants much operational autonomy to the sub-committees, which each have their own independent financial base. Thus, even within GPSDO it was clear that there were significant differences within the sub-committees related to levels of activity, organisational structure and the formality of their relationships with the community particularly institutions such as Idir and Shango.

I had anticipated that much of the research would take an approach similar to mainstream development studies, investigating issues of participation in development and mechanisms of accountability between the organisation and its beneficiaries. During the course of data collection, it became apparent that these terms had very different meanings to the informants and me, and that it would be necessary to contextualise informants' perceptions of these concepts. Before undertaking the fieldwork, I had considered that the objects of the research may not share my perception of the meaning of development, however, it was only during data collection that I realised that this should be an area of research. Before the fieldwork, I understood the theoretical aspects of the constructivist approach, however, I had not been able to translate this understanding into specific research questions that went beyond an instrumentalist approach. Thus, I expected to focus on the ways in which the leadership of GPSDO used ethnicity as a resource to mobilise the community and manage relationships within the organisation. It

⁶ In April 2001 Siltes voted to reject Gurage ethnic identity.

was only during data analysis that the complexities of the relationship between Gurage identities and the indigenous Gurage model of development became apparent.

2.2 Locations

The choice of location for the fieldwork was dictated by the case study methodology and Gurage migration patterns. Thus although the research is investigating rural development, much of the research was based in Addis Ababa, the main site of Gurage migration and headquarters of GPSDO and its sub-committees. As I explain in Chapter 4, Gurages migrate across Ethiopia and beyond in search of trading opportunities, however the thesis relates only to the perspectives of Gurages in part of Gurageland and Addis Ababa. I decided to focus in more detail on the activities of two sub-committees. The two rural locations were selected according to the following criteria:

1. The sites should be in separate Worredas. In the context of the devolution of power to the Worreda officials, informants had suggested that there were considerable differences in the relationship between GPSDO and Worreda officials in the four Worredas in Sebat Bet Gurageland.
2. Much of the previous research conducted in Gurageland had focused exclusively on Cheha whereas the other areas have received little academic attention. This has caused some resentment amongst other houses as previous researchers, particularly Shack, were accused of implying that evidence from Cheha could be generalised to the other houses. This had several implications for the research. Cheha has been historically politically dominant and has had a longer history of education leading it to supply the vast majority of the officials of GRCO and GPSDO until 1989. The Cheha sub-committee seems to have been more successful than other sub-committees, and thus the locations I chose did not necessarily focus on the best practices in the indigenous model.

3. Gurageland consists of a range of topography ranging from high mountain to midland plateau and a few sparsely populated low-lying river valleys. I wanted to select locations from the midland and highland regions in order to reflect upon the impact of the different agricultural practices and migration patterns.
4. The development discourses articulated by Ethiopian academics and the NGO sector emphasise the constraining impact of proximity to political centres on the autonomy of rural associational life. I also expected that distance from the political centre would increase the autonomy of the indigenous sector and would impact on its relationship with development activities. Therefore, I wanted one site to be located in the environs of the Worreda capital and the other to be some distance away.

I discussed these criteria and my overall research strategy with GPSDO activists, who made no attempt to sway me towards one site or another, with other urban Gurages and my research assistants. Moher was selected as the first site, as my first research assistant had previously worked there, could understand the dialect and had knowledge of key networks in the community. GPSDO officials described the Moher Development Committee as a typical representative of the sub-committees, although it had become actively involved in rural development later than the other committees. Moher is a mountainous area in the Eza and Wollane Worreda and some distance from the Worreda capital Agena. The Eza, Wollane, Moher and Akilil houses inhabit this Worreda⁷. Within Moher, the only place with available accommodation was Cheza Sefa, the largest settlement in the area and site of the high school built by MDA. Moher is one of the least developed Sebat Bet areas of Gurageland and was the last to be connected to the road system. The development association also constructed a telephone centre in Cheza Sefa and the government opened a piped water system along the main road during the fieldwork. The closest medical facilities are 20 km away. Sebat Bet Gurages have diverse religious affiliations with equal numbers of orthodox Christians and Moslems, which continue to be influenced by indigenous belief systems. There is also a small but

⁷ At the time of writing, the administrative boundaries of the Gurage zone were under revision.

influential Catholic minority and a few Protestants. Unlike other areas, Moher is almost entirely orthodox Christian. Strict adherence to religious obligations, such as abstaining from work on all saints' days and the Sabbath, is an integral aspect of rural life. As a highland area, chat production is less prominent in Moher than other Sebat Bet areas and there was little evidence of coffee production. This lack of opportunities for cash crops and the dense population has led to very high levels of male migration. In Moher, the research focused on the town of Cheza Sefa and two surrounding Jafforos, and two Jafforos in the neighbouring Koror Peasant Association (an area served by an elected committee representing a population of around five thousand. PAs were originally established by the Derg to facilitate participation in government).

The choice of Moher as the first research site then restricted choice for the second to Enamor as it was the only midland site other than Cheha, which included a Worreda capital. The Enor (Enamor), Aner and Indegagn houses inhabit the Enamor Worreda. The Worreda capital, Gunchire, is within the area inhabited by Enamors and is well connected to the Ethiopian highway system with daily buses to Addis Ababa. Gunchire has a range of facilities including a high school built by the Enamor Development Association (EDA), and a piped water system and clinic provided by the government. The EDA also electrified the town although recently the system has fallen into disrepair. The area around Gunchire is a centre for the production of chat and to a lesser extent coffee. Enamor is inhabited by both Moslems and Christians with the former being in the majority and indigenous belief systems continue to be influential. Both Gunchire and Moher suffer from soil erosion particularly of common grazing land. The research in Enamor focused on the town of Gunchire, two Jafforos in the neighbouring Shanka PA, and was supplemented by some research in a nearby Fuga Jafforo.

The thesis focuses primarily on development associations, also called sub-committees, representing two of the seven Sebat Bet houses, Moher and Enamor. However, this data was supplemented by discussions with representatives from almost all the GPSDO sub-

committees. I also made brief visits to the major settlements and GPSDO development projects in all seven Sebat Bet houses. Whilst discussing my research strategy with officials from the various sub-committees, it became apparent that although the sub-committees co-operate within GPSDO, they also enjoy operational autonomy and there is much competition between the sub-committees. Thus, it is clear that there are both similarities and major differences in their organisational structures in Addis Ababa, their relationships with Idirs in Addis Ababa, their levels of activity and their relationships with Worreda and zone officials. These issues came into focus when comparing the major differences between Moher and Enamor, and therefore it would be unwise to attempt to make broad generalisations about the nature of the Sebat Bet Gurage model of development from these two case studies. During the course of the fieldwork, I moved away from regarding the selected areas as representative samples of GPSDO or Gurage development in general and attempted to contextualise the unique features of each area.

2.3 The impact of the researcher on identities

Anthropologists have come to appreciate that academic research can have unintended effects on the communities under study. Tim Allen suggests that “just by using ethnic labels in their writings, scholars have contributed to the formation and development of the identities to which they refer” (Allen 1996 p92). He notes that “academic works, some of them published decades ago, may remain unread but are nevertheless invoked to show why primordial sentiment appears to dictate events.”(Allen 1996 p92). In the case of the Gurages, Shack’s research and particularly his publication, *The Gurage: A People of the Enset Culture* (Shack 1966), has had a major impact on the construction of ethnic and other identities. Shack’s research emphasised the homogeneity of Gurage culture, social organisation and ethnic identity. According to Markakis, this lent scientific credence to the creation of uniform Gurage ethnic identity at a time when Gurage identities were responding to a variety of environmental factors related to mass urban migration

(Markakis 1998). Markakis' approach oversimplifies this process by treating the indigenous populations as homogenous passive consumers of academic research and thereby underplaying indigenous agency in the process of appropriating academic research for the construction of identities.

During the course of the fieldwork, it became apparent that a wide range of Sebat Bet Gurages were aware of previous research into Gurage histories and cultures. This literature included research by academics, such as (Shack 1966; Gedamu 1972; Nida 1996); indigenous intellectuals, such as (Mariam 1972; Bereka 1986; Neri); and government sponsored research, such as (Alemu 1999). However, much of this knowledge was partial, highly subjective and in the case of Shack, based more on the criticisms levelled against it, some valid others less so, rather than the contents of the text⁸. In Chapter 6, I outline how articulation of knowledge of Gurage history, traditions and culture is an essential aspect of the process of becoming a respected elder.

Indigenous intellectuals, such as rural elders and urban intellectuals have contested much of what has been written about Gurages, including one prominent Gurage visiting Shack in the U.S.A. to demand that he revise his research. They juxtapose their interpretations of its limitations with their own knowledge of the histories and traditions of the Gurages.

Previous research was often used as a straw person to demonstrate the intellectuals' own credentials as an authority on Gurage traditions or to further their own interests. In this process, new understandings of Gurage traditions and cultures are constructed. Thus, it is not the research per se that impacts on the construction of collective identities, but the way that understandings of the research are interpreted and articulated by the intellectual strata and accepted by the wider society as a way of understanding the world. The critical attitude of Gurage intellectuals towards Shack influenced my approach to the research.

This attitude conjured up images of a viva staffed by a committee of elders demanding that the thesis accurately reflect Gurage culture. This led to self-imposed pressure, during

⁸ The critiques of Shack refer primarily to *The Gurage: A people of the Enset culture* (Shack 1966). These critiques seem embedded in Gurage culture and include criticisms of his methods and focus particularly on an accusation that he generalised his findings based largely on one sub-clan to the rest of the Gurages. The subsequent revisions of his views (Shack 1974) seem to be unknown.

the fieldwork, to discover and accurately portray objective facts about Gurage development, rather than to analyse the data as my understandings of their discourses.

Without foresight of the particular political and socio-economic circumstances and internal competition, it is extremely difficult to predict the nature of the impact of this research on Gurage identities. The dominant Gurage development discourse is in part constructed to make sense of contemporary events and legitimise activities by drawing on the developmental history and culture of Gurages, which is embedded in the dominant notions of civic virtue. The salient external contexts are discussed at more length in subsequent Chapters. Chapter 7 discusses the recent conflict between GPSDO and the EPRDF government, increased state penetration and political challenges to the legitimacy of Gurage urban rural connections. The Gurage survival strategies outlined in Chapter 4 are challenged by socio-economic and demographic changes discussed in Chapters 4 and 8. These changes may well have caused some Gurages to question whether the dominant notion of civic virtue still produces rewards. The period immediately before the fieldwork (April - December 1999) had been particularly traumatic for GPSDO due to a number of external and internal factors. These included government attempts to undermine the organisation by destroying its financial base and prohibiting the organisation from mobilising support in Gurageland (see Chapter 7). Six months before commencement of the fieldwork, a period of intense internal conflict within GPSDO culminated in the ousting of its leadership and reforms to its mechanisms of accountability (see Chapter 6). The discourses outlined in subsequent chapters are in part the product of attempts, by different groups of Gurages, to make sense of the new environment in which GPSDO finds itself. They are also the products of a long period of contestation within the urban and rural elites, which involved various intellectual strata constructing notions of the role of participation in development and leadership in what it means to be Gurage.

The findings of the research are thus, not presented as objective social facts about the nature of the indigenous Gurage models of development, but as forms of understanding,

constructed by the dominant sections of the urban and rural Sebat Bet elites, that make sense of the new and challenging social and political context. The discourses outlined in the thesis reflect the ways in which they have sought to understand contemporary issues in a period of socio-economic and political change. Although, these discourses are based on various constructions of Gurage histories and cultures, it is not the place of the researcher to challenge the accuracy of these histories or to attempt to construct an objective model of Gurage society. The purpose of this research is to explain how different sectors of the Gurage communities use these constructions of Gurage civic virtue to resolve contemporary issues.

3 Informants

3.1 Selection of the informants

3.1.1 Urban informants

The selection of informants was initially driven by the case study approach. Therefore, the key informants in the first stage of the Addis Ababa fieldwork were GPSDO officials. The leaders and activists in GPSDO can be placed into three categories: the founders and other figures from the GRCO period (pre 1989); the leadership of GPSDO from 1989 to 1998; the current leadership of GPSDO and the sub-committees. The three groups had differing views on certain issues, particularly the nature of accountability within the organisation and the balance of power between the house-based sub-committees.

However, they all articulated the dominant Gurage development discourse. The leaders of the sub-committees introduced me to the leaders of associational life, particularly house and clan-based Idirs. The Idir leaders are highly respected and knowledgeable and as discussed in Chapter 4, they have close links with the indigenous development associations. The Idir leaders and sub-committee activists led me to the wider urban

community. This approach to the selection of informants could lead to a self-reinforcing view of the extent of community participation in development discussed in Chapter 6. The implications of this approach, particularly for homogenising Gurage perceptions of development, are discussed in section 3.2. With these limitations in mind, it became clear that it was necessary to contact a broader group of urban informants.

Locating alternative urban informants was done on a pragmatic rather than systematic basis. Some informants were contacted through the research assistants and friends of acquaintances. I also contacted informants such as merchants, traders and bar owners through visiting their premises. This group of informants included various categories of traders ranging from the owners of large shops and trading ventures to small traders and artisans in the Mercato to street traders. However, this group did not include the business elite, which according to some informants is de-linked from the wider Gurage communities.

Urban Gurage intellectuals are a heterogeneous group comprising professionals and successful businesspeople born in Addis Ababa and Gurageland. They had a central role in interpreting Gurage history and traditions in an urban setting. This group was highly influential and tended to be active in Gurage associational life. In particular I wanted to see how they conceptualised the role of development in the Gurage community and to understand how they articulated their views to the wider community. However, it should be noted that this group was usually contacted through the networks associated with the development associations and Idirs. Therefore, the data they provided is likely to be in line with the dominant Gurage development discourse. Contacting Gurage professionals and civil servants with fewer ties to these networks was difficult and, as discussed in section 3.2 below, this group was barely represented in the data.

The final category of urban Gurages was political activists such as, MPs representing Gurageland and figures linked to opposition parties. These groups provided information

on government development policy, particularly as it relates to indigenous development associations. I also attempted to get information on the causes of and salient events in the conflict between GPSDO and the EPRDF government.

I also had detailed discussions with mainstream development agencies, such as NGOs and bilateral agencies, that had partnerships with indigenous Gurage and other development agencies in Gurageland. The relationship between mainstream development agencies and GPSDO is not the central focus of the thesis. Therefore, the purpose of these discussions was to get background information on the salient aspects of their relationships with GPSDO. This included how relationships between mainstream development agencies and GPSDO influence the relationships between GPSDO and its beneficiaries, relationships within GPSDO and the extent to which engagement with mainstream development had impacted on the orientation and activities of GPSDO.

3.1.2 Rural informants

For pragmatic reasons, contacting informants in Gurageland followed the hierarchies of political authority and status as I tended to follow the order of Zone, Worreda, PA leaders, elders, heads of household, women and youth. In order to obtain permission to undertake the research the first group of informants contacted were the representatives of the state. This group included Zone and Worreda officials such as the heads of Economic Affairs, Social Affairs, Women's Affairs, Culture and Planning departments and the leaders of local PAs. This group provided information on how government development policy was implemented in the localities. They also provided government opinions on the nature of development problems in Gurageland, their perspective on Gurage survival strategies, the relationship between the state and indigenous development associations, and the roles of the various rural strata in development. This group also included Development Agents (extension workers) from the Department of Agriculture and GZDA officials.

Prominent elders and others active in community affairs were usually identified in advance by urban residents and GPSDO activists. I tried to follow the hierarchy of elders as those of lower status seemed uncomfortable if they were interviewed before the highest status elders. This approach may appear to legitimise communal hierarchies, however this was balanced by the need not to offend key informants and the critical role that this group plays in communal affairs. Developing a relationship with the elders was critical to the success of the research project, as their support provided legitimacy in the eyes of other potential informants. I assumed that this group would fulfil the role of an indigenous rural intellectual strata, as they act as interpreters of tradition and were thus the most knowledgeable about Gurage histories and cultures. Furthermore, they have acted as contacts between the rural community and GPSDO and have a central role in rural associational life.

I was able to contact a wider range of people in the rural than urban areas, as there were fewer difficulties related to identifying potential informants. Community members were selected at random in the different locations. Farmers were selected by waiting in the Jafforo and arranging meetings, or by visiting farms where Debo groups were working. Access was also negotiated at associational events such as Senbete, Idir meetings, clan and house shangos and Mahber. In both locations market day provided an opportunity to meet with a wide range of informants and arrange interviews. I did not use PA meetings as a point of access to the rural community, as during this period these meetings were used to discuss politically sensitive issues such as the forthcoming elections and the war with Eritrea.

The approaches taken in contacting rural informants in Moher and Enamor differed due to the nature of associational life in the two areas and the extent of prior knowledge of the two areas. In Moher the rural sub-committee of the development association continues to function and maintains close links to the leaders of rural associational life and the Moher

PAs. In addition my research assistant was known in the area and was able to harness some of his contacts to gain access to the community. Associational life in Moher appeared more active than in Enamor, possibly due to the intensity of their religious obligations. In Moher, there were almost daily associational gatherings such as Idir, Shango, Mahber and Senbete in addition to PA meetings. In Gunchire, the situation was more challenging, as the Enamor Development Association had no functioning rural infrastructure. Associational life was dominated by state-linked institutions such as the PA, therefore, in order to contact informants in the villages, PA leaders and Development Agents were used as access points in three Jaforros. Although this approach facilitated access to the community, there is a strong likelihood that informants identified me with these agents of the state. This may have had some impact on the research, as the Development Agents were the key actors at the village level in GZDA. I tried to maintain some distance, by not allowing them to observe my interviews and made the informants aware that I was not involved with the government. The impact of using these actors as access points is difficult to evaluate, however it must be viewed in the context of a lack of privacy in rural areas. Furthermore, my research was discussed within rural urban networks with information passed in both directions as some key rural actors were aware of my research before I arrived in their areas. As I seemed to be linked to the Development Agent and political structure, in Enamor many informants seemed to believe that they were obliged to participate in the research. I am unsure of the impact of this as I explained that participation in the research was voluntary, and it is probable that if informants were uncomfortable they would have engaged in avoidance strategies.

3.2 The missing voices

From a constructivist standpoint, the notions of civic virtue that underpin the dominant Gurage development discourse are likely to be contested. The construction of this discourse is likely to involve articulating conceptions of tradition in order to benefit certain

sections of the Gurage community. As discussed in Chapter 2, identifying and privileging one group of a given society as historical actors capable of creating ethnicity is problematic. During the course of the fieldwork, it became apparent that there were criticisms of the dominant view of Gurage development. However, with a single exception, these counter discourses were closely associated with government hostility to the urban rural relationships embedded in the dominant notion of civic virtue. In Chapter 7, I outline the political and ideological reasons for government suspicion of the dominant Gurage notion of civic virtue. Generally criticism of GPSDO and its sub-committees rarely extended to questioning the fundamental aspects of the dominant notion of civic virtue, outlined in Chapter 4, and the way in which it is embedded within Gurage identities, as discussed in Chapter 8. Instead, criticism was directed towards various categories of people who had not fulfilled their obligations to the community rather than questioning the legitimacy of these obligations or the institutions that have been built upon and sustain them.

As discussed in section 3.1, the choice of informants particularly in the urban areas was constrained by necessity. It was far more difficult to locate informants who would be likely to articulate counter discourses. Thus the thesis outlines and explains the basis of the dominant Gurage development discourse. This is the understanding articulated by the urban elites, associational activists, rural intellectuals and is apparently accepted by the bulk of the community. Whilst not wishing to privilege this view over others it should be noted that very few informants explicitly or implicitly criticised the fundamental underpinnings of this discourse. Although other members of the Sebat Bet community may articulate critical discourses, they were not presented to the researcher. The lack of counter discourses may be due to patterns of land ownership and the dominant economic role of migratory activities, outlined in Chapter 4, combined with a perception that the benefits from development interventions are equally shared by the rural population, discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. The only discourse that attacked some of the fundamental relationships that underpin the contemporary notion of Gurage civic virtue was outlined by

a prominent member of the urban elite. This critique is discussed at length in the postscript to Chapter 5 as, although it is an isolated opinion, it may well reflect the views of de-linked, professional Gurages, a category under-represented in the thesis.

The choice of informants was dictated by the case study approach and pragmatic concerns and has led to some voices being dominant. This limitation in the selection of informants was reinforced in the production of data, as I developed a close relationship with the most articulate, confident and charismatic informants. In Enamor, I developed a rapport with some professionals and civil servants, whilst in Moher this tended to be with the clan leaders. In Addis Ababa, my respect for the leadership and activists within GPSDO and their support and enthusiasm for the research led me to develop a close relationship with some of them. Thus, there is a likelihood that information received from the relatively powerless and least educated would be subordinated and that the research risks further marginalising their views. As Lonsdale suggests “Some...were clearly better than others at stating their view of the world to strangers. They not only won an argument about civic virtue, they seem to have silenced their critics” (Lonsdale 1992 p295). Thus, the weight I give to responses from the more articulate, those more confident in the presence of foreigners and those most proficient in English undoubtedly could play a role in marginalising critics. In the future, this research could well be harnessed to promote the dominant Gurage development discourse, which presents a particular conception of development as embedded within Gurage notions of civic virtue. Thus, it is important to highlight the internal and external context in which the data for this thesis was gathered and who the informants were. My research focused on certain sections of the community and therefore may give their perceptions privileged status. In line with the discussion in section 2.3, I acknowledge that this research could be used to legitimise the dominant Gurage development discourse by imbuing it with ‘scientific status’. Allen suggests that in relation to the impact of academic research on the communities under study, academics “have much less control over the interpretation of what we write than we would like” (Allen 1996 p92). However, researchers can make the wider context of their research clear and

outline whose voices are predominant within it. Thus, I re-iterate that the findings outlined in this research are largely based on my interpretation of the dominant Gurage development discourse that, in my opinion, is used by certain groups of Sebat Bet Gurages to make sense of the world. I do not claim that all Gurages or even all Sebat Bet Gurages uncritically accept these views; only that this is the way that the dominant urban and rural Sebat Bet Gurages currently construct the relationship between development and civic virtue.

4 Data collection methods

4.1 Methods

The main method of data gathering in both the rural and urban areas was semi-structured interviews. This consisted of discussion around a pre-determined list of key issues, focused to particular categories of informants. The discussion usually began with open-ended questions about the nature of development in the area, what the informant saw as the key developmental problems in the area and who was responsible for development. I would then focus in on salient issues raised by the informants to allow for adaptation to informants' agendas and concerns. When interviews were less structured, the informants had greater control of the interaction and tended to yield more interesting and unexpected data. This also seemed to make them feel that I was valuing their opinions and allowed them to participate in setting the agenda for the interaction. Whilst this was slightly more time-consuming for both of us, there were only a few occasions when the lack of control led to long and irrelevant answers. This was exacerbated in translated interviews. It was apparent that informants would discuss the content and nature of the interviews with other members of the informant's network and tried to prevent interviews becoming dull or too intrusive. Interviews conducted in Amharic or Guraginia had to be more structured than those conducted in English and were based on a list of specific questions. This approach

often reduced the scope for follow-up questions and constrained the ability of the informants to discuss issues at length.

Urban interviews were usually conducted in the informant's workplace or home in order to minimise disruption to their schedules and to create a relaxed atmosphere. Visitors often interrupted interviews conducted in the home and although this reduced privacy, it served to broaden my network of contacts. The main limitations of using informants workplaces were that, in the case of merchants and traders, there was much disruption caused by onlookers and background noise, and in the case of civil servants, electronic equipment such as tape recorders could not be taken into government offices. The location of rural interviews varied considerably, some were conducted in informants' homes and places of work whilst others were held at communal meeting places such as Shangos, markets and Idirs. I also held interviews in my lodgings, which provided an incentive for participation, as refreshments were also provided.

During the initial part of the urban fieldwork, I presented key informants with a typed transcript of the interview. This was extremely useful at first in correcting some basic misunderstandings and provided me with an idea of where conceptual and linguistic confusion was likely to occur in future. Ultimately this technique proved time-consuming for the informants and it could only be used when informants had a very high standard of English. This approach evolved into arranging as many follow-up interviews as possible in order to build up rapport and provide the informants with information about the nature of the research.

The original intention was only to conduct interviews individually, however often the number of participants was determined by the setting of the interview. The rural interview schedule was dependent on the inhabitants work schedules, therefore the best opportunities for interviews were either at associational gatherings or during breaks in communal work groups. Thus, group interviews were often unavoidable. In addition,

during the course of interviews in the rural areas and in Addis Ababa, impromptu groups would form. This would put informants at ease and acted as a means of disseminating information about the nature of my research on their terms. This approach had both positive and negative outcomes for the research. On occasion, this technique produced dynamic interactions within the group whereby informants actively discussed and refined ideas. This seemed to happen mostly with younger and educated informants and where they appeared to be of relatively equal age and status.

In the context of the limited resources available, it was difficult to do group work in Amharic, as it was often beyond the capability of a single research assistant to translate the responses immediately and control the group. Many of the issues that I wanted to discuss were seen as sensitive, as informants seemed unwilling to discuss them in a public forum. This was particularly the case with issues that could be related to politics and internal conflict within GPSDO and, to a lesser extent, local power structures and personal finances. In addition to self-censorship, some informants were silenced by others in the group when they mentioned issues deemed to be sensitive or unsuitable for discussion with outsiders. Usually the responses elicited from group interviews were of limited value as there was a tendency for only the person of highest status to speak and for others to merely agree with them or remain silent. This was particularly a problem when attempting to get responses from women or young people, as there was an assumption that certain people can speak on behalf of the community. In this situation, observing the dynamics within the group was of equal or greater value than the actual responses provided. The interactions within the groups revealed the contextual nature of status hierarchies as, within the same group, different people would dominate the discussion and would be deferred to at different times according to the nature of the issues raised. Analysing these interactions also revealed which subjects are sensitive and to whom in the group. Generally, it seemed that older informants within groups were more willing to discuss sensitive issues such as inter-clan relationships. In group interviews, the responses were often made for the consumption of the group as a whole rather than the

interviewer. This had a contradictory impact on the data as, in some cases, individuals would exaggerate their own contributions to the community, or the importance of their own clan or house, whereas some prominent individuals would downplay the significance of their contribution to the community when interviewed in a group. This could be related to the expectation of highly respected people behaving humbly.

In Addis Ababa, informants generally consented to the use of tape recorders when being interviewed. During recorded interviews discussions became conversational and less structured. This proved most valuable in interviews conducted in Amharic as it allowed the discussion to be reviewed and translated later in depth. However, it was clear that when the interviewee found issues sensitive they would glance nervously at the tape recorder and respond less than candidly and often refuse to elaborate. This issue was partially resolved by ceding control of the tape recorder to the informant, which enabled them to decide which issues required the confidentiality that not recording implied. This seemed to lead to many informants being much more confident and candid than if no parts of the interview had been recorded. As interviews were usually transcribed within 48 hours, I was able to demonstrate that the tapes were constantly re-recorded and that there was no possibility of them falling into the wrong hands. Tape recorders were not used in rural areas, as I believed that it might intimidate some informants.

4.2 The absence of PRA and survey methods

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and other participatory methodologies have become increasingly important in development studies. This approach allows many of the concerns listed above to be addressed particularly allowing the researched to have some input into the agenda of the research. These approaches are particularly popular with practitioners who have little time to engage in long-term research methods. The limitations discussed in section 4.1 with reference to group interviews can also be applied to

participatory exercises such as PRA. This method is used mainly by development practitioners, who have substantial incentives for people to co-operate. With many other demands on informants' time, I seriously doubted whether it would have been feasible to arrange group exercises. PRA did not seem an appropriate method of investigating the research topic. Although PRA can be relevant to project planning and revealing information about resource use, it seemed less appropriate for questions designed to reveal perceptions that are more abstract. The main advantage of participatory methodologies is that they allow informants' concerns to be prioritised in the research, however, my approach of semi-structured interviews involved a high degree of informant participation.

Household surveys did not seem a valid means for acquiring data on this subject matter in this socio-cultural environment. It seemed an inappropriate means to explore the subtleties of the meanings embedded within responses, and therefore would have produced misleading data. During interviews, questions had to be constantly rephrased and refined in line with informants responses in order to overcome conceptual and factual misunderstandings. This was particularly apparent when informants used a range of names to refer to the organisations. Indeed, appreciating that the informants and I were often using the same terminology to describe different things led to major conceptual breakthroughs. A quantitative method could not have revealed the differing meanings that have been applied to important terms in the dominant development discourses. A survey would have been incapable of exploring the situational factors affecting responses and discourses used by the informants.

The structure of a survey would make it extremely easy for the informants to give answers that they deemed to be the most inoffensive. It was probable that there would be a very high rate of non-response as most rural interviews required a period of negotiation and many informants missed appointments due to other engagements. For an extensive

survey, it would have been necessary to train up a group of research assistants, time which could have been more usefully spent in interviews.

4.3 Research Assistants

In addition to the ability to translate, I wanted research assistants with knowledge of local culture and political issues so that they could provide advice on how to handle sensitive issues and negotiate access to networks of informants. Much of the criticism of the work of Shack can be traced to his selection of and reliance on his research assistants.

According to urban and rural informants, Shack's assistants were all from the same sub-clan of the dominant clan in Cheha which led to distortion of his data, as it tended to overemphasise the importance of this sub-clan, clan and house. Therefore, I attempted to strike a balance between research assistants' knowledge of the dialects, culture and access to informants whilst maintaining some distance. Although local research assistants, if available, would have facilitated better access, it was preferable to select Gurage research assistants who were not from the house under study. Ultimately knowledge of the local dialects did not seem crucial, as most rural interviews were conducted in Amharic with some use of the local dialects to clarify certain terminology.

The first research assistant was a Kistane Gurage graduate student in anthropology. His previous work in Moher involved some interaction with key urban and rural informants. However, he seemed to be perceived as an outsider, which had implications for the research. In Addis Ababa some of his contacts refused to co-operate with the research, or were extremely hesitant to discuss development in Moher in anything other than the most vague terms. He was relatively young and not active in urban Gurage associational life. The difficulties that we encountered suggest that gaining access to the key urban and rural Gurage networks does not automatically translate into good information. For many informants this seemed to require credentials and a degree of trust, which can only be

established by an insider. In rural Moher he commanded a great deal of respect and was able to facilitate access to elders, PA leaders and the wider community. However, many of the rural people continued to be suspicious and even fearful of our motives. Furthermore, his previous position seemed to lead to many rural informants behaving deferentially.

The second research assistant was a Cheha Gurage in his sixties who had previously worked on Catholic Secretariat development projects in Gurageland. He was a member of clan and sub-clan Idirs and attended the same Catholic church as many of the most significant historical figures in GPSDO, and was active in a Cheha sub-committee. These associational ties enabled me to overcome many of the difficulties I had encountered in negotiating access as he seemed to be a part of many of the most important urban Sebat Bet Gurage networks. He also had credibility in both the rural and urban areas due to his previous employment with the Catholic secretariat that had previously been active in development in much of the Gurage zone. His position as an insider influenced the direction of the research, as he was knowledgeable about sensitive issues which had previously only been hinted at, specifically political relationships and internal relationships within GPSDO. Whilst providing much background information, he was also able to arrange contacts with individuals who were both knowledgeable and prepared to discuss these issues. When he was present, urban interviews tended to take on a different atmosphere, as informants seemed more relaxed and tended to speak to him rather than through him to me. They also seemed more prepared to discuss sensitive issues, perhaps because they assumed that I already had some knowledge of these issues. As his presence seemed to increase greatly my credibility, I also engaged him in interviews where his translation skills were not required. Being aware of the dangers of over-reliance on the interpretations of research assistants, I cross-checked information that he gave me.

4.4 Gender

The major limitation to the thesis is issues relating to gender. Historically women have had little role within GPSDO and a range of pragmatic issues severely constrained my ability to research gender issues. In urban areas it proved very difficult to contact women, as the networks that I used to access the community were male dominated. There appeared to be no female participation in the sub-committees and households are represented in Idirs by the male head. Migrants such as merchants were all men. The situation varied in the rural locations. During the course of the research in Moher, there was little evidence that gender relations have changed from the situation in the 1950s described by Shack as absolute male superiority, whereby women have no authority (Shack 1966). More recently, "the ideal pattern of relations between husband and wife in Gurageland" was described as "male domination and the separation of the sexes. [The] husband as a family head... makes all major decisions which he considers necessary for the welfare of the family" (Abute 1997 p58). In Moher, it was almost impossible to arrange interviews with women and I only managed to speak to three female informants, two young women who worked at my lodgings and a female Development Agent. In Enamor it was possible to speak to female informants, however these interactions were constrained by a number of factors. Generally, it was only possible to speak to women in groups, during work in Debo (rotating, single sex agricultural labour group with 6 to 15 members) and breaks from work. However, interviewing women whilst they were working was difficult, as often the householder would disapprove due to the disruption caused. Furthermore, there are strict taboos preventing men from observing women during the preparation of enset, the main form of female work during the research period. This was partially resolved by constructing screens, however, this further increased the disruption to production. Interviewing women during breaks from work was also difficult, as these breaks were short and the women had to prepare food and care for children.

Thus discussion of the role of women in development and their perceptions of Gurage civic virtue in this thesis is limited and tends to reflect male perception of the role of women. Whilst not wishing to endorse the view presented by male informants that women participate in development through heads of household, discussion of gender issues in the thesis is limited to the perceptions of Gurage men, with a limited contribution from a few rural women and urban female intellectuals.

5 Ethical issues and sensitivities

During the course of the research, it became apparent to me that several issues had major ethical dimensions. These can be grouped into two areas: issues of sensitivity to the informants, and the nature of my research contribution to GPSDO.

5.1 Sensitive issues

To an outsider, the relationship between GPSDO and the Gurage communities would appear to be uncontentious, however this was far from the case as the relationship between GPSDO and the government was extremely sensitive. Indeed a previous attempt, in 1997, to investigate the relationship between GPSDO and its rural stakeholders received no co-operation from the government (Molla 1997). The Zone, Worreda and party officials that I dealt with were, without exception, helpful and co-operative and freely gave up their time to assist in the research. However many informants in the rural and urban areas were unwilling to discuss politically sensitive issues. The current leadership of GPSDO and the sub-committees generally declined to discuss any details of their relationship with the government other than stating that it varied between houses and Worredas and that it was generally improving. Some informants requested anonymity or declined to answer sensitive questions, as they feared sanctions being taken against their businesses, others feared their pensions being

removed, whilst some civil servants feared that their careers would be adversely affected by openly criticising their superiors or party policy. It is not necessary for an outsider to assess the validity of these fears. However, in the context of the recent history of Ethiopia, with networks of informers during the Derg period, and the perception of many urban Gurages that they are a target group, these fears were real to the informants. In the light of these fears, I assured informants of absolute confidentiality. Some data openly critical of the government could be traced back to sources and have not been included in the thesis. No serving members of GPSDO or the sub-committees explicitly criticised government policy or officials, however other data could potentially harm the relationship between GPSDO and the government and have been left out of the thesis.

The second aspect is related to internal conflicts within the Gurage communities and within GPSDO. The approach of informants to an outsider who may publicise internal conflicts varied. Many informants refused to acknowledge that there had been any internal conflict or refused to discuss its implications for GPSDO and the Gurage communities. However, once I had demonstrated that I had some knowledge of conflicts within GPSDO, some informants clearly relished the opportunity to promote their views. Many rural informants were also unwilling to criticise rural power structures. This was most obvious in the discomfort shown by some informants when attempting to reconcile party discourses and other affiliations. For example, informants with political affiliations were expected to be critical of the behaviour of known elders in relation to changes to the Gurage customary law (Ya Kitcha, Chapters 5 and 7) yet seemed unable to openly criticise them. Discussion of internal conflicts often led to avoidance strategies or to coded criticisms.

Informants were usually unwilling to discuss the nature of economic networks and the nature of economic activity during migration, as they were deemed too sensitive to discuss with an outsider. In Chapter 4, I suggest that much of the information on the role of ethnic and sub-ethnic networks may well represent a counter discourse to the dominant

Ethiopian perceptions of Gurages as a secretive ethnic group who use their ethnic networks for business advantage.

5.2 The contribution of the research

The other major ethical issue was about the nature of my contribution to the Gurage communities who assisted me in my research. This was most apparent in Moher, where most informants believed that I was part of a development project, which would bring tangible benefits to the community. Discussing the nature of academic research had little impact on informants' perceptions and ultimately I had to begin discussions by downplaying direct developmental issues in the research and focusing on the contextual aspects. This perception on the part of the informants probably led to contradictory distortions of the data. On the one hand there was an emphasis, particularly by those who felt that it was their duty to secure resources, on claiming that no development agencies had been active in their area. On the other hand, other informants seemed unwilling to criticise previous development projects and would try to demonstrate their worthiness to receive developmental assistance by emphasising their role in previous development and their flexibility.

The direct contributions of the thesis to the Gurage communities and particularly GPSDO are likely to be limited. As discussed above, it may well act as a point of reference in internal discussions of the nature of Gurage civic virtue and its relationship to the Gurage model of development. At a tangible level the thesis and subsequent publications will serve to publicise the activities of GPSDO to a wide audience including potential donors and partners. The thesis may also provide 'academic legitimacy' for GPSDO's claim to be the most successful example of indigenous community development in Ethiopia, which can be harnessed by the leadership as they struggle to renegotiate their relationship with the Ethiopian state. At a broader level, the thesis will contribute towards an understanding

of the contributions of ethnically-based development associations. It provides a framework for understanding a broader salience of ethnicity in development. These understandings can be applied to a range of indigenous development associations. At a methodological level, the thesis raises significant questions over the extent to which the meanings embedded in the concepts used by dominant development discourses are shared by people on the ground. This in turn questions whether the conceptual tools used by the dominant development discourses are applicable to indigenous development associations. In addition to raising questions, the thesis proposes ways of locating the conceptual tools used by researchers in the reality of people on the ground.

6 Conclusions

GPSDO is the most successful and well-known example of indigenous development endeavour in Ethiopia, and could well be the only successful example of long term indigenous community development in Ethiopia. Therefore, it is not surprising that understanding and replicating 'the Gurage model of development' has become something of a Holy Grail in Ethiopian development discourses. The intention of the thesis is more modest, as I seek to understand the forms of trusteeship between GPSDO and the Sebat Bet communities. My approach is to relate the orientation of indigenous Gurage development associations to Gurage social organisation. The thesis seeks to locate the dominant Gurage development discourse, articulated by the urban and rural intellectual strata, in contemporary Gurage notions of civic virtue, the processes of Gurage citizenship. Although I use the terms Gurage and Sebat Bet Gurage interchangeably, the thesis refers only to the relationships between the Sebat Bet Gurage communities and GPSDO and its sub-committees. The methodological approach taken in the thesis can be applied to other similar organisations. The conclusions drawn from the data are largely specific to the relationship between GPSDO and the Sebat Bet Gurage communities at the turn of the millennium.

Chapter 4

The social world of the Gurage migrant and conceptions of civic virtue

1 Introduction

Migration is a central element of the lives of Gurage people. Migration to other parts of Ethiopia is crucial for the economic viability of most rural households, therefore almost all rural Gurage men are involved in migration. Migration and the social adaptations it necessitated have become embedded within Gurage cultures and value systems. Any explanation of Gurage society must be grounded in an understanding of the nature of Gurage migration patterns and its impact on Gurages. For example, migration is now a central aspect of Gurage masculinity. Migration is also central to Gurage beliefs about their origins as an ethnic group. Although Gurages now have a strong attachment to their current territories which form the basis for their house identities, their oral traditions suggest that they are composed of several distinct groups of peoples who migrated to Gurageland in the past and eventually became the Gurages (Alemu 1999).

The chapter begins by introducing some of the rural institutions that have been built upon by Gurage migrants. Then the chapter will illustrate the economic and cultural pressures that lead to high levels of Gurage migration. The approach taken in this chapter is influenced by the way of conceptualising migration put forward by Emanuel Marx (1990). This analyses migration in terms of social networks and focuses on how migrants are connected to series of groups in different locations. The chapter will explore the complex social world Gurage migrants construct in order to survive socially and economically. It will examine the web of rights and obligations within the Gurage communities, particularly the obligations to rural kin and illustrates how many of these networks of trust and co-operation have been institutionalised. It will show how migrants and other urban Gurages

obligations to the rural sectors of the community shape a broader orientation to the rural areas. Urban Gurage orientations to development are an extension of their wider orientations to the rural areas, often expressed in terms of kinship, that form a web of rights and obligations. Gurage urban networks have been characterised as an example of 'the economy of affection' (Baker 1992) and using more current concepts they might be seen as social capital (Coleman 1988; Fukuyama 1995). However, my focus is to analyse the rights and obligations embedded within Gurage migratory survival strategies as the central element in the dominant constructions of Gurage notions of civic virtue.

2 Rural institutions

This section introduces some of the institutions and social practices in the rural areas. The relationship between these institutions and development will be discussed at greater length in Chapters 5 and 6.

2.1 Shango

Shango are the Gurage customary courts where legal disputes are settled according to Ya Kitcha, the Gurage customary law. This institution has various tiers that reflect some of the elements of Gurage identities such as family, village, clan, house and Sebat Bet. In principle Shango decisions are binding on all Gurages and are backed by Ya Kitcha and a range of powerful sanctions. The Shango is seen as the voice of the community and its authority is widely accepted, however, it is attended mainly by male heads of household and dominated by elders. Although that there is no prohibition preventing them from attending, unless directly involved in a case, women, low caste Fuga and young people rarely participate in these meetings, as they believe that it is the domain of the elders and that their contributions will not be taken seriously. In addition to settling legal disputes, Shango provides a forum for elders and heads of household to discuss communal issues.

In Chapter 6, I discuss the central role of the house Shango in securing legitimacy for development interventions.

2.2 Idir

A range of residential and clan-based Idirs serve the population of Gurageland, their primary function is to provide social and financial support at times of bereavement. All rural households are members of at least one Idir. The functions of Idirs vary according to the levels of contributions expected of their members. The most basic Idirs have no direct contribution and members are expected to only attend funerals and wakes, rather than provide financial assistance. Most Idirs require a monthly financial contribution from members and will provide them with financial support on the death of a member of the household. Some members of this type of Idir who cannot afford to contribute financially can provide services to the Idir in lieu of financial contributions. Some large and well established Idirs may also provide a range of types of social insurance, such as loans for members payment of land tax and subsidising the transportation and hospital costs incurred during serious illness, with the money being deducted from the death settlement. In Moher, this sector is particularly dynamic and became relatively wealthy through lending money at interest from their capital, however this practice was recently prohibited by the government. These Idirs now invest their surplus in cattle, which graze on common land. The Idirs in the area around Gunchire seemed less dynamic and concentrated solely on their original purposes. The role of rural Idirs in development is discussed at length in Chapter 6.

2.3 Senbete and Mahber

Senbete are informal gatherings after church at which the congregation eats together and discusses communal affairs. In Moher, the congregation and the community are virtually synonymous, as the entire rural population is obliged to attend church. Thus, Senbete is a central institution in Moher and provides a point of access to the community for development interventions. Other Sebat Bet areas are more heterogeneous in religious affiliation and thus Senbete are of less importance. In Moslem areas gatherings after worship fulfil a similar function.

In the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the 15 leading saints are celebrated each month. Mahber are gatherings to celebrate these saints' days and involve communal eating and drinking and provide a forum for the discussion of communal issues. In most Christian Sebat Bet areas, people refrain from work and celebrate the monthly day of the patron saint of the local church and the monthly celebration of St Mary's birthday. However, in Moher all 15 saints' days are observed in this manner.

3 The causes of Gurage migration

3.1 Push factors

The Gurage zone is one of the most densely populated areas of Ethiopia with population density varying between 200-300 per square kilometre. Prior to the construction of a road network there were few opportunities for cash cropping and surpluses of the staple crop enset were of limited trade value as it was perceived as unpalatable by the Amhara ruling groups. Thus, in order to meet financial obligations, particularly land tax after 1929, regular migration to the urban centres to generate income became necessary. This process of regular cyclical migration was facilitated by a combination of the seasonal

nature of male agricultural labour in enset producing areas which reflects the rural sexual division of labour and the relative proximity of Gurageland to Addis, which allowed men to migrate for large parts of the year. The rural economy continues to be based on rain fed agriculture with enset supplemented by grains and pulses and, in some areas, cash crops such as chat, eucalyptus and coffee. Due to the high population density, small land holdings and the limited application of agricultural technologies, high levels of migration are still necessary for economic survival in many areas particularly the most highly populated areas and those with only limited opportunities for cash cropping. Although migration has increased the demand for hired agricultural labour, other than retailing there are still few opportunities for wage labour in rural Gurageland. This has led to an estimated 95% of Gurage males being involved in migration at some stage of their life which has led to 60% of Gurages now residing outside the Gurage zone (Alemayehu 1999)⁹. According to one economist, 85% of land taxation in Gurageland is paid through migrants remittances (personal communication 1999). There is a widespread perception that the economic survival of rural households is dependent on migrants' remittances to pay taxes and to exist beyond a subsistence level, i.e. to purchase clothes and pay for festivals.

3.2 Pull factors

In contrast to the limited economic opportunities in Gurageland there is a perception that other areas, particularly Addis, provide many economic opportunities for industrious Gurage men. Young men and their families are aware of the kin and village level networks used to assist migrants in finding employment and accommodation. The rural community regularly sees many examples of highly successful migrants who return for festivals. In the past, migration to urban centres enabled access to the benefits of urban life such as hospitals, electricity and water. In particular, access to formal education was limited to those rural Gurages living close to Endeber, the largest Sebat Bet Gurage town where a

⁹ I was unable to verify the accuracy of this statistic, particularly whether or not it accounts for

missionary school was located. As a response many boys stayed with relatives in the urban centres, as youths engaged in urban occupations could potentially pursue education. As migration has become a central part in Gurage life, it is embedded in Gurage cultures, with expectations that young men will support their household financially. In addition, role models such as male relatives and their peer group are either resident in Addis or regular migrants. Gurage perceptions of masculinity seem to be influenced by the idealised migrant discourse discussed later. The social and cultural expectations of migration reflect economic pressures that are part of being a male Gurage. In addition to paying land taxation Gurage men are obliged to support relatives, amass capital to marry and establish a household and to finance festivals.

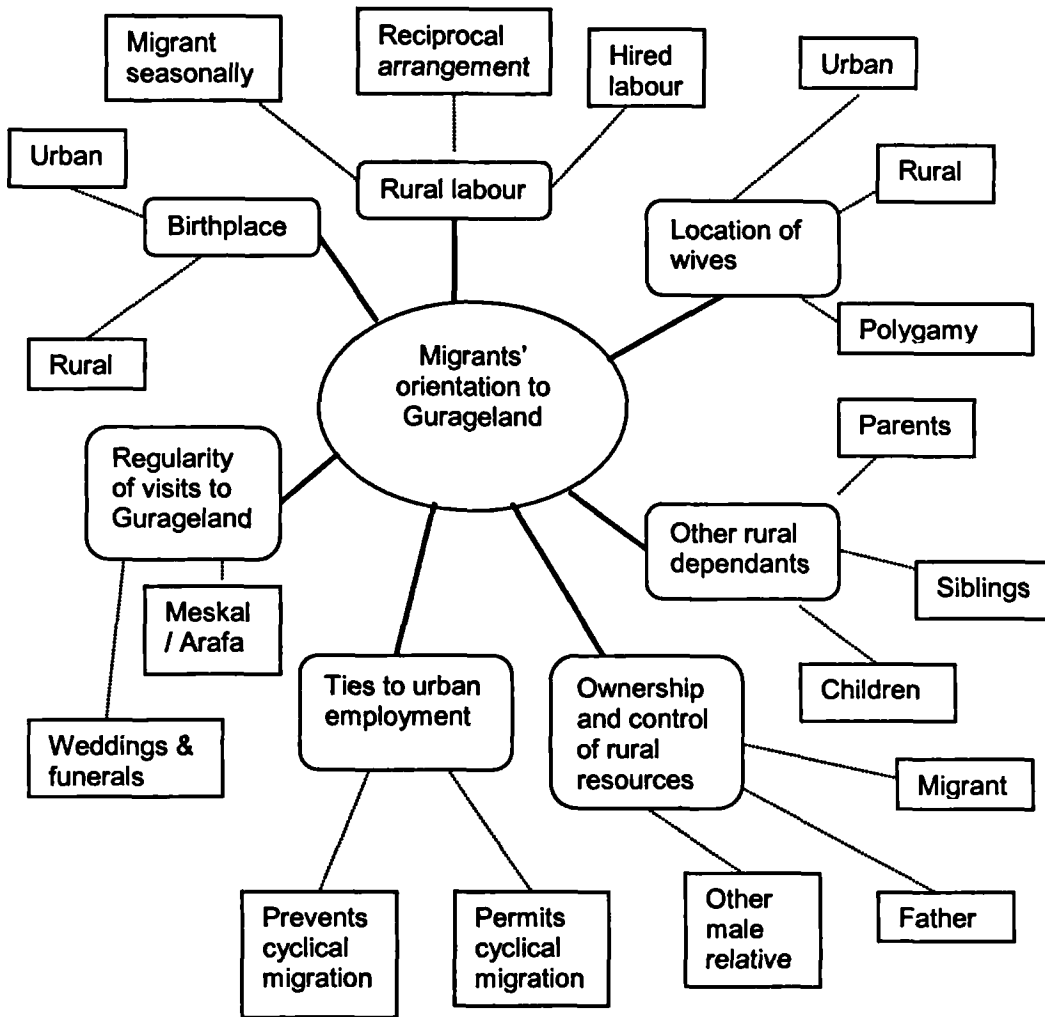
3.3 Patterns of migration

Although almost all rural-born Gurage men seem to be involved in migration, there are significant differences in their migration patterns. On the basis of their orientation to Gurageland and other Gurages, many informants drew a distinction between the Addis born, 'sons of Addis', and those born in Gurageland, 'Mercato Gurages'. Although these distinctions illustrate how Gurages conceptualise different urban residents, they seem arbitrary and do little to illustrate the variety in Gurage migratory survival strategies and how this impacts on orientations to Gurageland. These migration patterns are complex and vary between individuals and during the course of a man's life. Rather than placing categories on the different types of migration, I will outline the factors that can be used as indicators in attempting to typologise the various migratory strategies (see Figure 4.1).

This can be regarded as a continuum ranging from urban Gurages who rarely or ever visit rural Gurageland ('sons of Addis') to cyclical migrants who migrate to Addis annually to supplement their incomes ('Mercato Gurages').

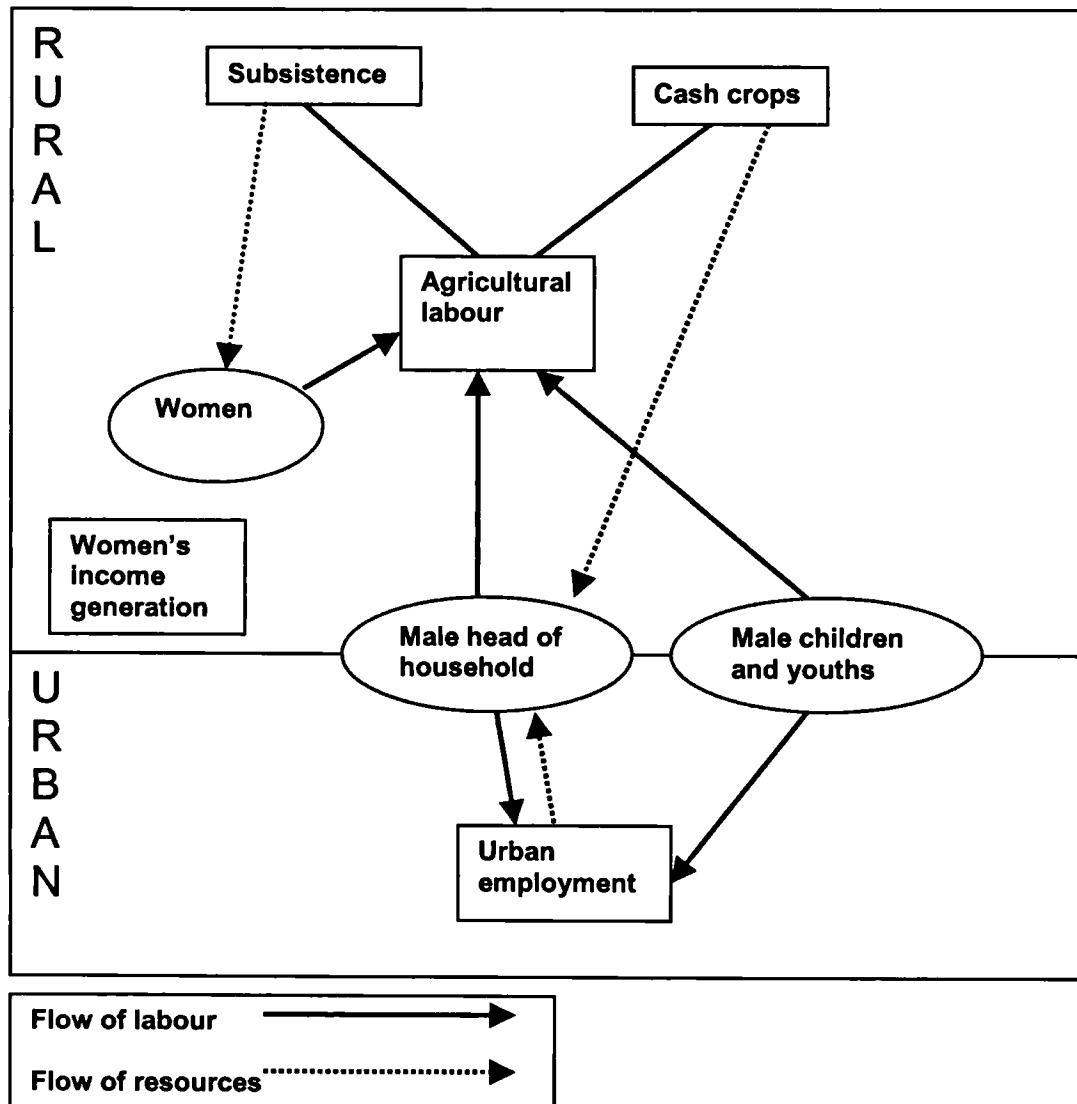
cyclical migration and if it includes women and children.

Figure 4.1
Factors influencing the nature of Gurage migration



The key factor in distinguishing migration patterns is the ownership and control of rural resources, particularly land. Although all adult male Gurages are entitled to own land, many urban Gurages chose either not to exercise this right or cede control of it to other relatives. The performance of agricultural labour also indicates the nature of ties to Gurageland, in some cases the migrant himself engages in agricultural labour, whilst others hire workers or are involved in reciprocal arrangements with other villagers. The presence of rural and or urban wives also dictates the nature of ties to Gurageland. These factors are constrained by the degree of flexibility permitted by the migrants' urban occupation, as traders have greater freedom to rotate between urban and rural areas than civil servants and professionals.

Figure 4.2
The Gurage household as an economic unit



As an adaptation to the socio-economic conditions created by their incorporation into the Ethiopian economy, and in the context of the sexual division of labour in enset-producing areas, the Gurage household can be seen as an economic unit that operates in different locations (see Figure 4.2). This illustrates the artificiality of dichotomising the urban and rural Gurage communities. Not only does the household bridge geographical gaps, it also harnesses the resources of different generations, as unmarried men living in Addis continue to be seen as key elements of the household providing money. Married men are also under some obligation to support their parents' household if they have the financial capacity to do so. This has been conceptualised as Gurages being 'urbanised peasants'

(Nida 1996). Others such as Gedamu see Gurageland as a suburb of Addis Ababa due to the improved communications links and regular migration (personal communication 2000).

In urban Ethiopian cultures, the term Gurage carries a range of negative meanings, many of which have resonance with stereotypes applied to economically intermediary groups in other societies. The term Gurage is often applied to those with an obsession with making money and can mean to cheat or steal. In the past Gurages were subject to discrimination, which effectively limited their employment to spheres despised by the Amhara elites such as manual labour, artisans and trade. A caste system, officially abolished by the Derg, operated in Gurageland, which prohibited the Wolleba caste - approximately 95% of the population - from engaging in occupations such as carpentry, metal working and leather working, which were restricted to the Fuga, Nefura and Buda castes respectively. However, these restrictions did not apply to migrants working outside Gurageland, where Gurages have taken an instrumental approach to work and have become involved in a range of occupations including manual labour, artisans, service industries and, most notably, trade.

Gurages responded to the negative stereotypes and discrimination through the construction of counter-discourses and the recreation of Gurage identity. The cohesive urban social world created to counter the effects of discrimination included a range of urban institutions for social and economic advancement and to reinforce urban rural linkages. Many of the Gurage counter-discourses about themselves are rooted in the period of urbanisation in the 1950s. A range of discourses reflect how Gurages see themselves and also impacts on their activities. One of the most pervasive, in terms of its impact on Gurage men and masculinity, is an idealisation of the Gurage migrant. This discourse has appropriated elements of the negative stereotypes and presents an idealised hard-working and enterprising Gurage man. He is flexible and takes an instrumental view of labour, being willing to undertake any work in order to advance himself and support his family. He saves money to invest in future business ventures,

whilst at the same time supporting his rural kin and maintaining his social obligations to other Gurages. Thus, in addition to sending money back to his parents, he returns for festivals, particularly Meskal and Arafa, and for ceremonies such as weddings and funerals. He also maintains strong associational linkages with other urban Gurages such as village, clan and house-based Idirs. He is willing to help other Gurage migrants, particularly those from his home village and clan. Yet most of his economic success is due to his own individual effort rather than his Gurage linkages. This pervasive discourse seems to underpin Gurage explanations of their migration patterns and the majority of case studies outlined below are remarkably similar. The impact of a series of linked discourses relating to Gurage networks and a golden age of Gurage development is discussed at more length in the conclusion.

4 Rights and obligations of migrants

The perceptions of Gurages held by other ethnic groups and sometimes reflected in academic research, such as Baker (1992), present them as the classical 'other'. They are portrayed as more cohesive, secretive and exclusive than other ethnic groups in Ethiopia, and use this to promote their economic interests. However, Gurages rarely present their obligations in ethnic or house terms. They see their primary obligations being to their family, then home village and then clan, although this is not necessarily presented in economic terms. A leader of GPSDO expressed this, "People in the cities feel obligated to support their locality. It is a natural phenomenon that starts from the family. If you talk about the well being of society you start from your home then go to your neighbour. The obligations start with supporting your family, your clan, your bet [house], then the other Gurages, then the rest of Ethiopia." This section is based on interviews with a range of Sebat Bet Gurage migrants, however, it draws heavily on detailed interviews with five migrants whose responses characterised the experiences of many other migrants. The five cases are listed below:

A) Enor (Enamor) shop keeper (late 30s)

At the age of 10, A and his brother came to live with their uncle in Addis. The uncle gave them some money to start work as Listros (shoe shiners, the archetypal first occupation for Gurage boys). After 2 years, the brothers then took over the uncle's coal retail business and for 5 years, they shared the profits with him. Later they were given a shop by A's brother's in-laws with whom they shared the profits for three years. Since then, they have rented their own small shop. The brothers' wives live on the same plot in Gurageland and the brothers rotate between Gurageland and Addis working on the land and sharing the proceeds. They both send money back to their rural families.

B) Cheha artisan (70+)

B came to Addis at the age of 15 to get money to help himself and his family. Initially he was an apprentice saddle maker. After 15 years he started his own business with savings from his wages and through a small Ikube, and now co-owns a shop in the Mercato. He returns to Gurageland occasionally for festivals. His son looks after his land, although he controls the proceeds. He sends money to his rural family.

C) Enor bar owner (50s)

C came to Addis as a child and stayed with his mother's relatives to support his parents and to be independent. After his relatives had lent him the money to buy equipment, he initially worked as a Listro. He saved money from this and started a wood selling business. He was introduced to an Ikube by his older brother, which he used to expand his business. He has a second wife in Gurageland. He returns for Arafa (an Islamic festival) and at least twice every year for 2-3 months at the start of the rains to plough and plant cereals, and in November to harvest them and to plant and harvest enset. When he goes to Gurageland his urban wife runs

the business. In the rural area, his wife and relatives run the farm and employ hired labour.

D) Cheha street trader (22)

D came to Addis at age of 12 and stayed with a cousin. He migrated to help support his parents and family. He now shares a rented room with his younger brother and another friend from his village, who are both engaged in similar work. He started by trading leather goods produced in his Addis neighbourhood. He started an Ikube with nine other more established youths from his home village in order to set up the business. Later other boys from his village introduced him to selling electrical goods. He saved from his previous work and formed another Ikube to set up this business. As he is young and unmarried he has no land in Gurageland, but he sends clothes and money back to help his parents pay land taxes. He returns to Gurageland for Meskal (an orthodox Christian festival) and other celebrations such as funerals and weddings.

E) Eza wholesaler (40s)

E came to Addis at the age of 15 to earn money to help his family. He stayed with his older sister who helped him buy the equipment to work as a Listro. Later he worked as a servant, however his friends from the same area, who were working as fruit vendors, told him that he could earn more money selling fruit, and together they formed an Ikube to provide him with the capital to start his own business. Now he supplies fruit vendors with fruit from the government wholesaler. He returns to Gurageland four times a year and for festivals. During these visits he manages the farm and arranges hired labourers, who are paid monthly wages and given contributions for festivals. His mother and wife use the proceeds from the farm and he sends them money. When he is in Gurageland, his brother and friends take care of his business.

The rights and obligations embedded in Gurage networks vary over time and tend to expand with age and increasing financial capacity. The critical change in the structure of his networks occurs when he establishes his own household. The only constant feature is that the obligation to contribute financially to the parental household is seen as an essential aspect of being a Gurage man. All migrants suggested that their prime motivation for migration was to enable them to support their rural families from a young age. The response of E typifies all, "I had to come to Addis as there is no chance of earning money in Gurageland". For C, "it is the tradition and culture of the Gurages to help their kin in the rural areas. The land is small and the money is crucial for taxes and festivals". B stressed that urban remittances were crucial to the economic survival of Gurage households, "if we do not send money how do you think they would survive?" Gurages in Addis send money and other items home via returning migrants or when they visit Gurageland. In addition to money, all migrants, including youths, are expected to return to the rural areas for Meskal and festivities such as funerals and weddings. Most of the migrants interviewed stayed with relatives when they first arrived in Addis. Urban kin, such as siblings, uncles and cousins, are expected to help these young migrants by providing accommodation, assisting in employment and securing access to credit.

For youths (unmarried men) migration takes place in the context of parochial networks of existing migrants and peers. In addition to family ties, young unmarried men use networks based on their home village to provide a range of social and economic benefits. According to D, "we knew them there and do the same work and live in the same area here. We see other youths every day". The extent of this village level network is evident in the way in which accommodation is arranged. D suggested that young migrants without urban relatives are sent to the house of a widow from their village who rents rooms to those without relatives. They are allowed to stay in her house for 5 days without payment whilst they find employment. This village-level mutual interdependence is institutionalised through village *Ikubes*, which provide the capital to develop a business, and through village *Idirs*, the only ones in which youths participate. These institutions and friendship

networks provide a range of benefits for the young men and an arena to discuss potential business opportunities. Most of the informants suggested that not only did they get access to credit through *Ikubes*, but they also obtained ideas and information on potential business opportunities from friends. For example, E describes how, whilst working as a servant, “friends from the same area, who were working as fruit vendors, told me that I could earn more money selling fruit. Together we formed an *Ikube* to give me the capital to start my own business.” The young men seem to feel a strong sense of mutual obligation and expect that their peer group will support them in economic hardship. In some cases, prominent men from their home village will provide some assistance through providing employment, giving advice on business opportunities or as acting as guarantors in *Ikube*. In addition, their network tends to expand with the length of stay in Addis and the increased strength of their business, as they meet other young men engaged in similar work.

The youths seems to have little contact with the other identity-based networks of older *Gurage* men, based on clan and house. According to D and his friends, young people “do not know the older people of the clan, we do not know the other clan members. People who come together in clan *Idirs* are older people who are married and settled here or in the countryside.” Similarly “we do not have relationships with [other people from *Cheha*] our relationships are mostly with other people from our village”. Although it appears that, this group, as individuals, has few direct connections with the house or clan these obligations and participation in these affairs are expressed through the head of household. As all young men contribute to the household indirectly, they facilitate the household’s financial obligations. They are also seen as the responsibility of the head of household.

According to the informants, the migrant’s social world expands as his network diversifies and becomes based on more varied business contacts. His parochial kinship and village level contacts continue to be important and form some of his obligations. The critical time is when he marries and establishes a household. This gives him the right to ownership of

rural land. He continues to have obligations to his parents, although his primary obligation is to his own rural household. He is then admitted into the domains of heads of household such as clan and house-based institutions. Although there is a perception, held by other ethnic groups, that Gurages use their clan and house linkages for economic advancement all informants claimed that this was not the case. They focused on other aspects of clan obligations, particularly dispute settlement, the payment of blood money and social insurance. According to C, clan is most important “when you need to pay blood money or if a family member is killed by someone outside the clan. Then you need your clan.” B suggested that, “the clan helps in homicide cases and when blood money must be paid as all members must pay if the concerned person or his relatives ask.” Whereas, “the clan would not directly help my business, however, if there was an accident like a fire they may help me restart through organising an *lkube* and allow me the first collection”. The informants suggested that generally the clan did not help their businesses. According to B, “if a person loses his business he returns to the countryside and restarts when he can and clan members may help.” It seems that the migrants call on all their contacts rather than just the clan or house to help resolve business problems. Similarly E claims that “the tribe [house], clan or being a Gurage does not help [his business] in any way, personal effort is what counts.” If he had serious financial problems, he would turn to his close kin and business contacts.

There was some variation in attitudes to clan related to the strength and size of the clan and the extent to which clan cuts across geographical boundaries such as village and house. Those who were members of large and powerful clans seemed to have a greater expectation of assistance. When clan cuts across geographical boundaries such as village and particularly house, there seemed to be less affiliation and informants felt a greater obligation to those in the home village rather than clan.

● Although informants claimed that house connections provided few economic benefits, there was some limited social assistance. According to C, “when I need people, it is the

Enor people who come to help me first. Then I say I am from Enor. They are closer to us. If we need to go to hospital and there is nobody to take us then an Enor person will come first to take us because we think of ourselves as Enor when occasion demands, if we have problems. If I am in a position to do so I will help all Gurages from Enor, Cheha or Eza [all Sebat Bet] but priority is to Enor.” Another informant said: “It is very difficult to enumerate the social obligations, during occasions such as weddings the community has to participate including contributing money or gifts. In death there are contributions and they stay in the house for a week to give support. If the individual is a businessman and fails, they contribute money informally not through Ikubes. It is informal expectations not formal laws. Individuals should participate in money or activities in social gatherings.” These norms and values are illustrated further in the following statement: “Being a Gurage you can not say ‘I can live by myself and I do not want any contact with the other members of the society’. If you are born a Gurage, if you are a member of the Gurage you have to assist your family. The shoe-shiners are young kids but they assist their families in the rural areas. If you do not help your immediate family you will be outcast. This is a strong social obligation. Having a child is an investment, as their lives are partly dependent on their children in Addis.”

Social rights come with citizenship and are not granted automatically by virtue of being born a Gurage. For example, rights that come with clan membership are only activated if one demonstrates commitment to the clan through membership of institutions particularly Idirs. Members of Idirs can expect some form of support from other clansmen in times of crisis such as serious accidents and fire. However those who are not members of these institutions may receive some form of assistance from clansmen but this is not automatic. According to E, “If he is not a member of the clan Idir and if something happens to him and he needs financial or moral support and he comes to the clan Idir to ask for advice or support they won’t receive him in a good manner. They will ask ‘Where were you yesterday when we were meeting? Why didn’t you join us before?’ They will refuse to help him”. Other informants suggested that the clan may help clansmen in various situations

but this is determined by elders on the basis of the extent to which the concerned individual has shown commitment to the other clansmen by assisting them in similar situations. This is of central importance and recurred across the different layers of Gurage identity. It reveals a perception that the rights that are embedded in membership of Gurage communities are not automatically granted to people merely by virtue of their birth. These rights must be earned by demonstrating a commitment to Gurage citizenship by fulfilling the obligations inherent in being a male Gurage. The rights and obligations of Gurage civic virtue are institutionalised within Idirs. In Chapter 6, I discuss the central role of elders in determining the nature of Gurage civic virtue and who is considered to have met the criteria.

5 Urban institutions

Outside the extended family, there are few binding obligations on Gurages to provide assistance to other Gurages. However, voluntary obligations towards other clansmen and house-members have been institutionalised in Idir and to a lesser extent Ikube. These institutions, discussed in section 2, have rural origins and have been recreated and transformed to meet the particular needs of migrants in the Addis environment. Richard Pankhurst (Pankhurst and Endrias 1958) suggests that although Ikube and Idir have spread to all urban ethnic groups they originated in Gurageland. This view is backed by Gurage oral traditions, which suggest that the institutionalisation of clan obligations took place long before the monetarisation of the Gurage economy. Institutions similar to Idir provided a range of benefits for their members in times of bereavement and these institutions subsequently adapted to changes in the rural economy to become Idirs.

5.1 Idir

Depending on their age and financial capacity urban Gurages are members of a range of Idirs, including residentially-based multi-ethnic Idirs and those based on affiliations of house, clan, sub-clan, village and lineage. The primary purpose of Idir is to provide financial and social support at bereavement. These institutions pay out a fixed sum at the time of bereavement. They require members to attend funerals and provide refreshments during mourning. Many Idirs own tents and utensils for mourning. The dynamism of this sector can still be seen in the urban and rural areas where enterprising Idirs have expanded from bereavement to a range of welfare provision and some have found alternative means of generating income. Some large and well-established Idirs may also provide a wider range of social insurance such as subsidising hospital costs incurred during serious illness, with the money being deducted from the death settlement. They may also provide transport to hospital. Other functions of Idirs include reinforcing identity and rules such as exogamy. For example, according to some informants, one urban Cheha Idir was created by urban elders as a response to a case of intra-marriage within a clan. They provide a forum for people of that identity to meet and discuss issues of concern to them, such as rural development.

The functions of Idirs are largely social rather than economic. Although they reinforce social obligations to other Gurages, this does not seem to extend to business affairs. All informants said that Idir members do not discuss business affairs at the meetings. According to one informant, membership of a clan Idir in Addis had not affected his business “they are people like me, some in a better position some worse. We do not discuss business at these meetings. We meet at a fixed place and time and then separate and may not meet until the next month”. However, people acting on behalf of migrants will use their Idir contacts to provide new migrants with employment opportunities and guarantors for Ikube.

Informants suggested that there were significant differences in their orientations to the various types of Idir. In particular the clan Idir was regarded, by informants, as being about more than just the financial aspects of bereavement. According to E, “the clan Idir is a family affair... we meet more often and on different occasions than we see members of other clans, so we tend to help each other. It stands for you in times of difficulty, whilst the others only give you the money that you are entitled to. In times of accident, family misfortune or legal cases, members of the clan Idir are entitled to moral and financial support.” Another suggested that the services provided by the house and clan Idirs are different from the residential Idir as they pay for the corpse to be taken to Gurageland. “The clan Idir is more close knit than others. The clan Idir helps in the case of accidents as all members will help in some way. People from the village keep in contact via the Idir.”

Currently there is debate amongst NGOs, the Ethiopian media and academics on the role of Idirs in urban development. Some NGOs are attempting to harness Idirs for development using them as a basis for micro-finance. This approach focuses on the potential for residentially-based urban Idirs and seems to underplay the long term role played by identity-based Idirs in activating urban – rural linkages for developmental purposes in the Gurage communities. Allula Pankhurst (personal communication 1999) puts this current debate in historical context, suggesting that the re-emerging role of this sector in development is a response to the expansion of political space during the early EPRDF period, which can be compared with previous periods such as 1962-68 and the early 1970s. The role of Idirs in urban development and facilitating limited participation in metropolitan governance in the late imperial period is outlined by Ottaway (1976). However, these institutions and their leaderships were labelled as reactionary threats to the new class based organisations, the PAs and Kebeles (urban dwellers associations), established by the Derg. During the mid to late 1970s, the Gurage Idirs operated more covertly and only began to re-emerge in the mid 1980s.

In terms of their contributions to rural development the most significant indigenous institution in the urban areas are Idirs which, in addition to their welfare functions, have provided a social forum that gives a point of access to the urban communities. Although urban Gurages, like other ethnic groups, are involved in Idirs based on residence or occupation, many are also members of Idirs reflecting affiliations such as house, clan, sub-clan and home village. Although all these types of Idir have contributed to rural development, it is usually the house and clan-based Idirs that are harnessed for rural development by the association, whereas PAs often contact village Idirs to mobilise urban resources in small-scale development projects. These institutions were not established for development purposes. However, as their structures provide access to networks of urban Gurages, they have been crucial in mobilising urban resources for rural development over a long period of time. Idir meetings provide a forum for the dissemination of information from the leadership of the development association to the wider community and a point of access to the development association leadership. Although these structures provide a framework for urban dwellers to influence decision-making in the development association, their primary role is the mobilisation of urban financial resources. Some house Idirs impose a 10% development levy on all Idir fees and also makes ad-hoc donations to development projects from the Idir capital. Whilst the clan Idirs, whose members are usually also in the house Idir, are less likely to have a development levy they make ad-hoc contributions to individual development projects. Discussion of development within the Idirs centres on the financial capacity of the Idir and its members and the merits of the scheme, particularly the scope of its beneficiaries.

According to the development associations, most urban Gurages are members of clan or house Idirs or can be contacted through the Idir membership. Therefore, the association, in conjunction with the Idir leaders and other prominent urban dwellers, use these structures to identify Gurages residing in the urban areas and assess their financial capacity to contribute to rural development. In addition to the mobilisation of financial resources, Idirs and their leadership also provide a structure for identifying people who

potentially can contribute their skills, knowledge and contacts for development. This was evident recently when the General Assembly of the MDA, at the behest of the previous leadership approved a change in leadership from its previous base of businessmen with limited formal education to university educated professionals particularly civil servants. As discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, the institutional networks provided by Idirs were used to identify potential recruits and the leaders and encourage them to volunteer their services.

The use of Idirs as the principal means of accessing the urban community has provided an effective means of mobilising their resources, however, it also reinforces a common conception of community as being limited to male heads of household, as membership tends to be restricted to heads of household to prevent multiple death settlements, which could undermine the Idir's financial base. Through the Idir leadership, strong pressure can be exerted on members to participate in development. As it provides a range of critical socio-economic functions one of the possible sanctions for non participation in development is expulsion from the Idir.

5.2 Ikube

The urban institution of Ikube is an informal, ad-hoc rotating credit association. Members pay a set regular sum to the Ikube treasurer and in turn draw the money collected. This has become the main form of saving and generating capital for starting and expanding businesses, particularly for those migrants who do not have wealthy relatives.

Membership is based on close ties, as the institution requires a high degree of trust. Typically, the first Ikubes established by migrants are based on village level and family contacts. For new migrants it essential to get the support of a guarantor usually an established family member or villager. One informant stated that, "Ikube requires much trust so the members must know each other well and therefore it is easier if they all come

from the same area. Most importantly there must be a guarantor who knows them thoroughly this is most likely to be from their own village". Although Ikube primarily has an economic purpose, the informants claimed that, generally, business is not discussed at Ikube meetings other than with the guarantor, who expects to be informed of their financial capacity. Similarly, membership of an Ikube in itself does not confer any other benefits to the participants. The informants suggested that other Ikube members would not automatically assist them in times of financial crisis although they would be likely to form a new Ikube and allow the person to receive the first distribution.

Whilst Ikubes have a significant role in Gurage migratory survival strategies they have no discernible direct role in providing rural infrastructure. Although they are not harnessed by the development associations, they indirectly serve as vehicles for rural development as a proportion of the resources they generate are returned to the rural areas. As Ikubes tend to be temporary, informal, and are established for a specific purpose, their composition varies according to the nature and extent of the participants' social networks. Ikubes can be based on a range of urban identities including non-ethnic ones, such as residence, occupation and friendship networks. Over time, migrants and other Gurages are members of various Ikubes, which tend to broaden with the length of stay and the establishment of relationships not based on elements of ethnic identities. The Ikubes of young people and recent migrants are likely to be based on kinship and village level contacts, where members share an orientation to a locality, however, at this stage in their life these individuals and, therefore, their institutions have a limited financial capacity. Furthermore, this group of unmarried men is often excluded from definitions of community used by the development associations i.e. male heads of household who participate in associational life particularly Idirs. I explore definitions of community in more detail in Chapter 6. The Ikubes of older migrants or settled Gurages are often multi-ethnic or are comprised of Gurages from diverse house backgrounds and this wide range of affiliations makes them unsuitable to be harnessed for developing a specific rural area. Ikubes with a significant non-ethnic component are seen as unsuitable for harnessing for development, as large

proportions of the membership will not have a stake in the benefits. Due to the geographically defined nature of the beneficiaries in contrast with the territorially defined Gurage development associations, even Ikubes made up of Gurages or Sebat Bet Gurages are not suitable.

No informants, including migrants and development association activists, had ever considered that Ikube could have a role in rural development. According to a leading member of GPSDO, Ikube is based on the participant's economic status, "if your capacity is to pay 100 or 10 Birr per month you may be Eza or Cheha or Indegagn but your Ikube is based on economic status. [Development] institutions should be based on house or clan as development is geographical. If you work with an Ikube someone is from Eza someone from Cheha or the east [eastern Gurage] for development there is no geographical basis so there is no way of working for development purposes. It is not appropriate." This suggests that the importance of the functions of the urban institution to the participants' social and economic well being, and the levels of trust involved, have little role in determining its potential to be harnessed as a resource for development. Rather there must be a personal attachment to the beneficiaries in terms of kinship, village, clan or house. This will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 5.

6 Conclusions: analysing migration and understanding Gurage conceptions of civic virtue

This analysis of the social world of Gurage migrants has some important limitations. First, the research focuses primarily on GPSDO and its affiliates, which I argue, reflect male migration patterns and men's orientation to Gurageland. The orientation of this chapter reflects the nature of the male migration patterns and focuses on the institutions that they have recreated in the urban areas. Therefore, women's experiences in this process are largely overlooked. Second, although Gurage migrants are active in a range of economic

spheres, the chapter may well reinforce the stereotype of Gurage migration as being mostly trade-based. The informants were from a diverse range of social groups, however, they were all involved in some form of trading. The labourers contacted were unable to contribute to the research due to constraints of time. Third, I focus primarily on Gurage migration to Addis Ababa, however, Gurages migrate to all of the main urban centres in Ethiopia and to smaller locations throughout southern Ethiopia to engage in trade. Finally, this chapter has focused on the institutions that reflect the layers of identity that constitute Gurage ethnicity as these institutions are harnessed for development purposes. Some researchers have suggested that Gurages avoid non-ethnic associational ties (Baker 1992), a view that lends credence to stereotypes of Gurage ethnic exclusivity. Most informants stressed that they and other participants in Gurage institutions are also active in a wide range of non-ethnic associational life including Kebeles, Idirs, trade associations and churches. The ex-leader of GPSDO expressed these concerns; “you should not give the impression that when we say we [Gurages] stick together it means that we do not mingle with other people. We are well known for mingling with any type of community and society. It is one of the characteristics of this [Gurage] society, they associate with others.”

As outlined in Chapter 1, the central argument of this thesis is that Gurage orientations to development are an extension of their general orientation to the rural areas. The rights and obligations to other Gurages discussed in section 4 of this chapter are embedded in migratory survival strategies and are a central element in contemporary Gurage notions of civic virtue. The main elements of this aspect of the dominant construction of Gurage civic virtue are migrants’ interdependence and rural dependence on migrant remittances and gifts from urban kin.

Socio-economic changes have limited the opportunities for the migration patterns outlined in the chapter and call into question the extent to which adherence to civic virtue still produces benefits. The changing orientations of other ethnic groups towards the occupations historically dominated by Gurages have limited the opportunities for

economic advancement of migrants. Furthermore, there is a perception that the economic niches historically controlled by Gurages have become saturated. This has led to perception amongst the Gurage intellectual strata that the nature of migratory survival strategies must be refined. There is thus an increasing focus on the importance of education (see Chapter 5). Ya Kitcha (the Gurage customary law), which reflects the views of the dominant rural and urban elites, recognises that opportunities for migrants are more limited than in the past. "Situations have changed and financial success cannot come as easily as it used to in the past by starting from shoe shining" (Ya Kitcha 13.2a) and "education is a must to upgrade skills for the proper management of businesses" (Ya Kitcha 13.2c). Thus, the networks and institutions discussed above are of less importance, as the 'traditional' model of Gurage migration represented by the idealised migrant discourse is now constrained by socio-economic changes.

These socio-economic changes are also linked to cultural changes within the 'sons of Addis'. These changes are related to a process of de-linking from the Gurage community and Gurage networks, by the urban elite and young people born in Addis. This has been accompanied by a reduction in interest in rural affairs and the development of alternative non-ethnic ties.

The following statement by an urban intellectual encapsulates a range of issues that are discussed below.

"There is an increasing feeling amongst the older generation of Gurages who have a stronger tie [to Gurageland] that in the new urban generation the attachment to the rural areas is getting weaker. All my family except my parents were born here [Addis] and their attachment to Gurageland is weak. None of us will go there for anything. In the next generation, the links will get weaker. The older generation senses this urgently but are incapacitated to do anything about it. I suspect that the weakening is stronger at the higher income level than the lower. However, I

cannot see why the poor would have the strong attachment if they are born and raised here. The new generation is born here and feels more citizens of Addis Ababa. The attachment to the extended family is very very weak. I sense that Gurages are a strong part of the urban community so they have developed a different identity based being part of the urban community unlike the previous ones who were new migrants to the city. Now their affinity is closer to the urban people than anything that the Gurages have to offer. We do not speak the language, our ethnic food, kitfu, is now the national food. Whatever link there was has gone.”

In the past ethnically-related (house and clan) associational life was central, or presented as central, to survival strategies. The evidence in this chapter suggests that family and village ties are more important to early migrants and, as the migrant becomes settled in Addis, ethnic ties become increasingly important for social but not economic purposes. Economic-based ties do not seem to underpin the high levels of communal attachments, however discourses rooted in earlier experiences seem to continue to act to extend their strong ties of kinship to clan and house. These orientations are apparent in three interrelated discourses, which reflect Gurage perceptions of the relationships between Gurages in the urban environment and the relationships between urban and rural sectors of the Gurage communities. These discourses: the idealised migrant, the all encompassing Gurage networks and the golden age of Gurage development, together make up Gurage notions of civic virtue.

The social relationships constructed by migrants during imperial times, in which Gurage social worlds were a defence against economic and to a lesser extent social discrimination are presented as unchanging and all encompassing. In their current form, these discourses could well be a response to the new sets of relationships and the de-linking of the Addis born. A discourse outlining a golden age of Gurage development is linked to the ‘idealised migrant’ and ‘all encompassing social networks’ discourses. This golden age seems to correspond with an interpretation of events that took place during

the early road building phase of GRCO. Many urban informants reminisced about the ease with which the development associations located them and the solidarity, which led to high levels of voluntary contributions from all sectors of the Gurage communities. The discourse reflects a perception that the Gurage communities were much closer in those days and that few urban Gurages could resist the sanctions imposed on those who did not contribute (this is discussed further in Chapter 6). Gurage development was the ultimate expression of the cohesiveness of Gurage community and in particular the strength of its institutions. In Chapter 8, I discuss how development has become a symbol of Gurage identity.

The present construction of these interrelated discourses about the nature of Gurage civic virtue can be seen as a response to socio-economic and demographic changes. These changes challenge the underlying assumptions that relate to Gurage orientations to the rural areas and development. The discourses tend to be juxtaposed with the process of de-linking from Gurage communities and culture of many young Addis born particularly the wealthy and well educated.

This discourse is used by GPSDO leaders as a point of reference particularly in Moher where it seems to have formed the basis for their approach to mobilising the during high school construction. As discussed in subsequent chapters this discourse has been used by some urban and rural Gurages to critique GPSDO and has been harnessed in conflicts within the organisation's leadership.

The long-term success of GPSDO illustrates that these networks have acted as developmental resource for over thirty years. However, there are also features of these forms of social organisation, which have the potential to contradict aspects of the dominant development discourses. As Gurage development strategies are a reflection of male networks in the urban areas, they place the participation of women and younger men in the extended household, rather than as individuals. GPSDO harnesses and reflects

urban-rural relationships, which could be regarded as unequal and paternalistic. In Chapter 5, I discuss how the specificity of Gurage orientations to development mitigates this and in Chapter 6, I discuss the relationship between the dominant construction of Gurage civic virtue and the processes of legitimacy within the dominant Gurage approach to development.

The target community of GPSDO is limited to those who participate in identity based institutions or can be contacted through them. These institutions tend to be composed of regular migrants and those born in Gurageland thus those with more limited attachments, such as the Addis born and civil servants, are more difficult to mobilise. With the more limited opportunities for trade in Addis, it is likely that in the long term the membership and financial base of organisations based on this type of attachment will decline.

Chapter 5

Sebat Bet Gurage perceptions of development

1 Introduction

The chapter focuses on the perceptions of development within the communities in Moher and Enamor. Section 2 of the chapter will interpret and explain how an indigenous NGO, and the community it serves, perceive the purposes of development. This is something of a departure from the mainstream approaches to development, which rarely discuss how the objects of the research conceptualise the key analytical categories. The section discusses the factors that have contributed to the construction of the Gurage models of development and the possible tensions that this could create with the dominant development discourses. It also examines the relationship between Gurage understandings of rural poverty and their perceptions of the purposes of development. It suggests that Gurage perceptions of development are intimately linked with their survival strategies and are related to the way in which Gurages assign activities to particular spheres.

The third section examines how the perceptions of development affect which activities are seen as development and which are not defined as development. I argue that this represents a distinct model of public action to which activities must conform in order to be defined as development. The Gurage model of public action is based on a particular construction of civic virtue, which applies the rights and obligations to the community inherent in Gurage citizenship, to the process of development.

The fourth section examines how the construction of civic virtue is located in the relationship between Gurage cultures and their model of development. I argue that the

Gurage model of development is rooted in Gurage cultures yet draws a distinction between culture and development. To illustrate Gurage perceptions of cultural change, the section draws on the process of transcribing and modernising the Gurage customary law, *Ya Kitcha*, which took place in the 1990s.

Although the chapter refers to Gurage perceptions of development, it reflects the perceptions of urban and rural Mohers and Enamors, members of the Gurage elite and activists from GPSDO. Due to this selection of informants, related to issues discussed in Chapter 3, the perceptions outlined in this chapter are mostly those of male Gurages.

2 Sebat Bet Gurage perceptions of the purpose of development

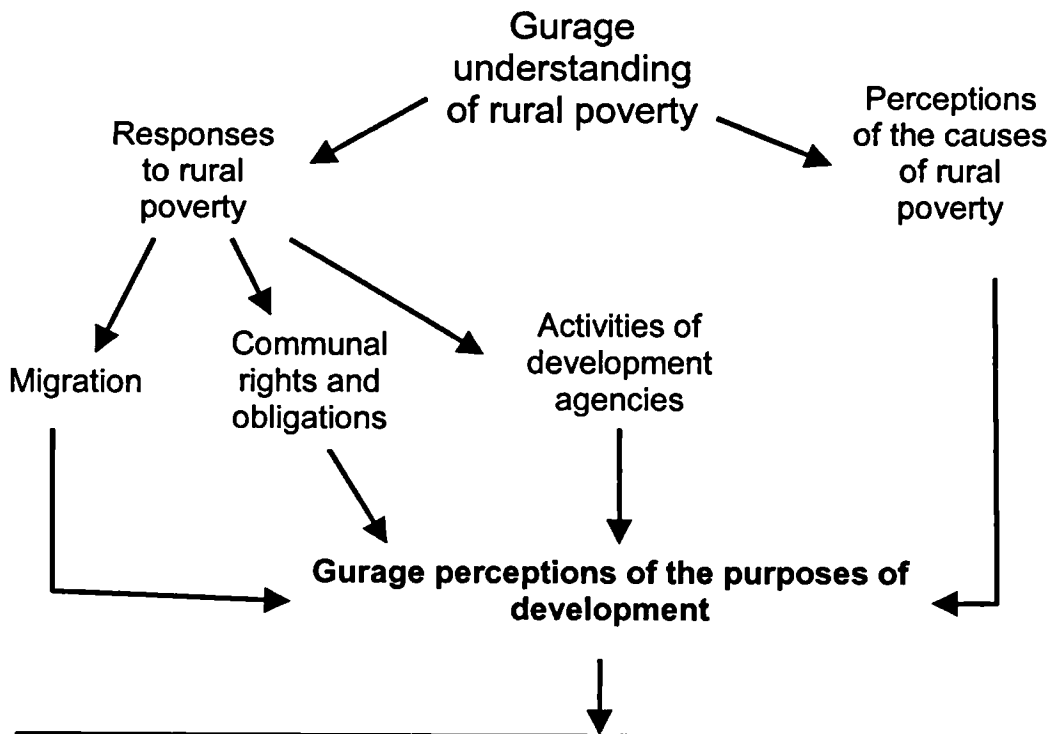
Gurage perceptions of the purposes of development are shaped by a understanding of rural poverty, which contains both understandings of the nature and causes of rural poverty and a set of responses to rural poverty. These conceptualisations of rural poverty are discussed in Chapter 4 and are presented as the primary factors that push men to migrate. The interrelated causes of rural poverty are seen, by Gurages, as the small size of land holdings and lack of other economic opportunities in Gurageland. The main response to rural poverty has been cyclical or semi-permanent male migration to the urban centres, which is underpinned by a web of rights and obligations within the rural and urban communities. The original purpose of Gurage development was to provide infrastructure, particularly roads, that would facilitate their migratory survival strategies. In addition to this, Gurages intend development to modernise the rural areas by providing rural kin with access to the benefits of urban life as experienced by migrants. Thus, Gurage perceptions of the purposes of development reflect their understanding of the causes of rural poverty and the survival strategies they have created as a response. In particular, migration patterns and the networks of communal obligations have created a

distinct perception of what activities constitute development that differs significantly from definitions outlined in the dominant development discourses and by the current Ethiopian government (see Chapter 7):

- Development activities and projects tend to facilitate the existing Gurage migratory survival strategies rather than challenging or providing alternatives to them.
- A secondary purpose of development is to modernise the rural areas by providing rural kin with access to the benefits of urban life as experienced by migrants.
- Communal perceptions of development reflect the obligations on migrants to support the rural areas, thus Gurageland rather than the urban centres is seen as the site of development.

This understanding of poverty is widely accepted by the urban and rural communities. However, it should be noted that some influential urban residents critique the assumption that rural Gurageland inherently lacks economic opportunities and that migration is, therefore, the only means of wealth creation (this dissenting view is outlined in section 6). Furthermore, the understandings of the causes of rural poverty and the responses to it contradict a central element of EPRDF ideology: the need for rural self-sufficiency. These different perceptions of the causes of and appropriate solutions to rural poverty have become a source of conflict between the indigenous Gurage models of development and the government. They are also the basis for the variations in the activities undertaken by the two approaches. The differences between Gurage understandings of poverty and their developmental responses, and those of the government are discussed in Chapter 7. The dominant Gurage understanding of the relationship between poverty and development is summarised in figure 5.1, which I now go on to explain.

Figure 5.1
Gurage perceptions of the purposes of development



- Development facilitates rather than challenges the existing migratory survival strategies.
- Development must modernise Gurageland.
- All development activities are located in Gurageland.
- The outcomes of development must be tangible.
- Development activities take place in the public domain.
- Development is a series of projects rather than a process.
- Development does not challenge existing social relations.
- Development originates outside Gurageland.
- The activities of development agencies influence definitions of development.

2.1 The impact of migration on perceptions of development

Previous research on indigenous African development associations has emphasised how the social changes caused by urban migration facilitated the foundation and growth of development associations. Migration to the urban centres increased opportunities for formal education, which in turn led to employment in the burgeoning civil service. Education and contacts with government were essential resources that were harnessed by the new elites when they formed development associations. Most indigenous

development associations were formed by successful and educated migrants who had been exposed to the benefits of 'modern urban life' such as education, water, health and electricity (Kolawole 1996; Woods 1994; Wahab 1996). This process and the social background of the first generation of leaders had a direct impact on the nature of development taking place the rural localities. In this context, rural development is often presented as bringing the benefits of modern urban life through the modernisation and transformation of their rural homelands. This led to a developmental emphasis on providing infrastructure particularly schools and services such as water and electricity.

The discourses that interpret the histories of Gurage developmental endeavour suggest that the establishment of Gurage development associations followed a different pattern. According to these discourses, rural elders acted as the instigators of formal development during the initial road construction phase of Gurage development. However, these attempts were only successful when elements from the educated urban-based elite assumed leadership of the development associations and harnessed their networks of contacts and other urban resources. Although the process of migration has significantly influenced the perceptions of the purposes of development, the relationship between migration and development in Gurageland reveals complexities that go beyond modernising the rural areas. Although perceptions of the purposes of development reflect a desire to provide benefits of modern urban life to rural kin, the primary purpose of the indigenous model has been to provide infrastructure and services that facilitate Gurage migratory survival strategies, and in particular to improve communications between Gurageland and urban Ethiopia.

2.2 Development to facilitate Gurage migratory survival strategies

In a passage often cited by GPSDO, the linguist Wolf Leslau, in the 1946 dry season, describes the difficulties in reaching Emddibir, the largest and most accessible of the

Sebat Bet towns. "A mule journey of seven hours [from Welkite] brought me to the town of Emddibir. Internal travel is in the rainy season virtually suspended and movement between villages is reduced to the minimum", cited in Gabre (1997 p50). In the context of these difficulties in transportation and the need for male Gurages to migrate, improving communications between Gurageland and the rest of Ethiopia, particularly Addis, rather than directly providing infrastructure to transform rural Gurageland, was the initial focus of formal Gurage development endeavour. General Wolde Sellasie Beraka, the first president of GRCO, outlined the reasons for the focus on road construction "Gurage people are very hard working but the area is very densely populated. Therefore, periodically they are forced to migrate in search of various types of work. When a Gurage went out and returns back to his homeland, he had transportation problems from Welkite to the Gurageland. Because of transportation problems, they could not get teachers to teach their children in Gurageland. When women were giving birth, they were forced to be taken to hospitals. When the sick needed to go to hospital, they all had transportation problems. For that reason, they [the rural elders] conceived the idea of road building."

The first indigenous development associations serving Gurageland, GRCO and AWRCA, were both established for the sole purpose of road construction. The first activity undertaken by GRCO was to construct a road connecting Emddibir with the national highway system and thereby bridge the Gibe River, the major physical obstacle between Sebat Bet Gurageland and the roads to Addis. GRCO then constructed a series of roads in the Sebat Bet hinterland connecting each of the seven house areas with the national road system. By 1990, the organisation had constructed over 500 km of roads in Gurageland at a cost of over 15 million Birr (£1.5 million). As an extension of this service, and in order to guarantee sustainable sources of income, both organisations invested in fleets of buses that served their respective localities. By the early 1980s, some of GRCO's affiliates were involved in other forms of development, such as school construction, however, the organisation continued to focus on road construction until 1988 when it was

renamed GPSDO to reflect a reorientation to encompass wider spheres of socio-economic development.

The focus on reinforcing migratory survival strategies reflects the felt needs of the community, as migration is an integral part of the economic survival of most households. Although producing the staple crop can provide for the basic need of food, it provides no additional income. A leading Gurage political figure stated “Enset does not provide the necessary cash, it can’t pay for taxation and clothing. It is a food security crop.” One peasant who migrated regularly stated “the land here [Moher] is too small. I grow enset, which provides food but not money. I am the only worker in my household so often I must migrate within Gurageland and to other places”. According to the secretary of GPSDO, “The Gurages have little land and the farmers do not earn enough. As the land is small, infertile and eroded people are poor and ill fed. They are very poor so their children must support them. If he is fortunate his parents can support him and he goes to school, otherwise he has to go out to Welkite or Addis doing whatever work and collect money. At the end of the year he goes back to that area and supports his family. We have a very strong attachment to our parents. If we want to go there [Gurageland] or they come here [Addis] the first thing we think about is transportation.” Within the constraints of the Gurage economy and culture, the financial capacity to pay land tax and secure access to health and education can only be achieved through male migration and remittances from urban kin. Thus, for Gurage households, being able to migrate to other areas is a fundamental requirement, and the most important development interventions are those which support their migration patterns and assist them in earning a living outside Gurageland. The households supported by regular migrants were the major beneficiaries from the road construction, as it has enabled them to migrate to Addis and other parts of Ethiopia quickly and cheaply. However as men from virtually all rural households are obliged to migrate in order to generate income, the benefits of road construction are perceived to be spread equally throughout the community.

Urban Gurages, who provide the bulk of financial and other resources for development, also have a strong interest in improving transport links between Gurageland and urban Ethiopia as it enables them to fulfil their social obligations to their rural kin with a minimum of time and expense. In particular, road construction has enabled urban based Gurages to return to Gurageland for religious festivals such as Meskal, Arafa and other ceremonies such as weddings and funerals.

In addition to facilitating Gurage migration and easing the impact of social obligations on urban Gurages, roads were seen by all informants as the pre-requisite for all other types of development. All sectors of the Gurage communities suggested the provision of other facilities, such as education, health and water, was impossible without first constructing a road network. This was outlined by the ex-chairman of GPSDO "It is futile to embark upon an extensive rural development programme without taking the most elementary steps to ensure regular movement and easy transport of goods and services. The provision of road transport is a first step in answering the problems of rural society." He concluded, "In a nutshell, road construction has facilitated availability of primary health care, dissemination of education, development of other infrastructure, expansion of government administrative offices, encouraged experts and researchers to work in the region, provided easy access for relief operations, promoted [the] development of villages [into] towns and created job opportunities." From discussions with development association leaders from the other Sebat Bet houses, it seems that the areas of Gurageland where roads were first constructed subsequently became the most developed. However, the fact that they constructed roads earlier is also an indication of the greater financial and organisational capacities of these communities that were subsequently harnessed for further development.

During the late imperial and Derg regimes, the road construction phase of Gurage development, members of the Gurage elite exerted considerable influence in central government. Another motivation for road construction was that increased communications

ensured that local government in rural Gurageland was accountable to central government and therefore indirectly accountable to the urban based Gurage elite.

The emphasis on improving communications between Gurageland and urban Ethiopia continued after the road building phase with the construction of telephone facilities in many areas. The priority given to the construction of a telephone station in Moher illustrates how the improvement of communications within the geographically dispersed community is a fundamental felt need of the urban and rural sectors of the community. It is an illustration of the importance attached to the role of infrastructure in reinforcing family linkages and other networks within the community. One elder, an active member of the school governing committee, stated that "The community benefits from the telephone almost as much as the high school. Previously people had to go to Welkite to contact relatives, now it is easy to arrange something urgently and it cuts down on expensive travel." According to one migrant residing in Addis, "My wife there [rural Moher] can call me if there are problems at home." In the early 1990s, the MDA constructed a telephone facility in a remote small town Cheza Sefa, the largest settlement and location of the main weekly market and high school in Moher. Until late 1999 the town had no piped water supply, thus although the area was connected to the outside world by a high technology microwave telephone link, water supplies were manually drawn from the local river by women. This contradiction also seemed to imply that development in the area was directed towards the interests of men and the relatively wealthy, as in this area water collection is deemed the domain of women and children. To a northern outsider this seemed incongruous and at first sight appeared to be a classic example of misplaced modernisation based on a symbolic project. However in the context of communities where almost all men are involved in migration the telephone was seen by all informants as a vital tool which enabled families to stay in contact, avert crises and manage family issues. In the past, maintaining contact with migrants had involved an expensive and long journey to the zone capital to use the telephone and postal facilities or passing messages via other migrants.

Most informants including women ranked the telephone as of equal if not greater benefit to themselves and the community than the newly installed water facilities. People were aware that the use of the telephone was related to wealth: "We all use it but not equally, those with money use it more". However, they suggested that although use of the telephone was related to wealth, the benefits were more equally distributed. The rural and urban communities had mitigated the effects of differential use through developing systems of passing on messages by utilising linkages within the community. This system evolved to the point that the rural Idirs employed a message taker to pass on messages to the rural population.

The telephone has strengthened the urban rural linkages within the networks of Mohers that are an essential element of rural economic survival. For example, it allows urban people to keep abreast of rural associational activities. This link has also proved invaluable in organising other development projects in the area through enabling the Addis based MDC to maintain regular contact with the PAs and rural development committees. However, although the telephone station as a physical structure is seen as development, the social effects of the use of the telephone, for example, reinforcing the social relationships underpinning Gurage migration are not perceived as development, by Gurages. Development is seen as pertaining to tangible structures rather than intangible human relations.

2.3 Migration and the modernisation of Gurageland

The literature on indigenous development associations suggests that their main aim was to bring the benefits of modern life to their homeland. Although this was not the original purpose of the indigenous Gurage development associations, modernisation has subsequently taken on increasing importance. The modernisation facilitated by the

indigenous sector has primarily focused on education, with the construction of high schools, the repair and maintenance of elementary schools and the construction of adult education centres and more recently kindergartens. It has also included the electrification of several Sebat Bet towns and the provision of telephone services, with more limited lobbying and fundraising for the provision of water and health services.

The increasing focus on modernising Gurageland through providing the benefits of modern urban life reflects both the urban rural power relationships embedded in the organisational structure of GPSDO and high rates of male migration in the Gurage communities. Although GPSDO serves rural Gurageland, the organisation is based in Addis, its elected officials are all Addis based, and its sovereign body the General Assembly, is overwhelmingly comprised of urban residents. The urban leadership controls both the overall development strategies of GPSDO, and planning for individual projects by its affiliates. This process has a degree of input from the wider community through consultation with *Idirs* and other urban networks. Thus, decision-making within GPSDO is based on urban perceptions of what is development. Rural input into the process of planning tends to take the form of consultation with male heads of household, most of whom have lived in urban areas thus reinforcing the urban influences of communal perceptions of development. Urban influences were evident in the ways that many rural informants suggested that they wished to bring modern services to their communities. Returned migrants use their experiences of urban life as frames of reference when conceptualising development as facilitating a lifestyle that they aspire to in their locality. One rural informant suggested “I haven’t always lived here [Cheza]. I have lived in many places...when I lived in Awassa my house had electricity, water and a telephone so I know the importance of such things”. This view was further outlined by the Cheza PA leader “All [rural] people are not equally concerned with development. People who migrate have seen the effects of development in other areas and they try to change this area.” This pattern reflects the complex linkages between the urban and rural sectors of the Gurage communities rather than a dichotomy between the two. Thus, perceptions of the

importance of modernity reflect the urbanisation of the Gurageland and Gurage cultures caused by migration, as discussed in Chapter 4, rather than the hegemony of an urban elite. However, as discussed in Chapter 6, the sectors of the community with least exposure to urban life, particularly women, have the least input into the decision-making processes and the consultation stages.

Modernisation of the rural areas could involve an element of self-interest in the cases of cyclical migrants and many Gurages based in Addis. Providing Gurageland with the social benefits of modern life could be seen as creating a relatively comfortable place of refuge to be utilised in times of financial or political crisis. In many of the development associations affiliated to GPSDO there is a preponderance of traders and businessmen when compared to professionals and civil servants. This could suggest that the development associations are dominated by sectors of the community who are most likely to suffer from economic insecurity and hence have an incentive to improve the rural homeland. Thus, this form of development could be seen as creating a safety net for when migratory survival strategies fail. However, the large number of businessmen in the development associations can be accounted for by their greater financial capacity than professionals, and particularly the relative ease by which they can be contacted through their associational and business connections. Furthermore, few migrants regarded returning to Gurageland as a viable long-term option. "I prefer life in Addis, only economic reasons prevent me from bringing my family here. Rural life is very difficult whereas life is easier here. It is like comparing light to darkness, life in Addis is better in every way". A leading Gurage economist backed this view. "The economy of the rural Gurage has deteriorated so significantly that I cannot see how anyone would think there is a better life there than in the cities".

This reluctance to return to the home village was explained partly in terms of a lack of services, an explanation which would suggest that the types of development undertaken in Gurageland are indeed an attempt to improve a potential home. However, most

informants suggested that the major deterrent to returning to Gurageland was a lack of economic opportunities for men. This is a central aspect of the dominant Gurage perception of the nature of rural poverty and is the key factor that obliges men to migrate. For most of these migrants, a purely agriculturally-based life in Gurageland was not financially viable. "The reason that I came here [Addis] was to support my family. How could I go back [to Gurageland]. If we do not send money how do you think they would survive?" Another who had considered returning stated, "it is mostly economic reasons that keep me here [Addis], there [Gurageland] I grow enset but the land is too small to provide for tax and clothing". This perception is also reflected in the attitude of the rural residents towards their urban kin. "It is not just development, we depend on our brothers in Addis for everything. If it was not for them we would not survive". It should be noted that the situation in Moher could well be more acute than in other parts of Gurageland, due to the unfavourable conditions for the cultivation of chat. The productivity of the agricultural sector is also constrained by strict adherence to refraining from work during the Sabbath and the 15 monthly saints' days. One Enamor stated, "the Mohers do not work, instead they live off their sons." Although there is also a high level of migration in Enamor, it seems that there are more economic opportunities there through chat cultivation. During the fieldwork period, it was evident that there were far more men in Enamor than Moher although this could be related to the timing of the visits. One Enamor elder stated, "now it is possible to earn six thousand Birr (£450) from growing chat."

2.4 The modernisation of Gurage migratory survival strategies

Within the dominant Gurage understanding of poverty, there is an acceptance that, although migration is the only viable option for economic survival, the nature of migration must be adapted to meet changing social and economic conditions. Thus, although few Gurage development interventions have challenged the underlying assumption that Gurage households can only become economically viable if men migrate, there is an

appreciation that the nature of this migration and the skills needed for economic success have changed. Thus far, there has been little development endeavour designed to improve economic opportunities for men in the rural areas. The limited attempts by GPSDO at improving rural livelihoods have focused on improving women's productive capacity through micro finance and technological changes to agricultural production. These do not appear to have been successful due to a number of reasons including obstruction from the current government.

Dependence on migration has led GPSDO, its affiliates and other indigenous development associations, to focus on education, including constructing and maintaining primary and high schools, the provision of adult literacy centres, and most recently the construction of technical schools and distributing educational materials contributed by the Gurage Diaspora, and facilitating a compensatory education scheme. According to the stereotypes held by other Ethiopians, Gurages take education very seriously, however, to an outsider, Gurage attitudes to education are somewhat paradoxical. On the one hand, the civil service and professional elite owe their positions to attendance at schools in Endeber and urban areas. The first generation of GRCO leaders were educated at the Endeber School and made their break from farming and trading through education. However, those in other important urban sectors particularly successful traders are not necessarily educated. Indeed, some of the discourses about successful Gurage migrants suggest that literacy is relatively unimportant for success in business. Stories abound of illiterate migrants who started their urban careers as listros and through hard work became highly successful businessmen without gaining any formal education. However, all informants suggested that the construction of schools and education of youth were the most important development activity. The views of the Moher rural community are illustrated by an elder active in the rural development committee. "The school is the rebirth of the area. Prior to high school construction students had to migrate. Parents are now more motivated to send children to school. It is especially important at the moment as due to economic difficulties people cannot afford to send students to other areas." Similar

attitudes were expressed in Enamor. "Before there were no schools here...but...the Addis people and the Worreda administrator were instrumental in bringing education here...people bless them for what they did here, because now our children can be educated." In addition, more established urban migrants continue to maintain households in Gurageland. These men have an incentive to support the extension of education in Gurageland, even though this is likely to reduce the levels of household income.

The focus on education also reflects a perception amongst the urban elite and some rural elders that the opportunities for migrants are more limited than in the past. This perception has been reflected in the changes made to the customary law, Ya Kitcha. For example, article 13.2a states that, "situations have changed and financial success cannot come as easily as it used to in the past by starting from shoe shining". Whilst article 13.2c suggests that, "education is a must to upgrade skills for the proper management of businesses". However, these statements reaffirm that the purpose of education is to equip the next generation of Gurage migrants with the skills necessary for success in changing economic and social environments, rather than challenging migration as a survival strategy. The purpose of gaining academic qualifications is to secure employment outside Gurageland. According to a group of Moher university students, "We would like to return here [Moher] and work, as we want to help our people, they built the school. [However,] there is no work for us here but we will still help the people in any way we can."

The elite is aware that the development of their locality is dependent on the education of youth, which in turn increases the flow of remittances back to rural Gurageland. The relatively high level of development attained in Cheha when compared to other Sebat Bet areas was usually related to the presence of education facilities. A high ranking civil servant instrumental in the establishment of a high school in Gunchire suggested, "This region [Enamor] is the largest and most fertile but in health, education and amenities it is not as developed as Cheha. The most important factor is education. Cheha had a number of catholic missionaries who enlightened the people and those people engaged in

education [then] exposed their people to health and education and created awareness. We started later but Enor started to catch up, they have done well in the last 10-15 years and are almost equal with Cheha”.

2.5 Gurage perceptions of the appropriate location of development

According to Alemayehu, the majority of Gurages reside outside Gurageland¹⁰, however, the indigenous development associations focus only on development within Gurageland. This was also reflected in the attitudes of all groups of informants who saw Gurageland rather than Addis as the appropriate location for development. “The purpose of the association (GPSDO) is to provide benefit for the rural area.” These perceptions of Gurageland as the only appropriate location of development projects reflect the obligations on migrants discussed in Chapter 4, and particularly the flow of remittances back to rural kin. It also reveals a perception of Addis as a place to earn money to fulfil the obligations embedded in Gurage perceptions of masculinity. Regardless of their circumstances, all migrants are expected to provide for their rural kin. Similarly all migrants or residents in Addis are expected to contribute resources to development according to their means and those who do not contribute are discussed in similar terms to those who do not provide for their rural families. A Moher clan head gave his view of those who do not contribute resources to development. “ After getting a job they focus on work and are not concerned [with development], once they go to town they live their lives in a selfish manner and forget about their origins.” An urban Idir leader stated “Honestly speaking they have less interest in development and any other issue concerning the rural people. Such people may have the feeling for their parents’ homeland but they are not concerned with the problems of the rural people. “

¹⁰ I was unable to verify the accuracy of this statistic, particularly whether or not it accounts for cyclical migration and if it includes women and children.

As discussed in Chapter 4, Gurage migrants have created a complex social world to facilitate effective migration in economic and social terms. However, in contrast to similar organisational forms in other parts of Africa, such as Hometown Associations and migrant workers associations, the Gurage development associations are not involved in the processes of providing services such as welfare for Gurages living in urban areas. The development associations are closely connected with the urban Idir sector with a significant overlap in personnel between the leadership of Idirs and the development association. In addition, the urban Idirs act as the primary means of access to the urban Gurage communities. However, the welfare services and other functions of urban Idir and urban Ikube are undertaken autonomously from the development associations and are not classified as developmental by Gurages. While no informants suggested that the primary activities of the Idirs constituted development, the founder of the Moher urban Idir stated, “the [Moher] Idir was formed for mutual help. It also supports development, but its main aim, especially at the time of formation, was welfare. The clan Idir was formed for self help welfare, but now although they do development they are not primarily for development.” The founder of several Enamor Idirs stated “The strength of Idirs lies solely in burial occasions. Development purposes were added only very recently and are insignificant”. When questioned about the role of Idirs in development, informants gave examples of the relationships between GPSDO and the Idirs and related occasions when PA leaders or other rural notables had contacted the urban Idirs for assistance in localised rural development.

Activists within the development associations and rural elders appreciate that urban Ikubes have an indirect developmental function, as they increase the financial capacity of their members to contribute to development, and make their members and the extent of their financial capacity more visible to the rest of the community. Many Idirs have secondary functions of providing resources directly to the development associations through levies and supporting individual projects implemented by a range of development associations and acting as forums for consultation and recruitment. The dominant Sebat

Bet view of these institutions is expressed in Ya Kitcha article 14.5. "Idir and Ikube have played and are still playing a supportive role in communal development endeavours. They should be fostered and strengthened so that they may [become] one of the prime movers of development". Nevertheless, urban informants drew a clear distinction between the primary role of Idirs providing financial and social support at bereavement, and their secondary functions of contributing to development. Informants were also aware of other important functions of urban Idirs such as the maintenance of urban rural linkages, reinforcing urban Gurage networks, maintaining Gurage cultures, and strengthening clan and house identities. These were not seen as developmental activities, although all informants recognised the importance of these activities as resources, which are harnessed for other activities defined as development.

The apparent lack of concern within the indigenous development sector for the welfare of urban Gurages is most striking when compared with the activities of many foreign and indigenous NGOs that have focused on providing welfare and other forms of support to Addis street children. To a northern outsider the presence of many Gurage children working on the streets would suggest the need for the community to extend some of its development endeavour to them. Although the Gurage Listro bears a passing resemblance to the archetypal street child, researchers suggest that they should be defined as street workers rather than children of the street (P. Hiekonnen – personal communication Sept. 1999), a perception that is shared by Gurages who expect that these children should support their parents. In their perception, young workers are able to take care of themselves through utilising village-based and kinship networks of support for accommodation, career development and financing their businesses.

Urban activities, although using communal resources, are not seen as development, as they are based on private networks. These activities are seen as natural for Gurages, whereas development implies a sense of intervention. This reflects a perception of firstly

the rural-urban divide and secondly the public-private divide, which I go on to discuss in section 3.

3 Indigenous Gurage approaches to development as a construction of public action and civic virtue

Gurage understandings of poverty and the role of development in ameliorating poverty lead to certain activities being defined as development, whilst others are excluded. I have summarised my understanding of Gurage perceptions in a series of propositions relating to the conditions that activities must meet in order to be defined as development by Gurages:

- Development must produce tangible benefits for the rural community, usually defined as the provision of physical infrastructure in rural locations.
- Development is perceived as activity that takes place in the public domain, as the intervention must benefit the whole community.
- Development is seen as a series of projects, rather than as an overall process.
- The activities of development agencies are a significant point of reference in defining development.
- Development does not challenge existing social relations, and there is an implication that development will not cause significant social change.
- Development is facilitated by outsiders, as Gurage perceptions of development tend to exclude activities that rural people undertake for themselves without intervention from external forces such as government or Gurages based outside the locality.
- Although the process of development is built on Gurage cultures, cultural change in itself is not seen as part of development, and the two spheres are presented as separate.

- Although Gurage development focuses on facilitating migration, it is limited to the provision of physical infrastructure and tends to exclude the social aspects of Gurage survival strategies.

Figure 5.2

Models of public action and Gurage perceptions of which activities constitute development

Model	Actor(s)	Form of action	Nature and extent of benefits
Dreze and Sen	State or Public Organisations	Collective action	Public benefits
Mackintosh	State or Public Organisations or Collective Associations	Collective action	Public benefits or Collective private ends
Gurage civic virtue	State or Public organisations or Collective Associations or Individuals	Collective action or Individual action	Tangible public goods

I now consider the implications of some of these points in relation to the concept of public action. For Dreze and Sen (1989), the concept of public action is limited to activities of the state or public organisations involving collective public participation in a process of social change. For activities to be defined as public action, they must serve public rather than private ends, thus the services provided by membership organisations for their members are excluded from this definition. Mackintosh makes a significant departure from this

position, as she holds that the definition of public action can be broadened to include the collective actions of public bodies for private collective gain but not individual benefits. Thus, the activities of membership organisations that provide benefits for a limited sector are also included as public action (Mackintosh 1992).

The aim of this section is to relate the models of public action to Gurage perceptions, rather than to review the models. As Mackintosh states, a major limitation of the approach of Dreze and Sen is that it is ahistorical and based on the subjective prejudices of the observer of what constitutes a public body and particularly what constitutes public benefits. This section seeks to relate the subjective perceptions of the informants at a given point in time and compare them to these models. In particular it will outline Gurage perceptions of what constitutes public benefits. The evidence in this section suggests that Gurage perceptions of what activities constitute development differ significantly from the conceptualisation proposed by Mackintosh and are closer to the definition of public action outlined by Dreze and Sen (see figure 5.2). Gurage perceptions of what constitutes development are not based on the nature of the development actors, but on the nature of the benefits, and particularly how these benefits are distributed. (This is related to the instrumental view of the process of development discussed in Chapter 6.) Thus, the primary activities of a membership organisation such as Idir are not perceived as development by the wider community or the members. However, when Idirs contribute to development projects which meet the criteria outlined above, they are perceived as assisting with development. As I will argue below, these perceptions form part of how the Gurage construct notions of civic virtue and how contributing to development in particular ways has become embedded in this construction.

3.1 Development must produce tangible benefits for the rural community

The types of development discussed above have all involved the provision of tangible benefits to the rural community. This reflects a common perception, particularly in Moher, that development is equated with the construction and use of physical structures such as roads, schools, bridges and clinics. In Moher, government extension workers were attempting to improve agricultural techniques, and the local community organised by the PA's was involved in natural resource conservation, such as planting saplings on eroded land, terracing and the construction of check dams. However, when questioned about development that had taken place recently and what they saw as the developmental priorities for the area, all Moher informants discussed physical structures, and only one informant mentioned any activities related to farming or natural resource conservation.

The community's emphasis on tangible outcomes is related to the legitimacy of development organisations being based on the extent of the communities' use of their services, and the perception, discussed below, that participation in development is a burden related to their communal obligations. Most urban Gurages began their conversations about GPSDO with a statement such as "because of them [GPSDO / GRCO] we can get there [Gurageland] and back in a day. Because of this they are close to the people." This reflects a conception of the legitimacy of development being based on tangible outcomes such as symbolic or visible benefits.

The perceptions of what is defined as a tangible benefit by the local inhabitants is illustrated by the way that people perceived the construction of a large stone church in Koror PA in Moher. In one Jafforo, the inhabitants had financed the construction of a very large stone church. All the informants in the area were extremely proud of the church. This project was portrayed as a developmental activity, and it was used as an example of how they had demonstrated their commitment to the community, which in their view proved their worthiness for further development. Similarly, other informants in Moher gave church

construction as examples of development activities that had taken place in their locality. To an outsider it may seem unusual for a village with no access to water and a road in a state of disrepair to devote an enormous part of its resources to such a project. However, in the perceptions of Mohers, it was a physical structure that provided the community, who were nearly all orthodox Christians, with a range of benefits. For this community, the sacrifices that they had endured to contribute towards the church were evidence of their worthiness as a community to receive development. This perception of church construction as development was also shared by leaders of other GPSDO affiliated development associations, Idir leaders and migrants from both Moher and Enamor.

However, these perceptions of the nature of tangible benefits are also contested.

According to a leader from Akilil, "Sometimes they [the rural people] do not invest their money in things that do not show immediate results, for example preventing soil erosion. They just want money or food or, like the Protestants, oil [for work]."

Perceptions around what benefits development should produce have also come up against opposition in recent initiatives around AIDS, when GPSDO attempted to establish an AIDS prevention programme in Gurageland. Awareness of the relationship between male migration and AIDS, changing attitudes to AIDS amongst the educated sections of the urban population, and encouragement from donors, led the leadership to attempt to facilitate AIDS awareness projects within Gurageland. To implement the project, GPSDO was in the process of establishing rural committees including rural elders, PA leaders and women. GPSDO has trained members of the house sub-committees and then the rural committees, although there was some resistance to the project from the committees partly due to sexuality being a taboo subject. In practice, GPSDO has experienced significant problems in mobilising the community due to the intangible nature of the benefits of this project. Leaders of GPSDO suggested that Gurages preferred projects with immediate tangible outcomes such as roads and schools. In projects, such as the AIDS project, with

less obvious benefits, the organisation has experienced difficulties in promoting the project to its normally enthusiastic core constituencies of urban and rural activists.

3.2 Development is confined to activities that take place in the public sphere

Development is expected to provide tangible benefits to 'the whole community'. As I argue in Chapter 6, the whole community is usually defined as all households within a given locality. Development is, thus, limited to activities that provide tangible benefits to all the people, or all households, within a given geographical or house locality. Thus, the services provided by GPSDO are often legitimised as being done by and in the name of 'the people' and providing benefits which serve the whole community.

This perception that development only includes activities that provide a tangible public good is likely to exclude many forms of economic development that are undertaken in the private sphere. Projects to raise the productive capacity of the rural area could be defined as part of the private sphere of household economics and individuals' businesses. Thus, whilst migrants acknowledged the assistance that their social networks had provided them, they tended to see businesses as their own private affairs, and distinct from these networks.

This strong distinction between the public and private spheres is evident in communal attitudes to two projects that aimed to improve the Moher towns, namely the levelling of Cheza Sefa, and the attempt to establish a new Worreda capital in Harawia. In the early 1990s, a group of householders and merchants organised the improvement of the land in the centre of Cheza Sefa, the main market town of Moher. The facilitators of the project and the PA called a meeting of residents of the locality and the issue was discussed with the PA. Eventually each of the participating households paid 500 Birr towards hiring a bulldozer that levelled off parts of the town to allow the construction of houses, shops and

bars. Although these activities are similar to other activities undertaken in Gurageland which are defined by rural informants as development, this project was rarely mentioned as a development activity other than by those directly involved. Most informants presented this project as an example of the entrepreneurial and flexible outlook of Moher and as the private actions of a section of the community, rather than public action on behalf of the whole community i.e. development activity. Although undoubtedly many people have benefited indirectly from this project, the primary beneficiaries were a limited and small group of activists who contributed financially. Thus, the project was for private rather than public benefit and therefore not defined as development.

The second project was undertaken during the transitional period (1991-95) when the administrative boundaries in Gurageland were redrawn. The process of redrawing the administrative boundaries and particularly the siting of Worreda capitals caused some controversy and competition between the Gurage houses. Some development associations including the MDA became involved in intensive lobbying of zone and regional authorities over the siting of the Worreda capitals in the territory of their house. The association raised funds within the urban areas for the construction of a new town. The site was cleared and the shells of houses, shops and bars were erected. Urban informants and activists within the development association suggested that this project was a legitimate development activity and an appropriate activity for the development association. Informants suggested that it would have led to a range of benefits accruing to the area, such as the siting of infrastructure, improved roads, a clinic and water facilities and it would have increased economic activity through urban growth. However, the Worreda capital was eventually sited some distance from Moher¹¹. It should be noted that some rural people had reservations about the project as they suggested that it led to significant conflict between the Moher and Akiil members of GPSDO and urban dwellers.

¹¹ At the time of writing, the administrative boundaries are being redrawn and the Moher committee is again lobbying for a Worreda capital to be sited in Harawia.

The importance of benefits accruing to the whole community is also evident in the perceptions of the activities of indigenous membership organisations. Idir and Ikube only provide benefits to members and their families, whereas legitimate development activities must be seen to provide benefits for the whole rural community. Ikube is seen by urban Gurages as a private business affair based on economic relationships rather than the identity-based affiliations, which underpin the development associations. However, in practice there is a significant overlap between the two, particularly for younger migrants.

In many parts of Ethiopia, NGOs are attempting to harness indigenous institutions such as elders' committees and Idirs for development purposes. In particular there is a great deal of activity in encouraging Idirs to become partners in micro finance initiatives. The objectives of these approaches by mainstream development agencies bear a striking similarity to some of the secondary activities undertaken by rural associational life in Gurageland. The dynamic nature of Gurage rural associational life was most evident in Moher where Idirs had, until recently, advanced money from their capital at interest to their members. This money was used to purchase cattle and agricultural inputs and to pay land taxes and for social obligations such as festivals. The system of loans was managed by the membership, with no outside interference, and relied on communal linkages underpinned by a range of sanctions. As a result of this activity the Idirs became wealthy, and some of the profits from these activities were used to implement GPSDO development projects and ensure their sustainability. The Idirs used their capital to pay members' household contributions towards the construction of the high school, and they make ongoing contributions towards the salaries of guards for the high school and staff at the telephone centre. However, the government prohibited the Idirs from lending money with interest on the grounds that it encouraged debt. The clan Idirs continue to lend money without interest to their members, which is used to contribute towards the payment of land taxes. The residential Idirs now invest the Idir capital in cattle, which graze on communal lands. Most mainstream approaches would label these activities as developmental, as they harness indigenous social capital and institutions to overcome

rural poverty. Some of the more established Idirs have broadened their activities, from providing financial and social support at times of bereavement to subsidising medical and associated transport costs and providing a form of accident insurance. Rural informants presented these activities as examples of how the rural institutions are dynamic and flexible and are used by their members to overcome economic difficulties, however these activities were never presented as examples of local developmental activity. This illustrates the requirement for the outcomes of development activities to benefit the whole community rather than a particular sector. Idirs only provide benefits to members and their families whereas legitimate development activities must be seen to provide benefits for the whole rural community.

4 The relationships between Gurage cultures and development

The final dimension of Gurage perceptions of development that I wish to address in this chapter is the tension between the separation of development and cultural change on the one hand, and the embeddedness of perceptions of development in Gurage values around civic virtue on the other. Culture is an elusive and contested concept and it is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss its definition at length. However, for the purposes of the chapter, the term culture will be applied to social practices within the Gurage communities, institutions which are perceived to be indigenous to the Gurages (such as Shango and Idir), the webs of rights and obligations Gurages have to their kin, villagers, clan and house and indigenous systems of knowledge.

Although there are significant debates within the dominant development discourses as to the relationship between culture and development, relatively little attention has been paid to indigenous perceptions of this relationship or to indigenous perceptions of what constitutes culture. In this section it is argued that although the indigenous models of development are based on Gurage cultures, and a significant group accept that cultures

can and must adapt to changing circumstances, purposive action with the intention to cause cultural changes is not seen as within the development sphere. I will outline the approaches taken to the relationship between development and culture in the dominant development discourses, and then discuss approaches Gurages have taken to conceptualising this relationship, focusing on why cultural change is not seen as part of development. The section will draw on the process of modernising Ya Kitcha, the Gurage customary law and will examine Gurage perceptions of the positive and negative aspects of their culture¹².

4.1 The relationship between culture and development in the development discourses

Within the development discourses, there has been much debate over the relationship between indigenous cultures and development. Much of modernisation theory saw indigenous cultures as a barrier to development, which was seen in terms of making the developing world like the west in economic and cultural terms. Although this type of approach is now largely discredited, the views of culture as a barrier to development are also embedded within much of the neo-liberal and structuralist approaches to development. Neo-liberals see elements of traditional cultures such as 'traditional' modes of exchange and reciprocity as a barrier to the effective functioning of markets which is a prerequisite for development. Many of the structuralist models of development would see certain elements of indigenous cultures as reflections of unequal power relations, which underpin poverty and marginalisation. It is implicit in many of these views that indigenous cultures are one of the major barriers to development. However, there are also contradictions. For example, the neo-liberal model is able to see indigenous modes of exchange as a barrier to markets, whilst simultaneously being the source of social capital which can be harnessed in order to promote non-governmental development. Within the

¹² The term culture is used in the singular to reflect the perception held by Sebat Bet Gurages that

various participatory schools, there is an appreciation of the contribution that indigenous systems of knowledge can make to development interventions by providing responses to problems based on indigenous forms of innovation. This focus on indigenous knowledge has also affected the orientation of academics and NGOs towards the potential role that indigenous institutions can play in development.

4.2 Insider views: Gurage perceptions of culture

According to the Gurage discourses, the indigenous models of development are an extension of their culture. Indeed, most Gurages claim that the strength of their culture and particularly the strength of ties within the family can account for the uniqueness and success of their model of development. I now provide statements from a range of Gurage intellectuals, which I believe outline the central aspects of Gurage perceptions of civic virtue and suggest that their notions of citizenship, including contributing to rural development, are built on relationships within the family:

One Gurage political figure and academic stated, “they socialise their children to such an extent that they will have to go back and give their cash to the parents and they receive their blessings. They are assigned to do this. Nowadays maybe a small percentage will be delinquents but they usually return. The Gurage method of social control is that children return and usually marry in rural areas when they reach 17 or 18, then they invest.”

Official GPSDO discourses stress that obligations within the family are the backbone of Gurage development. The executive director of GPSDO stated, “the culture of family is central to Gurage development. There are no other groups who annually visit their rural families. Gurages must do this once a year. He will send things to his family. This linkage and interdependence leads to development. The road construction facilitated this linkage

they share a common culture.

and he can get to his family for funeral and back in a day and they therefore understand the advantage of development. There are still problems in the rural areas due to small holdings of lands so they all migrate to town. When they migrate they remit to the rural and help their families which ties the relationship”.

The ex-leader of GPSDO stated, “there are many rural areas in Ethiopia where people migrate but mostly they remain in the urban areas [as] they find it difficult to return and remain there. In Gurage this is not common. There is always an attachment back home even if you do not have relatives or land there, people go back and see what is happening there.”

The importance of these relationships for development was outlined by one of the founders of GRCO. “We have a blood relationship to the extended Gurage community so we are culturally obliged to help them... Individually people think in terms of their families. With regard to development, they think of the community as a whole.”

The first president of GRCO expanded on this theme. “Our relatives are still down there. They come here to visit us now and then [and] we go to visit them. This has been going on for some time. That practice is good and we have retained it up to the present time. It is also a necessary practice. We know of their problems. We have been the ones who all the time were there to solve their various financial problems... Blood relations cannot be erased very easily. These people in rural Gurageland live in very densely populated areas. Their holdings are very small. Due to this, they have many problems that they can’t solve by themselves. We cannot live here in comfort when they lack many things down there. We share what we have. They need help and we gladly help them.”

The official discourses articulated by many urban Gurages and GPSDO often tended to romanticise Gurage culture and see it as immutable. In particular, Gurage institutions were seen as stable and unchanging and were juxtaposed with more temporary

government-based institutions. This is discussed at greater length in Chapter 7. However, in detailed discussions most informants were conscious of the extent to which Gurage culture and institutions have adapted to changes in the wider socio-economic environment. In particular, many of the rural elders held sophisticated understandings of the ways in which changes in the socio-economic environment and the extent and nature of state authority have constrained activities based on Gurage culture. Many elders were aware that the extent of their authority was constrained by the degree of state penetration and were aware that the scope of the activities of indigenous institutions such as Idir and Zowa were strongly constrained by the state. Although they did not present the Gurage culture as part of the traditional sector to be juxtaposed with a modern sector, they did tend to distinguish between the cultural and developmental spheres.

In Chapter 8, I discuss how culture is seen, by Gurages, as a means of differentiating themselves from other groups. In Chapter 6, I outline how articulating knowledge of the culture and histories of the Gurage is central to the process of becoming an elder in rural areas and amongst some sections of the urban communities.

4.3 The role of indigenous knowledge

Not all aspects of culture have been seen as resources for development in the indigenous model. The uses of aspects of culture, such as indigenous knowledge in development, are constrained by the power relations embedded in Gurage cultures and by the nature of development activities being undertaken. The leadership of the development associations has a great deal of legitimacy within the urban and rural populations, due to their rural origins and continuing linkages with the rural areas, and are therefore assumed to understand the nature of rural problems. However, the indigenous knowledge of rural people seems to be rarely used to either identify or resolve developmental problems. Development is seen as requiring technocratic skills, which are not part of Gurage

cultures. The use of Gurage cultures operates within the constraints of the power relations that are embedded within the cultures, and thus are not used to facilitate greater rural input into decision-making. A rural peasant remarked, "the rural people do not have a deep understanding of development. This is because they are rural, not educated, and have not been to other areas and seen other things. So they do not have much knowledge of development." The relationship between indigenous cultures and instrumental forms of participation that dominate Gurage development are explored further in Chapter 6. Most of the development undertaken by the indigenous development associations is capital-intensive application of technology or resources by external or government contractors to produce infrastructure. Thus, the rural population believes that they do not have the technical skills to contribute towards the construction of roads and schools. Rather, the use of Gurage cultures in the sense of institutions and practices reflects the nature of rural participation, and is therefore largely focused on securing legitimacy for interventions and most importantly in resource mobilisation.

4.4 Culture as a barrier to development and a resource for social transformation

The process of transcribing and 'modernising' the Gurage customary law, Ya Kitcha, illustrates the approach that Gurage elders and the elites have taken to cultural transformation and the processes this must undergo in order to be accepted as legitimate. It illustrates their perception of culture as simultaneously a barrier to development and a means of affecting social transformation. Thus, although Gurage cultures are often romanticised and portrayed as immutable, they can be legitimately changed. The process was instigated by Gurage elders at the Sebat Bet Shango, however, they felt that they did not have the organisational capacity and resources to effectively undertake the project and requested the assistance of GPSDO. Transcription of Kitcha took place over 10 years and involved the participation of rural elders and members of the urban elite, particularly

professionals, in a process of meetings, workshops and consultation held in Gurageland and Addis.

The results of this process reveal a perception amongst Gurage elders and the urban based professional elite that elements of Gurage cultures and traditions were acting as a barrier to Gurages fulfilling their full economic and social potential. In addition to changing the levels of fines and compensation for many offences, these groups identified several activities, which reduced agricultural production, such as excessive consumption of alcohol and chat. One informant gave an extreme view of the negative consequences of aspects of culture on rural productivity. "Look at the culture and calculate the average work day of the area. I honestly do not think that they work one hour a day. It was that bad. They wake up, drink coffee in one house, they move to another house and drink more coffee, then they start on arake [distilled grain] and they are half drunk by 3 or 4 o'clock and that is the end of it. It is only during the harvest time and that is very short and there is little tilling. There is no economic activity taking place. It is scary." They attempted to use the law to undermine traditional social practices that drained rural resources such as extravagance at festivals. They also sought to bring customary laws in line with the national law in relation to women's rights by outlawing bride price and forced marriage and by increasing divorce rights for women and reducing the stigma attached to divorce. They also put legal force behind obligations to contribute to development and it seems that fines are now paid to the development associations.

Although elements of the culture were regarded as impediments to progress, the culture was not seen as immutable. However, the seeds of the change were to be found within Gurage cultures rather than outside them. In particular, the processes within Gurage cultures and the views of Gurage participants using the culture as a point of reference were seen as providing the answers to these social problems. The project explicitly used the term modernisation to refer to the changes. This reveals a perception within the elite

and the elders that cultural change can be effected if this is done in line with the norms and processes contained within the culture.

However, this process led to major controversies within the Gurage communities, particularly between sections of the urban elite, between elders and younger people, between men and women and possibly between Christians and Moslems. Although the nature of the conflict varied between areas and social groups, it focused on the legitimacy of the process and to a lesser extent the nature of the changes. The form that the disputes took suggests that culture can be changed if certain accepted processes are followed. The process was legitimised as the rural participants such as elders and clan heads had much authority within the cultural sphere as they represented their communities at Shangos. The urban participants were leaders of GPSDO and other aspects of associational life and prominent professionals. These reforms also gained some legitimacy through consultation with religious leaders such as priests, imams and 'traditional' figures. However, there was considerable controversy over both the process of change and some of the contents of the changes. Certain groups, encouraged by the local government, rejected the changes on the basis that in many areas they were not finally ratified at the relevant house Shangos. This was due to the government prohibiting the organisers from holding meetings in the rural areas. This was an indication that, although it is possible to change culture from within, this must follow the accepted processes, particularly in terms of the changes gaining legitimacy through consent.

It is difficult to say how much change this process has brought about. The majority of the elders, who are responsible for adjudicating legal disputes according to Gurage law, seem to have accepted the changes as they signed the final printed document. However, many rural informants rejected some of the changes suggesting that they contradicted religious obligations. A few informants suggested that they undermined the basis of the Gurage legal tradition, which previously emphasised removing the burden of the sins caused by crimes from the clansmen and kinsmen. In Moher, all the elders and clan heads with

whom I spoke to claimed to support the changes and suggested that they were in operation, whilst a small number of younger men opposed them on the basis that the changes undermined Gurage traditions. However, there was very little criticism of the process, as the changes had been accepted by the Moher Shango. In Enamor, the situation seemed somewhat different as the government had prevented the organisers from holding a Shango to legitimise the changes. Thus, although the rural elders in Enamor with whom I spoke supported the changes and claimed that they were in operation, there seemed to be a great deal of resistance from the wider community.

Notwithstanding these controversies, it must be noted that no informants conceived of these changes as development. Even the participants in the meetings did not consider this to be developmental activity. This reflects a view that the potentially large-scale social transformation facilitated by these changes is not development, as it does not produce tangible outcomes such as the construction of infrastructure. Rather, these changes were seen as a response to the changing social and economic environment.

5 Conclusions

Gurage perceptions of the purposes of development are based on the understanding of poverty embedded in the Gurage survival strategies. Gurage migration is a response to their perception of the nature and causes of rural poverty and the available means to counter it. Gurages perceive the main causes of rural poverty to be a lack of employment and income generating opportunities in Gurageland, which is the result of land shortage and can only be resolved through migration. In the past, people avoided poverty by becoming successful migrants, with the majority engaging in trade, and an influential minority using formal education. The groups who control the development associations are successful migrants, or their descendants, and their experiences are points of reference, used to articulate the dominant Gurage understanding of poverty. I argue that,

for Gurages, improving the effectiveness of migration is the main purpose of development. Hence GRCO initially focussed on road construction and currently GPSDO emphasises rural education to equip the next generation with the skills necessary for successful migration. However, there is a subsidiary aspect, which focuses on bringing 'the benefits of modern urban life' such as health, electricity and water.

In this chapter, I have argued that Gurages define poverty in largely material terms. The purpose of development is to provide tangible benefits usually in the form of physical infrastructure in Gurageland in order to facilitate Gurage migratory survival strategies in a changing socio-economic environment. In Chapter 6, I argue that this instrumental perception of purposes of development has led to instrumental processes of development in interventions facilitated by GPSDO.

In this chapter, I have argued that Gurages define development as the provision of tangible public goods. This construction of public action contrasts with both Mackintosh (1992) and Dreze and Sen (1989), as the nature of the actor is unimportant in determining whether an activity is regarded as development. The critical aspect is that the activity must benefit 'the whole community'. Development is an integral aspect of Gurage citizenship, and the notions of equality embedded in constructions of citizenship act as a point of reference when assessing whether an activity is worthy of being defined as development. In Chapter 6, I suggest that Gurages regard contributing to development as a sacrifice willingly undertaken, which reinforces the importance of equal distribution of benefits.

It seems paradoxical that, although the Gurages are renowned as the most entrepreneurial of all Ethiopians, there is relatively little economic development in Gurageland, and GPSDO has not focussed on interventions specifically designed to raise its productive capacity. Although the construction of a network of roads facilitated an increase in the production of chat, eucalyptus and coffee in certain areas, the development of these primary agricultural products is constrained by the lack of available

land. In Chapter 4, I argued that Gurages tend to regard economic activities as within the private sphere. This can be juxtaposed with their perception of development as public goods. In the present Gurage development discourse, other forms of social transformation must also produce tangible public goods. The relationship between Gurage cultures and development is complex. Although GPSDO harnesses Gurage notions of civic virtue for development purposes, influential sections of the urban Gurage elite and some elders regard elements of Gurage cultures as contributing to rural poverty.

In Chapter 4, I argued that to receive assistance from the Gurage community and, therefore, benefit from the rights inherent in Gurage citizenship, one must demonstrate commitment to the community through participation in social affairs and accepting the obligations of supporting kin and clansmen in times of trouble. This chapter has illustrated how the obligations on Gurage heads of household, to financially support their rural kin and other members of the rural community, has been extended to include contributing to development. Gurage cultures and particularly the rights and obligations embedded within them, are seen by the dominant Gurage development discourse as the foundation of their model of development. Development for Gurages both builds on their notions of civic virtue, and is a central element in its construction. In Chapter 6, I develop this argument further, by suggesting that the dominant Gurage conceptualisations define community as households whose heads demonstrate their commitment to the group through accepting obligations including participation in development.

6 Post script: internal contestations of the Gurage development discourses

This chapter has focused primarily on the perceptions of the purposes of development embedded in the dominant Gurage understanding of poverty. Almost all informants, other than government sources discussed in Chapter 7, articulated variants of the dominant understanding of poverty, however, one notable individual contested its validity and

suggested that this approach could have reinforced rural poverty. I briefly outline the opinions of this informant as although he was a lone dissenting voice amongst the Gurage elite I contacted, his views may represent a counter discourse expressed by de-linked urban Gurages. It is not the place of the thesis to engage directly with the opinions of this informant. The purpose of presenting this data is to illustrate that the dominant Gurage perceptions of development are contested from within the community:

“The problem is that the economy of the rural Gurage has deteriorated so significantly. One of the most important issues that institutions like GPSDO should have addressed is, what are the fundamental causes of the economic deterioration in the Gurageland? They have built roads, they have built clinics and schools but from my observation, the life of the community around which my father was born has deteriorated. In imperial times, the average household would always have traditional foods, some vegetables, milk and cheese. So they had balanced diet. Now its incredible there is nothing. I have heard that 70-80% of the Gurages are subsidised by urban Gurages. There are no vegetable gardens. The people are dilapidated. It is obvious that their life has deteriorated in the last 25 years.”

“They [GPSDO] haven’t looked at what is happening, it is demographic pressure, the size of the land holdings reducing to the extent it won’t support families. It is rare to find young adults. It is old people women and children. Agricultural activity has significantly stopped in the area I know. “

“I have tried to provoke GPSDO to evaluate what they have done. This must ask, are people better off today than they were when we started this? If the answer is no, there is a serious problem. Have the roads helped at all? Maybe the development strategy should have been something else. 80% of Gurage land tax is paid by [urban] relatives, such a community is not viable economically. Everybody does a little thing in the community. They build a little clinic etc. There

seems to be a Malthusian disaster taking place, they are opening clinics and increasing the life expectancy and fertility, so the population pressure makes life impossible. Maybe that's not how to tackle these problems.

The paradigm needs to be evaluated. Have we improved the economic life of the average person? They may be able to get to Addis in a day, but how does this help a peasant who can't eat? For the urban population it helps for burials etc. They can go and come back so it is self-serving. They can get in touch with the area quickly and come back so they do not have to stay longer. This is heresy. [Academics] measure welfare inter-generationally, nobody can convince me that Gurages are better off today. They argue that roads have facilitated trade but this has probably hurt the community, more eucalyptus is bad for the soil, they now have a chat culture."

This strong critique has several salient aspects that fundamentally challenge both the dominant understandings of the causes of rural poverty and the approaches taken to alleviating it. The informant suggested that, the dominant Gurage view of development did not fully take account of the fundamental cause of rural poverty, the low economic capacity of Gurageland. For him, interventions based on this lack of understanding had entrenched Gurage poverty through facilitating migration, which lowered the productive capacity of the area. Furthermore, the roads had contributed to harmful agricultural and social practices. His overarching argument is that although development interventions had provided services for the rural population they had done little to improve the material conditions of people's lives.

Chapter 6

Legitimacy in Gurage development associations

1 Introduction

This chapter explores communal perceptions of the process of development by focusing on the forms of trusteeship constructed to manage the relationship between GPSDO and Sebat Bet Gurages. These processes and perceptions give GPSDO and its affiliates the right to act on behalf of the wider Sebat Bet Gurage community. The forms of trusteeship are explained by exploring the meanings that Sebat Bet Gurages have applied to terms used in the dominant development discourses, such as participation and accountability. The meanings attached to these terms by the Gurage communities can only be understood in the context of Gurage social structures, histories and cultures. In Chapter 5, I argued that Sebat Bet Gurage perceptions of the purposes of development are largely an extension of their survival strategies and conceptions of civic virtue. In this chapter, I argue that their understanding of the process of development is also built on the rights and obligations embedded in Gurage notions of civic virtue and survival strategies.

In section 2, I focus on the dominant Gurage perceptions of the nature of community participation in development and the ways that they conceptualise community. Discourses outlined by GPSDO and the Gurage communities present the indigenous Gurage approach to community participation in development as a model for the rest of Ethiopia and beyond. However, the chapter will illustrate that Gurage perceptions of community participation are distinctly at odds with the perceptions of community participation embedded in the dominant development discourses.

In section 3, I explore the sanctions that underpin the participation of the Sebat Bet community in development. I focus particularly on the web of obligations on the Gurage elite, which secures their services as leaders in GPSDO and its affiliates.

In section 4, I examine the processes of accountability between GPSDO, its affiliates and the Sebat Bet Gurage community. I outline the two complementary and interrelated sets of mechanisms of accountability. As a registered legal entity,¹³ GPSDO has established formal procedures for decision-making and accountability. In addition to formal processes a range of informal pressures and expectations are imposed on office holders. The section outlines the official processes of accountability within GPSDO and the sub-committees and compares their effectiveness with the web of informal pressures and expectation on leaders of the organisation.

In section 5, I explore the other factors that account for the legitimacy of GPSDO and its affiliates within the Gurage communities. Legitimacy is an ambiguous term. I define it as a sense of ownership of the organisation, its interventions, and a perception that the organisation represents the interests of the community and therefore has the right to act on their behalf. As such, it draws on the notion of trusteeship outlined by Thomas (2000c) and Cowan and Shenton (1996). In this section I explore how the legitimacy of indigenous Gurage development agents is based on the personalised nature of leadership within the development associations and the effectiveness of the interventions.

¹³ GPSDO has tightly defined structures of accountability established at the time of its change from GRCO. However, it is difficult to establish whether this constitution, the GRCO constitution or more ad hoc arrangements were actually in force during the period of fieldwork. Factions of the urban elite allied with different generations of GPSDO/GRCO leaders were party to a legal dispute over which memorandum of association was legally valid.

1.1.1 Respect, authority and leadership within the rural Sebat Bet Gurage community

Trusteeship is a concept used to understand relationships between organisations, communities and individuals and as such involves analysing the exercise of power. Before discussing Gurage perceptions of the trusteeship between their community and GPSDO, it is important to discuss the perceptions of power, authority, influence and respect within the Gurage communities. Analysis of the various meanings attached to and distinguishing between power, authority and influence have a long academic history. The purpose of this chapter is to uncover Gurage perceptions of power rather than to contribute to a theoretical debate on the nature of power. Informants other than the highly educated did not distinguish between power, authority and influence and used the same Amharic term, 'siltan', for all three concepts. The main point of distinction, for informants, was between respect and authority. Respect can be related to age and hereditary position within clans, however it does not automatically confer authority.

Within the rural areas authority is vested in a group of prominent elders and to a lesser extent PA leaders, who are highly influential in all spheres of associational life and tend to be the most active in promoting development. Becoming an influential elder entails a long process of being evaluated by peers, particularly other elders. In this process, men must demonstrate their worthiness by displaying a set of attributes based on the skills perceived to be necessary for effective and fair dispute settlement. These attributes must be demonstrated through their daily interactions with the community and particularly in associational life. The main criteria are: altruism and commitment to the community; wisdom, defined as knowledge of local history, laws and culture; impartiality; and the oratory skills necessary to effectively articulate these attributes at meetings. Rural informants presented these attributes as inherent to the individual and given by God or Allah for the benefit of the community. These attributes reflect the lifestyle of the clan heads who, by virtue of being free from the burdens of agricultural labour, are in a position

to demonstrate their commitment to the community through service, such as arbitration. Although clan heads command a great deal of respect, this is not automatically translated into authority or influence over the community. As with other elders their authority and influence is also dependent on the extent to which they are adjudged to have met the criteria for becoming an elder.

Thus, although the elders are influential in rural Gurageland, they do not impose their will on the community. In developmental activities it is evident that the elders act as enablers allowing the community to take advantage of new opportunities through relating them to Gurage history and traditions.

2 Participation in development

In Chapter 2, I outlined the range of meanings that have been applied to participatory development and the range of activities that have been labelled participatory. The purpose of this section is to explain why community participation, in the Gurage models of development, has taken particular forms related to indigenous social structures, culture and customary approaches to communal co-operation. I then explain how the nature of community participation affects the legitimacy of development interventions within this model. The dominant Gurage development discourse is underpinned by an assumption that all urban and rural Gurages participate in community development activities. A GPSDO official commented, “the whole community contributes to development”. While a rural informant stated “all the people here must contribute to development, each household pays their share or sends someone to work on the Debo”. Before analysing the nature of community participation in development in Gurageland, I examine the concept of ‘the whole community’.

2.1 Definitions of community

In some academic circles, the term 'community' is highly contested with feminists and others suggesting that the term artificially homogenises social groups divided by class, gender, age, status and other cleavages. The term community was used by all rural informants to refer to male heads of household within a given locality and to male urban dwellers with links to that locality. Rural informants tended to discuss local participation in developmental activities in terms of how 'hizb', the people, had contributed to development. When asked to define 'the people', the definition was always limited to male heads of household. In the urban areas, the term community was generally applied to people, mostly men, who had originated from a given locality and could be contacted through urban associations, such as Idirs and Ikubes or informal trade based networks. The salient aspects of this conception of community are that it is experienced through the head of household and that commitment to the community must be demonstrated. A Moher activist and GPSDO executive committee member commented, "The community is the rural people who live in the Moher area and also urban beneficiaries, people who have land and farm in these areas. All people living in Moher irrespective of ethnic background. The status of urban Mohers varies according to their perception of him. They are members [of the community] because they are obliged to participate and contribute to that community. Even if generations of his family are in Addis, he still has obligations to the rural area. Membership of institutions and willingness to contribute is what determines whether they are considered as a member of the community. If the person is not part of the associations and refuses to contribute the law applies here and they will not be considered as a member of the community." He then gave an example of how people can cease to be members of the Gurage communities. When a group of Mohers converted to Protestantism and attempted to evangelise in the rural area, the informant related. "The rural people complained and ostracised them and persuaded the urban people to do the same. Although these people are ethnically Moher they were expelled from the Idirs and

are not called upon to contribute to development. It is possible to lose your status as a Moher.”

The language used in the statement about urban Mohers above suggests that the urban community is limited to male heads of household. However, a few professional women suggested that they had been approached individually to contribute to development. Nevertheless, contributions were usually through the head of household unless other members of that household were members of an association such as Idir that had been harnessed for a particular project. Activists within GPSDO were aware that some of the resources contributed by the head of household came from other members of the household. A GPSDO official commented. “The Listros [shoeshine boys] also contribute...they come to Idirs or...their family will pay something, say 100 Birr, and definitely they [the sub-committees] will get money from the Listros.” Thus, in both the urban and rural areas, the community participates through the household rather than as individuals. This reflects the nature of the Gurage household as an economic unit discussed in Chapter 4. This conception of community could be seen as excluding women and youths from the process of development. However, its impact should be understood in the context of the nature of communal participation in development, which is perceived as a burden, discussed in section 3.2. Women suggested that they were free from the burdens of being obliged to participate in development. They contrasted this with the situation in Derg times when they were obliged to participate in community development programmes organised by the PAs. Some male informants suggested that women could contribute to development through discussing proposed interventions with the head of household, however, it was impossible to ascertain the extent of this. Anecdotal evidence would suggest that women have little role in major decision-making within the household.

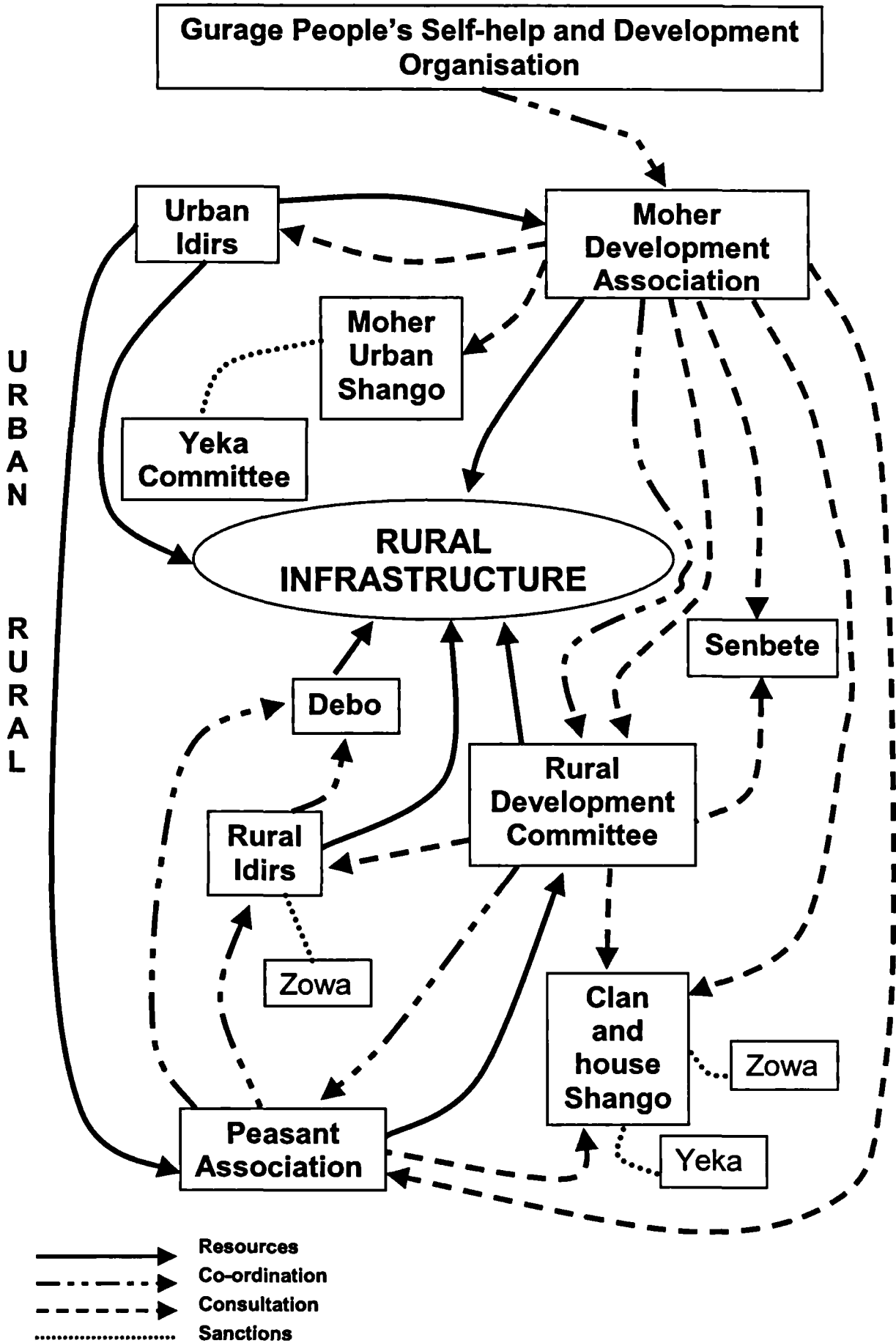
The definition of community is limited to households, in addition, membership is dependent on the quality of the relationship between the head of the household and the wider community. Membership of the community for heads of household entails a web of

rights and obligations, which make up contemporary constructions of Gurage citizenship. As discussed in Chapter 4, male Gurages must demonstrate their commitment to the community through fulfilling their social obligations before they can reap the benefits of community membership. In its present construction, Gurage citizenship requires that an individual, head of household, contributes to rural development. The dominant Gurage development discourse suggests that all members of the community contribute to development. However, the conception of the nature of the Gurage community in this discourse is somewhat self-reinforcing. An individual not contributing to development is likely to be excluded from the community and institutions related to community membership. Therefore, definitions of the community are limited to those who participate in development and it is, therefore, self-evident that all members of the community participate in development.

2.2 Sebat Bet Gurage perceptions of participation

I now examine the nature of community participation in development. The section draws on contemporary examples, particularly the construction of Moher high school and telephone station and historical examples such as the construction of Gunchire high school and road building during the GRCO period. These examples demonstrate that although initiation of projects occurs in both the rural and urban areas, decision-making is largely in the hands of the development association leadership. Rural participation largely consists of contributing resources to projects determined by the leadership. This form of participation serves the purpose of reducing costs and demonstrating the worthiness of the rural community to receive developmental assistance.

Figure 6.1
The institutional network of the Moher Development Association



2.2.1 Initiation

The construction of Moher High School typifies the process of development in the indigenous model and reflects the process of road construction outlined in Chapter 7. According to rural informants, agitation for the construction of a high school in Moher began in the early 1980s. A group of concerned elders and the primary school director took the issue to the Moher rural Shango which appointed a high school construction committee composed of prominent elders and PA leaders to co-ordinate the project. This group liaised with the government via a prominent Moher civil servant. However, government support for the project was not forthcoming. In the transitional period (1991-95), the committee and rural elders contacted the Moher Development Association¹⁴ who began to lobby the government for permission to build the school and to provide staff for the school.

Once the project was taken to the sub-committee, responsibility was ceded to the Addis-based sub-committee for planning. In both Moher and Enamor development interventions facilitated by GPSDO followed a similar process. Ideas for potential development projects were initiated by the sub-committee in negotiation with the urban elite including high-ranking civil servants, prominent businessmen and activists in associational life. Most of the projects undertaken by the sub-committees were initiated in a similar way, however there are some variations. Other development projects are initiated by the development association on an opportunist basis. For example, the telephone station was initiated by a Moher telephone engineer bringing the idea to the Addis committee. The only significantly departure from this model is in partnerships between GPSDO and international NGOs, discussed below.

¹⁴ The terms Addis Development Committee and Moher Development Association refer to the same entity: the Moher members of the Moher and Akilil sub committee of GPSDO.

2.2.2 Consultation

According to GPSDO activists, once a proposal has been accepted by the sub-committee it is discussed with the urban community, particularly the urban clan and house Idirs.

These negotiations secure wider acceptance of the plans and promises of financial support and other resources from the urban community. In the case of school construction in Enamor and Moher, and the construction of the telephone station, once the idea had been accepted in Addis, the sub-committee members either visited prominent elders and state representatives in Gurageland or summoned them to Addis for informal discussions on plans for the project. When the development association had produced detailed plans they consulted the wider rural community at associational gatherings. The Enamor committee used PA meetings to consult the community, whilst in Moher indigenous institutions, particularly Senbete were used. According to development association leaders, the purpose of these consultations was to explain the benefits of the project and the sacrifices that the rural people would have to make and to ensure that the rural community supported the ideas and keep them abreast of developments. There was little rural input into the planning process. Once the community had accepted the project, the committee and the elders would negotiate aspects, such as the expected levels of rural contributions and the location of the project. The outcome of these discussions would then be put to the house Shango. If the project was accepted at the Shango, directives relating to it would be backed by the Gurage customary law and a range of sanctions, discussed in section 3.1, could be applied to those who did not participate in the project. The purpose of consultation with the urban community is to secure acceptance for the project and to establish an institutional framework for harnessing urban resources such as finance, planning skills and contacts with government. Consultation with the rural community is primarily to secure legitimacy for the decisions of the development association and elders. Planning of these projects took place in Addis within the house-based sub-committee, with the assistance of professionals who were contacted through Idirs and other urban networks.

2.2.3 Resource mobilisation

During the imperial and Derg regimes, GRCO and GPSDO had formal rural sub-committees that worked in conjunction with the relevant government bodies, such as the Balebbats, rural landowners appointed by the imperial government, and the PA and Worreda development sub-committees in Derg times. However, more recently their rural organisational structure has become more varied. Some areas have a formally constituted rural sub-committee, others have a sub-committee activated for certain purposes, whilst in other areas there seems to be no rural organisation. However, even in areas with no formal rural organisational structures the sub-committees continue to maintain contacts with prominent elders. The chair of the Moher rural development committee stated, “the purpose of the rural development committee is to mobilise local resources for development”. This suggests that rural participation in development is limited to providing resources, which according to the terms used in the development discourses is an instrumental approach to participation. There is little scope for rural input into decision-making other than negotiating and enforcing the levels of contribution. However, during the rural fieldwork it was evident that contrary to the dominant development discourses, there was little desire on the part of the rural population to become involved in decision-making. One peasant stated, “the role of the rural people in development is to contribute in anyway they are capable, be it in money or labour. But rural people do not have the knowledge to participate in making important decisions.” Another suggested that, “people in Addis know more things than us and they discuss them when they come here”. This low opinion of rural capabilities was shared by most informants and suggests that rural people are not empowered by the process of development.

In development interventions led by GPSDO and its sub-committees, the mobilisation of rural resources has taken various forms. These forms reflect changes in the political climate, however, they have all been led by rural development committees. In Chapter 7, I outline how Balebbats were the main mobilisers of the rural community and how this role

was given to PAs in the Derg and EPRDF regimes. In Moher the construction of the high school and telephone facility shows an interplay between the state and indigenous sectors. This illustrates the artificial dichotomy between the so-called 'traditional' and 'modern' sectors. The rural development committee, which stands at the apex of rural resource mobilisation, is composed of PA leaders and prominent elders, such as clan heads. The committee ensures that the local PAs provide their share of resources and acts as a point of liaison between the rural community and the Addis based Moher sub-committee. The PAs are responsible for resource mobilisation, in the case of the high school construction their role was to collect 30 Birr (approximately £3) from each rural household. If households did not contribute the PA could take the case to the village, clan or house Shango and apply sanctions discussed in section 3.1.

Rural Idirs were used by the rural development committee and PA to mobilise their members' resources and to organise communal labour. During the construction of the high school, some wealthy rural Idirs paid their members contributions directly from the Idir's capital, whilst others lent money to their members to pay their contributions. The rural Idirs jointly paid for the high school opening ceremony and during the installation of a telephone service, the Idir leaders organised their members labour into Debo for land clearance. In addition to making ad hoc contributions to development projects, as permanent institutions, the Idirs make an ongoing contribution to the sustainability of development projects. In Moher, the rural Idirs pay the salaries of a message taker at the telephone centre and a guard at the high school.

Urban participation takes a similar instrumental form. GPSDO contacts what it defines as the urban community through networks of friendship and employment and particularly Idirs. All the migrants that I contacted were aware of GPSDO and, with the exception of youths, all had been contacted by GPSDO and encouraged to contribute to development. One commented, "part of our monthly Idir fee goes towards development and sometimes the [Idir] committee will ask us to pay a lump sum for a particular project." Another migrant

stated, "it [GPSDO] may not be as strong as it was before, but we still help it through our Idirs. Before road construction, it took many long hours to walk or ride. Now we can go to the country and back in one day". GPSDO activists use their knowledge of urban networks and associational linkages to mobilise urban resources. One GPSDO official commented "if you have a shop, there will be a chain of shops owned by Gurages. If you contribute you tell the person in the next shop and all will contribute but there is no chain to get the civil servants contribution. If you have a good tie with your family or you are a member of an Idir, you will be told how much you have to pay and you will pay. Once we have access there is no way out but if there is no access you are not a member of an Idir you will not be made to pay." The last statement emphasises how associational linkages merge with trade-based networks and kinship ties to include a large proportion of the urban Gurage population. However, the informant was also aware that these networks could exert less pressure on sections of the Gurage community who had fewer linkages, such as civil servants.

Urban participation usually takes the form of cash contributions, however, members of the community with other attributes, such as skills, contacts and organisational ability are also expected to contribute these resources to development. This process is outlined in section 3.2.

2.2.4 Implementation

State agencies and contractors using hired labour undertook the implementation of projects, such as the construction of roads and buildings. This was often supplemented by communal labour, such as clearance work by Debo groups. When rural participation in development takes the form of communal labour, Debo work groups of 8-15 people, which are the main form of co-operative agricultural labour, have become the appropriate organisational form. Pre-existing or impromptu groups are mobilised by Idirs or the PA

and used to perform the labour intensive aspects of development work such as land clearance. Each household is expected to provide one member to perform this type of work and non-participation in development labour is punished by PA fines or the sanctions outlined below.

2.3 The meaning of participation

The meanings ascribed to participation by Gurages emphasise contributing resources to projects according to their financial capacity, as determined by the development association leaders, influential urban dwellers and rural elders. These meanings contrast significantly from those embedded in the dominant development discourses. The contribution of resources and time are seen as an integral aspect of wider obligations to the Gurage community. The dominant Gurage development discourses outlined in publications by Mariam (1972) and Bereka (1986) and resonating through the discussions with Gurages at all levels and localities are imbued with a sense of participation in development being a sacrifice and a burden willingly undertaken. This perception of participation as a burden reflects their instrumental conception of development as outcomes rather than as a process. Thus, for example, GPSDO, in conjunction with PACT, have attempted to build the capacity of the sub-committees. This has included assistance in project design, implementation and contacting funders. However, this has not been extended to the rural population and rural informants saw no need for the development associations to build their capacity to identify and resolve developmental problems. As discussed in Chapter 5, there is a focus on the tangible results of development rather than on the process of development as empowering the rural people. In the next section, I relate this conception of participation as a burden, willingly undertaken, to the issues of voluntarism and leadership.

I should, however, add some qualifications to my argument. My analysis has tended to exclude much of the localised and small scale development activity originating from the rural areas. In the past, the rural people have attempted to initiate large-scale development activities, such as the attempts at road construction in the 1940s and 1950s (see Chapter 7), early attempts to construct a school in Moher in the 1980s and the transcription of and reforms to Ya Kitcha (see Chapter 5). However, as discussed in Chapter 7, these attempts were ultimately unsuccessful until the organisational skills, government contacts and financial capacity of urban Gurages were sought. This history has probably contributed to a perception of dependence on urban resources. It should be noted that numerous small-scale development projects, such as the construction of wooden bridges and the repair of primary schools, have been initiated and implemented by the rural population, with some financial support from village and clan Idirs based in the urban areas.

In addition, GPSDO has recently become involved in partnerships with international NGOs. Generally, the schemes were designed by GPSDO project workers in partnership with the NGO and have included education projects, such as building kindergartens and women's literacy centres. Each programme consists of seven projects, one for each of the houses. The sub-committees decide on the location of the project. However, in Enamor, for example, this did not appear to involve consultation with representatives of the entire rural area and focused only on representatives of the locality, which seems to have caused resentment and is discussed further in Chapter 8. The other main responsibility for sub-committees is matching donor funds through mobilising resources in the urban and rural areas. This seemed to be through institutions related to the particular locality rather than the house, such as clan and village level Idirs in Addis.

2.4 Participation, sustainability and civic virtue

The participation discourses, outlined in Chapter 2 and articulated by development agencies, may characterise the examples outlined as simply instrumental and non-empowering. However, the investment of time and money by Gurages into development projects must be understood in the context of Gurage discourses. In addition to increasing the effectiveness of projects by contributing to the costs, the instrumental form of rural participation, as resource mobilisation, increases the legitimacy of projects for the development associations and their urban supporters in two ways. For urban Gurages, it demonstrates the worthiness of the rural community to receive their assistance, while the rural community is vested with a degree of ownership of the project, which assures its sustainability. A GPSDO leader emphasised the importance of rural contributions to the sustainability of development projects. "Sometimes they [the rural people] do not invest their money in things that do not show immediate results...We try to explain about long term benefits but there are no established structures, so if we tell them something they may forget. So what we do is to get them to feel ownership by forcing them to invest their own money so that they will take care of the project." This point was repeated by the chair of Cheza Sefa PA, "Activities in which the people take part are fruitful because the people will look after them, they will consider the project as their own. So they do not want to see it damaged". In addition to sustainability, rural resource mobilisation also legitimised the position of the rural population as recipients of assistance from the urban population by demonstrating their commitment to the project and therefore to Gurage notions of citizenship.

This dynamic is further illustrated by perceptions of the rural-urban relation by rural Gurages. While rural informants expressed gratitude for the contributions that urban Gurage had made to rural development, they stressed that the urban people were only behaving in the way expected of them in Gurage culture and related this to their wider obligations to rural kin. They continually stressed the sacrifices that the rural people had

made for development and how this justified their entitlement to development. Their participation in development was presented as their way of meeting social expectations, which required that both urban and rural people should make sacrifices for the benefit of the rural area.

3 Voluntarism, sanctions and leadership

Voluntarism has been defined as “theories based on the intentions and motives of actors who are thus assumed to act ‘voluntarily’ and not as ‘determined’ by the social structure” (Abercrombie 1994 pp 447-448). This section discusses the elements of compulsion in development activities undertaken by GPSDO. The dominant Gurage development discourse suggests that in the past there was a golden age of Gurage development when all members of the community participated in development. The purpose of this discourse seems to be to juxtapose contemporary problems in resource mobilisation, particularly a lack of commitment to Gurage development amongst the young and those born in Addis, with this supposed golden age. However, accounts written during the road construction phase suggest that resource mobilisation was in fact far more complex and problematic (Mariam 1972; Bereka 1986). These accounts suggest that although there was much public support for road construction, ‘traditional sanctions’ were used to ensure participation. According to these sources, even when these sanctions were applied, they were not always successful as certain individuals and groups avoided contributing to GRCO. In the context of a communal desire for access to the benefits of development, the authority of the Shango and the levels of trust invested in the development associations, it is rare for people to refuse to contribute to development, without good reason. However, households that do not contribute to legitimate development projects accepted by the Shango, are liable to a range of sanctions, which I now go on to examine.

3.1 Sanctions

When a party to a dispute refuses to accept a Shango decision the institution of Yeka (Moher and Kistane dialects) or Kayewa, (other Sebat Bet dialects) is used to resolve the problem. In Moher, all those attending the Shango become Yeka, whilst in other Sebat Bet areas normally only fellow clansmen and kin participate in Yeka. The participants decamp to the transgressor's house and stay until the person accepts the will of the Shango. Being visited by Yeka involves social stigma and a great deal of expense, as the individual must provide hospitality for his visitors. If the person relents, he makes a symbolic offering by slaughtering an animal and feeding his guests. If he refuses to accept Yeka, he is cursed, ostracised, the matter is escalated to a higher Shango, and the process is repeated up to the level of Ya Joka, the Sebat Bet Shango. If the house Shango accepts the legitimacy of a development intervention, disputes relating to it may be regulated by Ya Kitcha and can be enforced by Yeka. For development purposes, the main use of this institution is to ensure that all members of the rural community participate in development projects.

Development projects facilitated by both the indigenous sector and the government have used this institution to ensure that all households pay the appropriate level of contributions or provide labour for development projects. Yeka and Ya Kitcha are also used implicitly to regulate the activities of office holders in the rural areas to ensure an element of accountability to the Shango and that they do not benefit personally from their position.

Rural elders suggested that, "Yeka is as old as the first Gurage" and there is a long history of its use in Gurage development. For example, Gedamu (1972) suggests that in the 1960s Yeka was used by Kistane Gurages to mobilise resources for developmental purposes, while rural and urban informants suggest that this sanction was also used by GRCO and continues to be applied by some sub-committees. However, there is some dispute as to how it has been applied. The official position is that Yeka has only been used to ensure that people contribute what they had earlier promised. However, many informants suggested that it was used to oblige all members of the community to contribute an amount fixed by the Shango to development. According to informants this

sanction is used rarely and when it is used it is unusual for it to escalate beyond a visit from elders which serves as a warning of the more drastic sanctions likely if the matter escalates further.

In the course of Moher Development Association's largest project, the construction of the high school, the institution of Yeka was transplanted to and evolved in Addis Ababa. The development association realised that contributions from the urban population were insufficient and presented the case to the Moher urban Shango, which established the Addis Ababa Yeka committee. Rather than Yeka being composed of all those in attendance at a particular Shango or kinsmen, a semi-permanent committee was appointed by the Shango. This committee is comprised of prominent urban dwellers, such as elders and Idir leaders. Its composition was decided on the basis of age, respect and those with free time. It also has an ad-hoc component and can include people known to the transgressor. Its function is to enforce development related decisions made by the urban general assembly of the Moher Development Association. The Yeka committee ensures that all urban Moher households contribute to development according to their means, as decided by the development association executive committee in consultation with prominent urban dwellers, such as Idir leaders. The arrangement in Moher seems more formal than those in other committees where no formal Yeka committee has been established. In other areas, ad-hoc groups of prominent urban residents fulfil a similar function.

Zowa is the practice of removing an item, such as agricultural tools or cattle, from a person's house to remind them to meet their financial obligations. In the past, it was used in a consensual way to remind people to pay Idir contributions or fines for minor transgressions. This sanction is only used once a decision has been legitimised by the relevant Shango and is regulated by Ya Kitcha. Information regarding its current use in development is somewhat contradictory as this practice potentially conflicts with government protected property rights and has been officially prohibited by the Gurage

Zone authorities. Thus, it is generally discussed in terms of how it was used in the past during road construction or is currently used by other people and organisations in more outlying areas away from centres of government authority. Some informants suggested that this practice has been used recently for development through confiscating and selling cattle in lieu of contributions to development projects. In most cases this was with the owner's consent, however, withholding consent would leave the person liable to other more drastic sanctions.

Ostracism is the ultimate sanction in the rural areas, as when invoked it becomes impossible for a household to function socially or economically. This involves the household being expelled from the community and therefore, unable to receive any form of communal assistance, such as agricultural labour or protection of cattle and exclusion from all rural social affairs, such as attendance at burial. Non attendance at burial was immense stigma for the household and was considered the ultimate sanction by all informants. Due its severity, this sanction is very rarely if ever used in the development process, as normally the threat of ostracism is sufficient to ensure compliance. Cursing is linked to Yeka and ostracism and is considered a powerful sanction. The threat of cursing was a major element in Yeka in both the rural and urban areas during road construction. As the curse could also affect kinsmen and clansmen, the threat of it encourages them to put further pressure on the transgressor.

Development interventions are thus, underpinned by a range of powerful sanctions. However, they are not applied indiscriminately. Informants suggested that the households with known financial problems were often excused from their obligations to contribute or were assisted by more wealthy members of the community. The power of these sanctions also varies between the urban and rural areas, and between social groups in the urban areas where it has lessened over time. In Chapters 4 and 8, I discuss the impact of de-linking and the development of alternative affiliations on contemporary constructions of Gurage civic virtue. For groups whose social and economic wellbeing is dependent on

their links with the Gurage community, these sanctions are potentially devastating. However, other social groups with alternative social and economic ties groups can avoid these sanctions. A highly educated and wealthy businessman commented, "previously if someone came to me for a contribution there was no voluntary element...you just pay an amount calculated from your income. Otherwise, you will be outcast. They would send people and go through processes and then nobody will come to your house if somebody dies. Then social life was very important, so people paid. Even for urban people, this was an important sanction but not anymore. People are not so concerned. The link is weaker. They have social arrangements and organisations that are independent of the Gurages. Someone in an urban area has an urban Idir for burial. I do not care much at all about where I belong with the Gurages. I am not sanctioned by their traditions because associatively I have been de-linked." GPSDO officials and activists seem to have tacitly accepted the futility of attempting to force people with few connections to the Gurage community to contribute to development. A GPSDO official commented, "The Yeka committee rarely visits the houses of such people [those with fewer linkages to the community]. Their participation in development is very low, so the Yeka committee does not expect much from them. I have never come across the Yeka going to their house."

In the rural areas the sanctions are still powerful. However, their effectiveness, in the urban areas, as a means to secure co-operation with the activities of the association is limited to people with strong affiliations to the Gurage communities, particularly those with most to lose from losing status or being ostracised. Thus it seems to have less impact on established residents of Addis particularly civil servants, whereas sanctions have a more powerful potential impact on regular migrants and businessmen who are dependent on their connections with other Gurages. In addition to the application of sanctions being based on the expectation of their effectiveness, on occasion they have been applied with greater vigour on those who are expected to take a lead in communal affairs. Gurage elders and other respected figures are expected to behave in an exemplary manner. An official Gurage history outlines how, during the 1960s one particular Azmatch (hereditary

clan head) refused to contribute to road construction and was persecuted by the GRCO executive (Mariam 1972). This persecution was seen to be justified because of other activities where he did not behave in an exemplary manner and thus, an example was made of him.

3.2 Voluntarism and leadership

All leadership in GPSDO and the sub-committees is provided on a voluntary basis. The changing perceptions of the appropriate attributes of leadership of Gurage development associations are also linked to the idea that contributions to development are willingly accepted but nevertheless a burden. In Gurage notions of citizenship, leadership is treated as another resource, which is harnessed by institutions and backed by similar sanctions to those for other forms of participation. Leaders see their participation as a sacrifice, which takes up much of their free time, and for businessmen work time.

Positions on the house sub-committees and GPSDO executive are unpaid and when the committee is active, they are very time-consuming.

In the 1990s powerful figures in the Gurage elite decided that the attributes necessary for successful leadership, particularly of the sub-committees, had changed. This reflects changes in nature of the activities undertaken and the skills necessary to achieve them. In the past the leadership of GRCO was dominated by prominent civil servants and military officers, reflecting the importance of government contacts and organisational capacity. However, in the sub-committees the ability to mobilise resources was crucial and the leadership was dominated by people active in other forms of associational life, particularly *Idirs* and successful businessmen who could use their contacts in trade networks. This is related to the nature of project implementation, which during the road construction phase was mainly done by government departments. Thus, the main role of the leadership was to mobilise resources and secure the co-operation of government. However, with the

changing focus of development activities new skills were needed by the leadership. In particular, organisational and technical skills became more important due to the increasing complexity of proposed projects and the need to improve planning and reporting mechanisms. In line with their ethos of self-help, there was a conscious attempt on the part of the powerful sectors to professionalise and build the capacity of the sub-committees by encouraging more skilled people to accept leadership roles. A leader of the Akilil committee and prominent civil servant stated, "The previous committee realised that poorly educated people could not lead these development activities. So they presented the problem to the people of Moher and Akilil [general assembly], saying that they were incapable of doing the job and that they had to be replaced by intellectuals, as it is beyond their capacity to produce projects. Then the people started nominating people who were appropriate." Thus, whilst attempting to change the activities of the development associations and the role of the leadership, the elite legitimised this process by using a discourse that stressed continuity in forms of leadership.

However, some people were unwilling to accept positions of leadership when requested by the association and Idir leaders. In some of these cases, the Yeka committee was used to recruit potential leaders who had declined to volunteer their services. The informant continued, "This included people who did not volunteer to become active, so they were forced. The general assembly obligated others to become active. Pressure included people going to their offices and homes saying that 'if you live with us and you are our brothers, so you have to contribute', so people have no choice but to participate and share their time. When elders come to your office in Gurage culture and law you cannot refuse. If you refuse it breaks the law and the Yeka committee will come to your home. Yeka is traditional law. If they come to your home, you have to invite them in and provide them with food and drink. It could be many people and they won't leave your home unless you accept. It is very strong pressure and if you refuse you may be outcast and expelled from the Idir." He then illustrated how he had been recruited to his present position, "Elders came to my office and I tried to explain that I had no time and have a sensitive job. So

they came again. One was the person who built my elementary school and said 'you are my product, you have studied because we built the school and now you are in a position to serve the people in your area', so I had to accept and become an executive committee member".

This perception of leadership as a burden is also apparent in other aspects of Gurage associational life. An urban Idir leader commented, "I did not want to be the leader but the general assembly and clan members requested me. The usual trend is that people do not want to use up their time especially their business activities. It is not about gaining status. A committee who proposed some people to be leaders conducted the election [and] the general assembly then voted on these people. We have no choice, I do not want to be the leader as it takes up my time but the general assembly obliged me to do so. It is a free service so nobody wants to do this. So who wants to assume this position?"

I indicated above that the enforcement mechanisms are applied to general contributions on the basis of their effectiveness. The obligations on leaders follow a similar pattern. The leader who had been obliged to join the executive committee compared his experience with another urban Akilil to illustrate how Yeka had only limited effectiveness as a means of enforcing participation. "One Akilil man was born, studied and is working in Addis and was nominated to be a member [of the executive committee] but he rejected saying he is often out of Addis, so his job prevents him. They wrote to him asking him to change his mind or to participate whenever he is in Addis. He refused but the Yeka committee did not take any measures. Sometimes the Yeka committee bases its' activities on their expectations of the individual, such as their earlier participation."

If participation can be enforced, there are greater obligations for those with greatest abilities. Gurage citizenship is about contributing everything within one's capacity to the community. In some ways, the attributes of the altruistic elder act as a point of reference for leadership. In the discussion of the attributes of leadership above I mentioned that

informants constantly stressed how these attributes were innate to the individual and given by god. This may well imply that those who have been given the greatest attributes also have the greatest responsibility to serve the community. The obligated nature of leadership, particularly within the sub-committees, grounds leadership's understanding of the nature of community participation in development. It also affects the nature of accountability and in particular limits the scope for more formal mechanisms of accountability, as I shall go on to argue in the next section.

4 **Accountability**

The processes of accountability in GPSDO can only be understood in the context of perceptions of participation in development, and other communal affairs, as sacrifices which are an element of the obligations that constitute the dominant Gurage notions of civic virtue. GPSDO has two interrelated sets of mechanisms of accountability: formal procedures for decision-making and reporting and a web of informal pressures and expectations imposed on office holders. Formal accountability does little to fetter the autonomy of the leadership of the sub-committees, as the official sanctions are not enforceable on leaders, who are 'obliged' to participate. Informal accountability is thus more important in the sub-committees. Within GPSDO headquarters formal accountability is potentially more important. However the people who hold the leaders to account are selected by the sub-committees (albeit with negotiation with urban and rural figures). In GPSDO, there seemed to be little evidence of informal pressures and, as I discuss below, when major problems related to accountability occurred, the contestants chose remedies in the formal sector and in legal recourse. However, it is difficult for an outsider to comprehend and assess the impact of informal pressures on the leadership, which are inherently hidden and may operate subconsciously. Indeed even the participants themselves may not be aware of these processes; I now look in detail at these formal and informal processes.

4.1 Formal mechanisms of accountability

As a registered legal entity the accounts of GPSDO are audited annually by the Auditor General's office which leads to a perception that there are no financial irregularities. In theory decision-making about the overall strategies of GPSDO and the sub-committees are the responsibility of their respective General Assemblies and annual reports by GPSDO and sub-committees are submitted to their respective general assembly. However, some inactive sub-committees do not hold regular meetings.

The general assembly of the sub-committees is made up of 55 'permanent members', 50 urban residents and 5 prominent rural elders selected by the sub-committee. However, every Gurage is considered a member of GPSDO and has a right to attend meetings. The sub-committees select the permanent members based on past activism and financial contributions to development. The GPSDO general assembly is made up of the 55 permanent members from each of the seven houses. A GPSDO officer explained how the sub-committees appoint the urban representatives. "Generally anybody who is Gurage and is a member of a house is by default a member of the sub-committee. He has Idir here [Addis], two or three Idirs in the area. In some areas, there are 50 or so Idirs and they are members of the sub-committees. Members of the Idir and the sub-committee elect members. They have no card or membership fee. They know each other because they were born together and they live together, they know each other's shops and working place. They go and select members. The committee selects these people. Usually it is the most active contributors, as when there is development these people are the ones who give money and ideas and they are the active members." Thus, the sub-committee members in negotiation with prominent urban figures, such as Idir leaders selects the urban people who will hold the committee to account.

The sub-committees also select the five rural representatives, who are the most prominent elders of the house and represent the house at the Sebat Bet Shango. A sub-committee

leader commented, “we know who the influential people are...there are groups of men on whom the people have great cult”. This was supported by an Enamor farmer who linked the elders’ leadership role in other communal affairs to their role in development. “In Gurage culture, if someone commits crime, that house will get together. It is already formulated [for development] so there is no need to change people every time. By culture, people know that area and they select tribe [house] chiefs and people with better leadership.”

The main purpose of accountability to the general assembly is to ensure that the leadership does not benefit personally from their position and to ensure equality between the houses. An elder who participated at the general assemblies commented. “During elections there is voting, otherwise the committee formulates points and there is consensus between the committee members, elders and others. It is most important to reach consensus with the elders”

The effectiveness of potential formal sanctions, such as de-selection from the committee, is constrained by the obligated nature of leadership. One committee member commented. “Individual leaders are accountable to the committee. Sometimes the general assembly will criticise the leaders, for example for poor performance or favouring their own area. But there is no such official accountability as the leadership is voluntary.” Informants suggested that there was much more competition for places on the GPSDO executive committee which involves status for the individual concerned and for their community. Equal representation on the executive committee has long been a point of contention between the houses and is central to the current leadership’s legitimacy, these issues will be explored in more detail in Chapter 8. The purpose of the GPSDO general assembly is to decide the overall strategy of GPSDO and to ensure equality between the houses. A sub-committee member commented. “We were appointed by the general assembly for 2 years, although usually people stay for longer depending on their commitment and the political situation. Although it is always possible for someone to challenge an incumbent.

Usually the challenge is between the sub-regional committees for a place on the GPSDO executive.” Again, there is little formal sanction on the GPSDO executive. One informant stated, “If executive members are not doing well they will be asked to leave. However, these mechanisms are not as strong as civil servants or shareholders enterprise. A person is elected in the belief that they will work for their community, so its not common for a person to be removed for negative reasons usually it is for other reasons, such as leaving Addis or sickness”.

Although this process of accountability appears to be open to abuse, it must be analysed in the context of the voluntary nature of positions in GPSDO and the sub-committees. Furthermore, the inter-linked formal and informal processes of accountability should be analysed as a whole. In the next section I look in more detail at the informal pressures on the leadership. In Chapter 8, I examine the ways in which criticisms of GPSDO structures have been articulated.

4.2 Informal processes of accountability

The informal processes of accountability are by their nature difficult for an outsider, or indeed an insider, to investigate and interpret. There appear to be two inter-linked processes at work in the informal mechanisms of accountability: pressures placed on the leadership by prominent elders and urban dwellers, and the cultural constraints of appropriate behaviour by which the leadership abide. Informal consultation with prominent figures is constrained by the voluntary nature of the post. One sub-committee member commented. “There is no pressure from the elders once you accept your responsibilities to become a committee member. You become aware of the problems and work to realise the objectives. Once in position the elders talk to me informally and discuss things. They consult us, as the elders play a great role in mobilising the people. If there are certain problems, we will also consult them. This is done informally.” The salient aspects of this

statement are that according to the informant the main pressure is to accept their obligation to serve and that informal consultation involves less overt pressure. A member of the Moher sub-committee explained the nature of informal accountability in detail. "It is natural that I have to be accountable to the traditional institutions, as I am a member of that community. Since I am Moher I am accountable to the Moher judges [elders at the Shango] there [Gurageland], the general assembly there [Moher Shango] and also the Yeka committee here [Addis]. If I do something wrong I will be asked by the Yeka committee. Informal accountability to traditional institutions is much stronger than the formal accountability to the sub-committee and GPSDO, as formal accountability has not yet been practical. The traditional organisations are strong and we are behind traditional law and traditional judgement so we know what will happen to us if we do something wrong to the community or if we do not do what is expected of us". This suggests that informal accountability is related to ensuring that the leadership adhere to the general values embedded in Gurage citizenship rather than the elders intervening in specific issues and projects.

An ex-leader of GPSDO stated that elders never overtly attempted to exert pressure on him over issues, such as the allocation of resources. However, he was aware of the threat of indigenous sanctions if he did not conform to the appropriate notions of leadership. "In order to be truly accountable to the community you serve, you must have the confidence of the people in the first place. It is more dangerous for the individual if we use the traditional ways, because if he makes a mistake or is not being honest in his dealings or does not perform what he is supposed to do, then that person is destroyed. But, if it is in the formal system in the first place it must be accepted and it has to have meaning to you. In the informal system maybe they do not know the word 'accountability' or 'participation' but they do participate and they are accountable, because if you use community property and misallocate what has been given to you then they are destroyed if they do not function properly". He also acknowledged the power of social expectations of appropriate leadership in constraining the activities of the leaders. "Those processes that require the

individual to perform his tasks may not be minuted or recorded but it is recorded in the minds of the people that the individual was assigned, even we do not fully understand how it operates. But, there is definitely accountability there. It may not reflect our wishes or the way we would like to see it but there is definitely transparency because we have to explain what we do to the community.”

The impact of social expectations, on the activity of the leadership, is difficult for an outsider to assess. Perceptions of appropriate leadership are framed with reference to the past, such as previous leaders and the role of rural elders. A moral framework of obligations and conceptions of justice and equality is embedded within contemporary constructions of Gurage civic virtue. These constructions include definitions of appropriate leadership, which act as a point of reference in negotiations between leaders of the development associations and elders. These constructions are part of defining who the Gurage are and are thus, embedded within the consciousness. Thus, these perceptions of appropriate leadership act to self-discipline the leadership.

Whilst indigenous methods are used to recruit office holders, they have a more limited role in regulating the activities of leaders, who are granted a great deal of autonomy once they accept office, due to an appreciation of the personal sacrifices made by them. However there are regular informal discussions between the urban elders and the leadership and it is acknowledged that if they do not act in the interests of the community they will be liable to sanctions. The leadership emphasises that these informal mechanisms ensure accountability to the community through informal discussions with the elders and that this is more powerful than the formal structures of accountability. The activities of the leadership are thus constrained by the need for legitimacy with the community, represented by the elders.

Although these processes are deemed effective at ensuring that the organisations represent the interests of the community, there are occasions, particularly for GPSDO,

where these processes have broken down. In these cases, the informal processes are not always applied or have not been successful. One of the founders of GRCO stated in relation to the use of formal legal procedure's rather than the Gurage customary law to resolve the controversy over holding regular elections. "In the constitution [of GPSDO] we have provisions that are governed by the law of the country and we are also governed by the culture of Gurages. The cultural measures are very strong steps, they are not easily done. All other possibilities have to be exhausted. We have been trying to persuade them [the previous leadership] to understand the risk they were facing but until lately they always ignored us...there are two ways, we abide by the law and culturally. There are provisions in the civil law for non-profit making organisations to deal with wrongs done to us. Cultural steps, the sanctions of ostracising them, but to have leadership change it is more appropriate to use the law as this is where the organisation is registered."

5 Personalised leadership and effectiveness

I now examine how the legitimacy of indigenous Gurage development agents is based on the personalised nature of leadership within the development associations and the effectiveness of the interventions. I argue that structures of accountability and participation and the legitimacy of the development associations is enhanced by personalised leadership, while ultimately the legitimacy of the development association is dependent on its effectiveness. The relationship between personalised leadership and the effectiveness of the organisation is based on the belief that known personnel will adhere to Gurage values.

5.1 Personalised leadership

As I have shown above, the development associations tend to be associated with groups of prominent urban and rural people in whom much trust is vested. The urban leadership

and key activists are prominent businessmen and civil servants, who are active in urban associational life particularly the Idirs. In Gurageland, prominent elders who have much authority, act as intermediaries between the community and the development associations. The personalised form of leadership harnesses the informal structures of accountability discussed above. The sub-committees of GPSDO tend to be identified with their leaders. The urban-based leaders are highly respected and well known in Gurageland and within the urban communities. Their participation as leaders of the development associations is an extension of the wider obligations to the wider community. Thus, they are regarded as exemplars of Gurage civic virtue and therefore have much authority based on their activism. Their 'localness' is central to their authority, as the attributes of leadership are demonstrated by their local activism. Thus, they are trusted by the urban and rural communities to conform to the dominant notions of Gurage citizenship. An ex leader of MDA stated, "members of the committee in Addis are part of the rural area, they grew up there and only came to Addis for business. They know the problems of the area and the proximity of Addis facilitates regular rural visits during which time they meet rural people and discuss their problems and find solutions." In Moher, most rural informants were able to identify with key activists in the sub-committee due to their regular visits and history of activism. A farmer stated, "the Addis Development Committee is closest to the people, they are people from this area so they understand the problems and we take our problems to these people." Trust in the leadership is based on their rural origins and linkages with Gurageland, which demonstrates that they share the values of the local people. Furthermore, by accepting the obligations of leadership and providing rural development, they exemplify Gurage civic virtue. An elder stated "they are part of the community. In the past they went through the same problems as us, then they became rich in other areas. But they understand this area and help us most of the time." Thus, leadership in development is seen as fulfilling the social obligations expected of successful members of the community. A Moher student stated "the Addis Development Committee is closer to the people [than other organisations] as they were born here and

take responsibility for the people. This responsibility is to the Moher people in general rather than to a specific area.”

5.2 Effectiveness of the organisation

The other key factor that contributes to the legitimacy of the leadership and the relationship of trusteeship between the communities and GPSDO and its sub-committees is effectiveness in development, outlined in Chapter 5 as tangible public goods, distributed on the basis of equality between and within houses. The other elements of trusteeship, such as accountability and participation, usually only become salient in determining the legitimacy the development associations when they impact on the effectiveness of the organisations. Thus, it is only when the process of development fails to deliver public goods equally that dissatisfaction with GPSDO or the sub-committees is articulated.

All non-government informants stressed the services that GPSDO and the sub-committees had provided to the Gurage communities. A typical example of their views came from a migrant, “GPSDO is close to the people because its services are well known. Before road construction, it took many long hours to walk or ride. Now we can go to the country and back in one day.” These views were repeated by informants of all ages and occupations in Gurageland and Addis.

It appears that the perception of equal distribution of the benefits of development is more important than the level of these benefits in determining the legitimacy of development agencies in Gurageland. In Enamor, even though the committee has barely functioned since the mid 1990s, the main criticism currently levelled against it is related to the location of a project implemented in partnership with Save the Children rather than its lack of other developmental activity. The uneven distribution of benefits was the main criticism of all government and non-government development agencies operating in Gurageland.

Informants frequently complained that certain houses and areas within the houses had been forgotten by these development agencies. Conflict within GPSDO has tended to take the form of competition for the distribution of resources between houses. In Chapter 8, I relate this to constructions of Gurage identity. The mechanisms of accountability discussed above relate primarily to ensuring equality between areas.

In Moher, the Moher Development Association was seen as 'the eyes of the community' (see Chapter 5) due to its personalised leadership and history of providing benefits to the area. However, most informants drew a strong distinction between the Moher sub-committee and GPSDO. This was due to a widespread belief that GPSDO operated in favour of certain areas at the expense of others, whereas, in Cheza and its environs, there was a perception the MDA distributed benefits more equally. This was also the basis for their complaints about the lack of accountability and democracy in GPSDO. One elder who was a representative at GPSDO General Assembly stated "Although we [Moher] have representatives on the committee [GPSDO executive] they have no rights as the chairman decides everything. In the past it was impossible to hold leaders to account, as from its inception the organisation has operated in favour of Cheha, Enamor, Geta and Gomer. As things have been done earlier in these areas by the organisation, whenever the chair wants to do something in their own area they activate their relationship with the dominant groups against other areas. It is impossible to prevent this." Similar criticisms were repeated by a wide range of rural informants including a student who stated that, "GPSDO leaders are not from this area so we are ignored. It has done nothing in Moher. The only problem is the leaders. Our fathers told us that this area had many chances for development but the leaders diverted it to other areas." These views express the interrelationship between the two central aspects of the trusteeship constructed between GPSDO, its affiliates and the beneficiary communities: 'localness' and equal distribution of benefits. A leadership staffed by local people, who embody the notions of equality and fairness embedded in Gurage civic virtue, will ensure that the leaders of other groups maintain their commitment to these notions.

GPSDO officials strongly countered criticisms of uneven allocation of resources and stated GPSDO's only role in implementing development projects was to construct roads and the order of road construction was based on the level of contributions made by each area. Most other development work was the responsibility of the sub-committees. Uneven development was explained by the varying levels of capacity of the leaders of the sub-committees and the financial capacity of their urban community. An ex-leader stated, "There was no distribution of funds to the sub-committees under GPSDO. Money is not distributed. The money collected is used for implementing the programme of GPSDO. The major funds went for road construction. Roads were built to the different sub regions, now with the exception of Indegagn all the other houses have their share of road construction. But money was not distributed to each group." The Moher Development Association leadership seemed to accept this, a previous leader of the association commented, "The Moher contributed the least [towards road construction] and got the last road." However unjustified, there is a perception that benefits are not equally distributed between areas and this has severely reduced the legitimacy of GPSDO in some areas.

To conclude this section, I have argued that personalised leadership and a perception of equal distribution of resources are the key factors in the legitimacy of Gurage development associations and that this can be evidenced from the differing perceptions of the legitimacy of GPSDO and its sub-committees. However, it should be noted that special circumstances in the two rural locations might also influence perceptions of the legitimacy of GPSDO. As discussed in Chapter 7, in Enamor and particularly around Gunchire there was a great deal of agitation against GPSDO during the 1990s, largely for political purposes. Although there appeared to have been less political agitation against GPSDO in Moher, perceptions there may be influenced by antagonisms between some of the Moher elders and GRCO during the 1960s. At the beginning of the road construction phase, the Moher elders attempted to persuade GRCO to change the route of the first road so that it would pass through Moher. The GRCO executive, on the grounds of cost

rejected this. Problems between GRCO and rural Moher were further exacerbated when Moher experienced great difficulties in meeting its financial pledges to GRCO. This was caused by a contradiction between the organisational structure in Addis, which reflected house affiliations, with Moher being grouped with Akilil, whereas, in Gurageland the organisation reflected government administrative districts with Moher being linked with the Wolenie Gurages, a non Sebat Bet group. Under pressure to match the pledges of other areas the Moher elders pledged 100, 000 Birr towards road construction, however, it was not possible to produce this money as Akilil contributed to another area and the Wolenie refused to contribute. According to GRCO minutes because of this controversy, the Moher rural elders were rebuked by GRCO and reproached by other Sebat Bet elders (Mariam 1972). In the light of this context, the hostility shown towards GPSDO in rural Moher and Enamor may not be evident in other areas of Gurageland.

6 GPSDO and NGOs

This chapter has focused on one dimension of the legitimacy of development organisations, the relationship between the organisation and the community it seeks to serve. The relationships between GPSDO and its other stakeholders, such as the state, donors and partner organisations have not been the primary focus of the chapter. However, I include a brief comment here. Until recently, GPSDO and its affiliates have drawn almost all of their resources from the Gurage communities and the state. However, since the removal of its main sources of income, GPSDO and some of its affiliates have sought support from partners in the international NGO sector, including PACT, OXFAM and Save the Children. According to its main partner PACT, GPSDO has been an exemplary partner as it excels in three essential criteria for partnership with community based organisations. A PACT project officer commented:

They have deep roots in the community: "They are controlled by the community.

All the power comes from below, this is a major strength. It has been able to

survive for 35 years through its strength in a turbulent society and changing politics and economics.”

They have a clear reporting structure: “They have good documentation. They try to document things, I believe that they spend more time in documentation than in actually doing things. [Their] culture of documentation is good... [And it] helps [them] to remain legal.”

They are able to match funds: ” We use their people to train others in fundraising. People are very committed to the organisation. Starting from below, they are committed at all levels. They have the capacity to raise resources locally, which is not the case with other indigenous organisations. It has the capacity and is doing so. It raised a lot of money to build schools. However poor the community is they are very eager to contribute. That is their greatest heritage and capacity.”

It seems that with the removal of GPSDO’s main source of income, and a perception that the urban Gurage community has less financial capacity than in the past the sub-committees and particularly GPSDO will have to rely more on outside support. Increased interactions with mainstream development associations may well lead them to re-orientate their approach to participation and accountability. However, the statement of the PACT project officer above suggests that, at present their partners are supportive of the form of trusteeship constructed between GPSDO and the Sebat Bet Gurage communities.

7 Conclusions

Community participation in development contributes to the legitimacy of the development agencies and the intervention primarily by increasing the effectiveness of the project. This reflects the perception, outlined in Chapter 5, that development is a set of tangible outcomes rather than a process. Although consultation of the rural community secures acceptance of projects, the most salient outcome of consultation is that it legitimises a

range of processes which facilitate resource mobilisation. For urban contributors, rural participation in development is crucial as it demonstrates the worthiness of the rural community to receive their assistance and assures urban stakeholders that the rural people will sustain the project. Community participation in development reflects urban rural relationships within the Gurage communities, particularly the obligations on migrants. Hence, it entails rural dependence, passivity and deference to the skills and knowledge of the urban sectors of the community. The dominant development discourses are underpinned by an assumption that community participation in development is an essential aspect of the process of development. However, whilst the dominant development discourses view this participation as being part of a process of empowerment, Gurages see participation as a burden that is a willingly accepted aspect of their wider communal obligations. Contrary to the development discourses, the nature of community participation in the organisation has little direct bearing on communal support for the organisations. The most important aspects of the process of development, in securing legitimacy, are the ways that they impact on the outcomes of development – tangible public goods distributed on the basis of equality.

Through personalised leadership, which embodies an idealised form of Gurage citizenship, the development associations are seen as being of the community and representing the community. Thus, participation in decision-making is largely the responsibility of the leaders of the development association. Accountability is based on a complex interrelationship of formal mechanisms and informal pressures, which are underpinned by expectations of appropriate leadership embedded in Gurage notions of civic virtue. The central argument of the chapter can be summed up by the words of a merchant and farmer in Cheza Sefa.

“The Addis Development Committee have done many things in this area and compared to the others [GPSDO, GZDA and the government] this group are the closest to the people. Rural people do not have the economic capacity, but the

people from Addis do. The Addis Development Committee understands the problems of the people because they meet with the rural people. They are close to the community because they help people.”

Chapter 7

The relationships between Gurage development organisations and the state

1 Introduction

In this chapter, I provide some historical background to the evolution of GPSDO and in particular its relationship to the state. This provides the historical and political contexts for contemporary constructions of Gurage identities and the relationship between GPSDO and the Sebat Bet Gurage community. While this chapter is a break in the discussion of Gurage constructions of development and their relationship to ethnic identities, it is important to understand the historical forms of accommodation that GRCO/GPSDO have had with the Ethiopian state and the issues that these accommodations now present to the role of ethnically-based organisations. I thus trace the evolution of the relationship between GRCO/GPSDO and the Imperial and Derg regimes from the establishment of the organisation in 1961 to the assumption of power by EPRDF in 1991. The histories presented here are based on current narratives provided by Gurage elites and intellectuals and historical insider accounts based on GRCO / GPSDO documentation produced by Gurage intellectuals linked to GPSDO, such as (Bereka 1986; Mariam 1972; Neri undated). The chapter outlines how they have interpreted the historical position of GRCO / GPSDO, and its accommodations with the Ethiopian state, and how they make sense of contemporary events. I then outline how the accommodations with the state established during the imperial and Derg regimes broke down during EPRDF rule, and relate this to ideological differences between the competing models of development of GPSDO and the government. I focus particularly on the contradiction between the government vision of self-sufficient rural development and the urban rural relationships inherent in Gurage survival strategies and exemplified by GPSDO. I also argue that the

conflict is related to the government's perception of the practical processes needed to implement its vision of development in Gurageland.

2 Historical constructions

2.1 Accommodations with the imperial regime

According to Gurage oral traditions, the Gurages have a long history of rural self-help initiatives. This has included clan and village based institutions, group labour in agricultural production and village level projects such as Jafforo (the village street) clearance and bridge building. Indeed, Pankhurst and Endrias (1958) suggested that the two most significant Ethiopian non-government institutions, Ikube and Idir have Gurage origins.

The history of formal Sebat Bet Gurage development organisations began soon after the end of the Italian occupation when rural Gurage elders attempted to establish a road construction organisation. This initiative failed because the governor of the Sebat Bet Awraja (Imperial administrative unit) thought that the proposed organisation was politically motivated. In addition, the Gurage elders were constrained by their limited links with educated urban dwellers, which resulted in a lack of organisational capacity, skilled personnel, limited political influence, and a relatively weak financial base.

With the increase in Gurage migration, their financial base and supporting networks improved, including their forms of accommodation with the state. During the Imperial and Derg regimes, the survival and effectiveness of GRCO/GPSDO was largely due to accommodations made by the Gurage urban and rural elites with the two regimes. The official Gurage development discourse suggests that the key element was that the organisation officially distanced itself from political activity. However, in practice

GRCO/GPSDO was promoted by patrons who were strategically placed within the state. Its activities were broadly in line with government policy, which allowed it to serve the interests of different sections of government, and it engaged with rural power structures, which were deemed legitimate by the regimes. I look at these elements in turn.

According to the official and semi-official histories of GPSDO / GRCO, such as (Bereka 1986; Mariam 1972; Neri undated), by the early 1960s the rural elders had gained the support of a more sympathetic governor, and together they contacted prominent Gurage figures in the military and civil service, suggesting that without assistance from their 'sons in Addis' it would be impossible to establish a road construction organisation to serve the rural areas. These senior figures included: General Wolde Sellasie Bereka, the first president of GRCO, Seifu Dibabie, a senior civil servant and deputy minister of transport, and Fitawirari Habte Mariam, a provincial governor, who was close to both the royal family and the prime minister. This alliance, which occurred in the aftermath of the attempted coup of 1960, linked the rural power structure of prominent elders and administrators with prominent urban Gurages. Moreover, the imperial regime attempted to tie these groups to the state by giving them a personal and communal stake in government. This process seems to have opened political space and facilitated an expansion of associational life. Several prominent military officers were rewarded for their loyalty and were permitted to become leaders of ethnically-based development organisations, including in Gurageland, GRCO and AWRCA. The latter organisation was analysed in depth by Gedamu (1972).

The channels used by these individuals to promote GRCO took two forms: access to powerful circles in the court, and access to ministries. They enabled Gurages to allay fears of politicisation and to ensure that government ministries acted in accordance with the emperor's directives to support the organisation.

During this period, the central government promoted what it called modernisation, however, there were no government-backed agencies with the capacity to carry it out.

However, by the early 1960s, it became clear that the government did not have the capacity to satisfy developmental needs, which created some public dissatisfaction. “The government conceded that it could not accomplish all that was required...by doing so, it avoided pressure and criticism and put the onus of development on the people” (Gedamu 1972 p189). The government therefore encouraged civil servants and military officers to initiate and lead development associations. The activities of GRCO were thus not autonomous from the state. It worked in partnership with government agencies, particularly the imperial highway authority. The primary role of GRCO was to mobilise resources and to select the starting and finish point of the roads. The road construction authority controlled other aspects of decision-making such as, the route of the roads and implementation. Therefore, the interests of the ministry of transport were served by supporting an organisation, which provided it with a great deal of paid work and reduced its costs. The localised successes of GRCO also reflected well on the government administrators.

The ability of GRCO to overcome obstacles to its aim of road construction was also dependent on the relationships established between the urban Gurage elite, the state and the rural power structure of Balebbats and elders. In Gurageland, the organisation was structured into four rural sub-committees, mirroring the rural administration, rather than seven sub-committees, reflecting Gurage house affiliations. The key personnel in the rural areas were the Balebbats and, to a lesser extent, clan heads who regularly met with the Addis-based committees and collected money. Their role in mobilising resources for GRCO reflected their position within the rural government structures, where their primary functions were as tax collectors and agents of social control. Thus, the structures of GRCO reflected rural power relations, and both reinforced their legitimacy in the eyes of the community through providing benefits, and facilitated new linkages between them and the urban elite.

In the urban areas, GRCO also engaged with urban sectors deemed legitimate by the government. The clan and house-based Idirs were the key access point used to harness urban resources. During this period, Idirs were used by the government as agents of urban development, social control and to provide linkages between residentially-based communities and local government structures (Ottaway, 1976).

The main fear of the imperial government was of political opposition. While GRCO avoided becoming involved in anti-government activities, an Oromo organisation, the Macha Tulama association, by contrast embarked on a programme of politicisation of the Oromo population, which culminated in an attempted coup in 1968 (Hassen 1998). Although these events seem to have had little bearing on the relationship between GRCO and the government, there is a more theoretical issue of whether raising ethnic consciousness can be considered as political activity or not. For example, Gedamu (1972) broadens a definition of political activity to include increasing ethnic consciousness or ethnic divisiveness. However, the term 'raising ethnic consciousness' is ambiguous. Promoting the ethnic group's self image was a key motivation for GRCO's activities, particularly to challenge some of the negative stereotypes often assigned to Gurages, which are discussed in Chapter 4. Contemporary Gurages distinguish this from generating politically motivated ethnic sentiment.

2.2 GRCO/GPSDO and the Derg

During the Derg, much independent organisational life was suppressed. However, GRCO managed to survive and eventually prosper by adhering to the principles outlined above. This is largely due to the political astuteness and commitment to development of the Gurage elite. Superficially, it seems surprising that an organisation largely dependent on its personalised linkages with the imperial state developed an accommodation with a radically different regime. However, this demonstrates that the organisation had managed

to maintain a degree of autonomy from the state. Although the organisation used the networks of pivotal individuals, co-operated with government departments and used the imperial rural power structures, it was not directly associated with the government. Gurage intellectuals have constructed a particular history of the transition from imperial to Derg rule, which acts as a point of reference and informed the organisation's approach to the new EPRDF government in the early 1990s.

At the time of the revolution, the organisation was wealthy because of its access to rural and urban resources and its own income-generating schemes, such as a monopoly of public transport on the roads it constructed and charging tolls for private use. It also had access to influential networks and had strong linkages with the rural areas. Gurages believed that the Derg regarded GRCO as a potential threat. For example, someone who had been a Worreda administrator during the Derg period commented, "in the beginning it [the Derg] opposed the organisation, as it was suspicious of what their real objectives were. The organisation united the Gurages and collected much money so the government was suspicious. But due to wise people they were able to continue."

These strengths also made it a prime target for take-over by other politicised sectors in order to use the structure of the organisation as a political vehicle. There was a great deal of hostility to the old guard of GRCO leaders, who were labelled as reactionary and corrupt by politicised students. According to official Gurage histories, an alliance of elders, prominent civil servants and some students were able to resist these attempts at politicisation (Mariam 1972; Bereka 1986). Although the organisation was largely inactive in the aftermath of the revolution, this resistance to politicisation and support from the Gurage elite enabled it to survive the red terror, a period of backlash against politicised organisations.

Official Gurage histories relate the survival of GRCO and the termination of AWRCA by the Derg, to their differing legal statuses. According to these discourses, two Gurage road

construction organisations were established because the other Gurages proposed to establish a share company rather than a non-profit organisation. This led AWRCA to be nationalised by the Derg, whereas GRCO as a genuine community development organisation was allowed to continue. However, the role of the old Gurage elite in the post-revolutionary period is an extremely sensitive subject, and few informants were willing to discuss this period in any detail. Some Gurage intellectuals attribute the differing fates of GRCO and AWRCA to the differing autonomy of their respective leaders from the imperial regimes. According to Gedamu, General Yilma, the leader of AWRCA and executed by the Derg, was head of the imperial security apparatus, whereas General Bereka, leader of GRCO was an “honest soldier” (personal communication Nov 2000).

During the Derg period, a new Gurage state-based elite developed. This group maintained connections with the old elite and promoted GRCO in a similar way using their personalised linkages with the Derg leadership and within the ministries. The leader of GRCO from 1980-89 explained his role in the organisation. “At first we [Gurages with political connections] supported the organisation and kept it free from political activity. The leaders were getting my legal advice on an unofficial basis. Later when things were getting worse, i.e. the red terror, we wanted to save the organisation. By then, I was a Presiding Judge of the Supreme Court, perhaps I was one of the senior officers of the government. So I was asked to be chairman rather than informal advisor. I accepted and took the chairmanship. This was through elections at a General Assembly. From the early history, the organisation’s success was dependent on the closeness of people like the General to the emperor. Always you need powerful backing from the government side, otherwise you are nowhere. People were thinking that since I was a Supreme Court judge and knew many people, like the Chief Justice and Ato Emanuel Michael, one of the chief advisors of the Derg, this meant that the organisation had many friends.”

In addition to the leader, many sub-committees used their links with well placed civil servant to promote the organisation. For example, an Enamor Gurage, Lemar Argau, was

Auditor General in both the Derg and EPRDF periods, and has acted as an unofficial intermediary between GPSDO and the state for 20 years. Although he has never held office in GPSDO, he has used informal channels to lobby for both GPSDO, over taxation issues and the Enamor committee, over high school construction, and the electrification of Gunchire. Similar processes were apparent in other sub-committees, for example, the Moher committee used a prominent Moher civil servant to lobby the provincial governor and education ministry to support the construction of a high school in Moher during the Derg period. Prominent urban Gurages and the leaders invested much time and effort in demonstrating the development orientation of the organisation to civil servant and government figures by taking them on tours of development sites. The elite used their contacts in the cabinet and ministries to maintain the concessions granted to GRCO by the imperial regime, such as tax exemption for the transport operation, a 35% subsidy on road construction and legal recognition. According to contemporary accounts, the leaders continued to avoid political activity. However, between 1989 and 1998 the executive committee included members of the Worker's Party of Ethiopia (WPE), the political party established by the Derg. This may partially account for the current regime's suspicion of GPSDO, which I return to below.

Even though GRCO attempted to maintain political neutrality, during the initial stages of the Derg, the previous agents of GRCO in the rural areas, the Balebbats, and some of the clan heads, were labelled as reactionary and dispossessed of their lands so many fled the countryside. Critically, the Gurage elite constructed a new accommodation with the state, which took a similar form to that with the imperial regime. GRCO sought new partners in the rural areas and engaged with the new legitimate structures, the PAs and the Worreda development sub-committees. The members of the Worreda development sub-committees became ex-officio members of GRCO and 'permanent members' (see Chapter 6) of the general assemblies of the sub-committees. GRCO and the sub-committees used the PAs and elders, approved by the government, to mobilise rural

resources. This process reinforced the linkages between the indigenous and state sectors, legitimised the PAs and enhanced the status of the government-approved elders.

The personal motivations of the Worreda officials seemed to be a crucial determinant of the success of GRCO during this period. The Worreda leaders directed all local agencies to co-operate and mobilised rural resources. Many informants, who were active in GRCO during this period, suggested that the relationship between a district administrator in Enamor and the Enamor sub-committee of GRCO exemplified the positive outcomes of a long-term interaction between a committed sub-committee and supportive government officials. This Worreda administrator is still remembered with affection by the rural community in Enamor.

“I was district administrator in Enamor from 1971-75 [1978-83 AD]. When I arrived there were no roads. The roads were constructed [by GRCO] according to which house contributed the most. So the Worreda development committee, EDC members and I went to GRCO to lobby for construction of a road. The Worreda development committee had some money and we handed it over to GRCO headquarters and mobilised the people in Enamor to pay more. We also contacted various GRCO committees, such as the executive in Addis to lobby for our road. The Worreda development committee and EDC went to Addis and presented the case to the Enamor General Assembly and discussed how much money had been handed over and what to do. When they saw that they were entitled to have a road constructed, they contacted the executive committee. The EDC in the countryside and Worreda development committee submitted the money and joined with the Addis EDC to persuade the executive that it was their turn. The executive went to the highway authority and they brought equipment to the region and built the road.”

In addition, there was lobbying by prominent individuals of government departments and Worreda offices for individual development projects, as well as to persuade them that the organisation was not politically motivated. In addition, Worreda leaders lobbied GRCO and engaged with the organisation on its own terms, while sub-committees and the executive of GRCO often invited the Worreda leaders to Addis to discuss development, and the sub-committees would ask permission of the Worreda and PA leaders before holding meetings in the rural areas.

Another example comes from one of my fieldwork sites, Moher, where a close relationship developed between the PAs and the urban and rural committees of GRCO during the late Derg period. The Moher rural development committee was made up of PA leaders and prominent elders. At the fall of the Derg, when the future of the PAs was uncertain, the PA leaders signed over the assets of the PAs to the rural development committee for safe keeping.

However, like the imperial regime, the Derg claimed to be promoting modernisation in Ethiopia yet lacked the financial capacity to do so. As GRCO was the only autonomous community development organisation, it was in the interests of the government to support the organisation, as it helped to project the government's image as a facilitator of rural development. GRCO's projects were shown to representatives of international financial institutions and other donors when they visited Ethiopia. This relationship gave GRCO some negotiating strength with the government. A GPSDO leader during the 1980s commented, "the Derg wanted to get international money from the IMF, World Bank and UN Development Fund. These institutions were encouraging rural development, so whenever the foreign officials came to Ethiopia, the Derg took them to Gurageland to show how they encouraged public development. That was the main reason why the Derg was supporting GRCO. In fact, we were exploiting this situation. Whenever problems arose we would say, 'this is the only organisation run by the public, helping the government do its job in providing rural infrastructure'". Many urban Gurages suggested

that the organisation received the personal support of Mengistu, as it was an example of community development initiatives and rural socialism, therefore Mengistu directed ministries to assist the organisation. Moreover, the Gurage elite adopted the pseudo-socialist discourses of the Derg, portraying the activities of GRCO as co-operation (Bereka 1986).

The interests of local as well as national government were also served by supporting GRCO. Worreda leaders could increase their prestige in the eyes of the community and government by ensuring that development projects were sited in their area. Derg cadres, who were drawn from the peasantry and rural teachers, were generally supportive of GRCO, as they desired access to GRCO services for personal reasons and prestige. GRCO's planning process also provided incentives for the local government to co-operate. The rural and urban communities had already contributed to GRCO's first road, from Welkite to Endibire, on the basis that these contributions and their ongoing tolls would be used to construct roads in other Sebat Bet areas. Thus, there was much pressure on local state representatives to assist GRCO in order to receive the benefits of activities they had already contributed to.

2.3 Contestation, continuity and change during the Imperial and Derg regimes

This account is intended to illuminate contemporary understandings of the history of GPSDO, not to provide an accurate reflection of events that happened 20-30 years ago. The central aspect is that all informants presented these discourses as facts that could be detected as points of reference when informants discussed contemporary events.

During the imperial regime, the major fear of the government was that the organisation would become a focus point for anti-government activity. The GRCO leadership suggested that the government was particularly suspicious of organisations that used

mass rallies and there were fears that the resources collected in the rural and urban areas could be used to obtain weapons. Current Gurage discourses suggest that some bureaucrats in the rural areas feared that road construction would lead to a circumvention of their authority and that increased travel would destabilise the rural areas. Conversely, these rural officials feared that easing communication would also fetter their autonomy from central government. According to these discourses, most of the problems encountered by GRCO seemed to be at local government level. However, they were overcome by the connections that the prominent leaders had with contacts at the political centre and within the ministries. These two issues, the ability to circumvent rural political authority if problems arose and the relationship between the Gurage elite and the state being stronger at the political centre than at the periphery, are ways of using the past to construct an understanding of contemporary events.

The urban elite was thus able to use its position to facilitate the foundation of the organisation during a period of associational expansion. The elite was able to ensure that GRCO evolved into an organisation form deemed appropriate by both regimes. This imperial period of associational expansion was, however, also characterised by high levels of government suspicion and was tightly controlled. This pattern of civil society exhibits many similarities to the relationship between other African governments and associational life (Woods 1994). In the process of road construction, GRCO became a vehicle for binding the central government, rural power structure, and the urban elite. This involved both vertical and horizontal integration of ethnic groups into the state. The civil service and particularly military elites were integrated horizontally with other members of the elite and regime through a system managed by court controlled patronage. These ethnic elites were vertically integrated with their respective ethnic or sub-ethnic constituencies through these associations and thus tied the group to the state. The organisation can be seen as institutionalising linkages across spatial divisions between urban and rural Gurages and class cleavages between the elite and the wider population. The organisation also facilitated the development of new linkages between the Sebat Bet

elites from differing clans and houses. Gedamu (1972) implies a similar process with respect to the role of the Kistane Gurage elite in AWRCA. He suggests that, AWRCA provided a structure for the elites to increase their prestige in the eyes of both the court and the Kistane Gurage community. However, due to political considerations he was not explicit. More recently, he has suggested that, "General Yilma enhanced his position through the organisation. Whilst he was building loyalty for the emperor, he was feudalising the area through distributing titles etc. In my thesis, I did not stress this, as at the time support for the feudal regime was dwindling and other groups like the forerunner of OLF were moving for secession. The Gurage organisations were exemplary, using the emperor as patron and building loyalty for him and his regime" (personal communication, Nov 2000).

3 Contemporary governmental relationships

One would expect that an ethnically-based development association, which had survived two repressive, authoritarian dictatorships, would flourish under ethnically-based pluralism. However, this has been far from the case for a variety of reasons related to government strategies of domination, and contradictions between Gurage migratory survival strategies and EPRDF ideology. By the late 1990s, the organisation was in crisis. The relationship between GPSDO and the government during the EPRDF era deviated significantly from the patterns of accommodation discussed above. This has severely impaired the ability of GPSDO to operate effectively. The salient issues are:

1. GPSDO became associated with an opposition political party.
2. The government established a competing development association, based on a different model of development. Thus, the interests of the government are no longer served by promoting GPSDO.

3. The government opposes the urban rural relationships embedded within the structure and orientation of GPSDO.
4. The house and Sebat Bet affiliations that form the basis of association of GPSDO are regarded by the government as parochial and sub-ethnic and thus inappropriate.
5. The networks of influence previously used by urban Gurages to promote GPSDO are less effective under the new federal structure.

3.1 Gurage Political representation

At the time of the EPRDF military victory in 1991, Gurages unlike other ethnic groups were not represented by any formal political organisations, leaving GPSDO as the only Gurage mass organisation. At this time, EPRDF invited all ethnic groups to form political parties to represent them in the transitional assembly. Prominent members of GPSDO had been involved in an Addis-based study group of Gurage intellectuals, which had been meeting regularly at GPSDO headquarters. This group formed the basis of the new political party, the Gurage Peoples Democratic Front (GPDF). The first programme of the GPDF included several policies based on the perceived interests of Gurages, which were contrary to core principles of EPRDF. These policies included opposition to ethnically-based federalism and Eritrean independence and support for the introduction of the private ownership of land.

The party received mass support and funding from urban Gurages and became the cornerstone of an alliance of parties from southern Ethiopia, which quickly became the second largest political grouping in the transitional assembly.

Although the leaders claimed to make a clear distinction between their roles in GPSDO and GPDF, the party initially used GPSDO headquarters for meetings and its facilities for printing. Furthermore, the networks of sub-committees and Idirs were used for mobilising the urban population and penetrating the rural areas. There was also some suspicion that

GPSDO resources were channelled to the party, although the leadership vehemently deny this and point out that the organisation's accounts were audited by the Auditor General's office.

In addition to the connections between the GPSDO leadership and GPDF, certain prominent members of some of the sub-committees were also active in GPDF. These groups campaigned in the rural areas and attempted to reinforce the legitimacy of the party in Gurageland by emphasising the contributions GPSDO had made to the rural areas. This should be distinguished from using GPSDO as a political vehicle, as these groups used the status gained through their years of sacrifice for the rural community to promote their political ambitions. In some areas, political activists used GPSDO's networks, such as the links with prominent elders and clan heads that had been GPSDO's rural representatives, to mobilise rural support.

Prior to its military victory, the TPLF had created 'sister' organisations amongst many non-Tigrayan ethnic groups, however, they had no structure in Gurageland and their Gurage representatives were relatively unknown and thus lacked legitimacy. Following their established pattern, the EPRDF created a parallel organisation, the Gurage People's Revolutionary Democratic Movement (from 1998 the Gurage Zone Nationalities Democratic Movement (GZNDM)), in order to contest power in Gurageland. According to urban Gurages, initially GPDF was popular, however GZNDM had access to greater resources in the rural areas. For political purposes, it became necessary to de-legitimise GPSDO in order to undermine GPDF. Therefore, in the context of a widespread perception that the internal workings of GPSDO were not transparent, GZNDM cadres were able to mobilise rural suspicions about alleged corruption and a lack of accountability within GPSDO. Although the competition between the two parties did not degenerate into violence, there are allegations of a great deal of intimidation of GPDF and GPSDO supporters. When they attempted to hold meetings about development issues in Gurageland, the leaders of GPSDO and General Wolde Sellasie Bereka, possibly the

most respected Sebat Bet Gurage, were arrested at gunpoint, imprisoned and only released after the personal intervention of the vice-president of Ethiopia.

3.2 Government sanctions

As a result of the conflict with the government, GPSDO and some of the sub-committees have been prevented from holding rural meetings in Gurageland. This has constrained its ability to consult the rural communities and secure legitimacy for development interventions. In some areas, meetings to ratify the changes to Ya Kitcha were also prohibited by the government. As discussed in Chapter 5, this led to tensions within urban and rural Sebat Bet Gurage communities and within GPSDO. After undermining GPSDO's rural base by cutting its linkages with the rural areas and achieving a decisive electoral victory in Gurageland, it seems that the EPRDF government then sought to eliminate GPSDO's financial base. In 1998, GPSDO was prevented from charging tolls for using roads in Sebat Bet Gurageland and the monopoly of public transport in the area held by GPSDO's bus company was also lifted. This occurred at the culmination of a period of intense internal conflict within GPSDO and it is possible that the government assumed that the organisation would cease to exist.

This move by government seems to have received widespread support in the rural areas. Rural informants suggested that it has increased competition, which is perceived to have reduced transportation costs for people and goods. However, it took place after a great deal of agitation against GPSDO related to alleged corruption, inefficiency, lack of transparency and accountability to the rural people. The government also justified its actions on the grounds that it has taken responsibility for road maintenance and that due to the alleged corruption and lack of accountability, GPSDO no longer provided significant benefits in return for the revenue it generated.

While this effectively destroyed GPSDO's financial base, the sub-committees have other independent sources of income. Furthermore, through ending the revenue generated by tolls, the long term mismanagement and corruption within the bus company and toll collection agency was exposed. The bus company seems to have been given unfavourable access to transport routes, as until late 1999 only two of GPSDO's fleet of 20 buses were operating at any one time, although this could also be related to a lack of adequate repairs. The organisation has been made liable for a tax backlog of 2 million Birr (approximately £185,000), a figure greater than its assets. The leadership of GPSDO suggests that if these tax obligations are enforced the organisation will be bankrupt. Some well-placed patrons are discretely attempting to lobby for the tax exemption to be upheld.

GPSDO is not the only development organisation to have experienced difficulties in its relationship with the Gurageland administration. The Catholic Secretariat, which had provided a range of development projects, such as micro finance and natural resource conservation, was expelled from Gurageland in 1998. This action was supported by elders from Cheha, their main base, although there are suggestions of some intimidation. The zone authorities claim that the organisation fostered dependency through its use of food for work programmes, which have been prohibited. However, these methods are still widely used in many other areas of Ethiopia.

With the exception of partnerships with Save the Children and Oxfam, GPSDO is no longer allowed to undertake development activities in Gurageland. However, this prohibition seems to have been interpreted in different ways across Gurageland. There is a great deal of variation between Worredas in the relationship between the sub-committees and the state authorities. The relationships between the sub-committees and the state now vary between outright prohibition on any form of rural activity and active partnerships with the Worreda authorities. Certain sub-committees, notably Eza and Gomer, are involved in large-scale development projects in partnership with their respective Worredas. For example, the Eza sub-committee is involved in constructing a

technical school on land owned by the Worreda. As noted previously, the Moher rural sub-committee is composed of prominent elders and PA leaders.

There seems to be a tendency for government to differentiate between GPSDO and its sub-committees, which it regards as 'tribal associations'. Thus, many of the sub-committees are still active, and there seems to be a degree of confusion at the Worreda level over the relationship between GPSDO and the sub-committees. For example, when discussing the relationship between the Eza Development Association and the Worreda authorities in Eza, the Worreda leaders appeared unaware that this organisation is a sub-committee of GPSDO or that its leader is currently the president of GPSDO. This could be due to a lack of knowledge of the structure of GPSDO particularly at the Worreda level as many informants at this level were unable to determine which of the plethora of house, clan, village and kinship-based development associations operating in Gurageland were affiliated to GPSDO.

However, the crucial issue is probably the differential perceptions of the legitimacy of GPSDO and its affiliates in the eyes of the rural communities. The sub-committees, composed of known local men in regular contact with the rural population using personalised leadership and providing benefits are seen as more legitimate than GPSDO. Furthermore in some areas, GPSDO is unpopular due to transport problems, rumours of corruption and internal disputes that either reflect or harness inter-house competition. In the rural areas, criticisms were usually directed towards GPSDO rather than the sub-committees.

In section 2, I argued that GRCO's legitimacy was enhanced by making accommodations with state-backed rural institutions during the Derg and imperial eras. The differing relationships between the various sub-committees and the government is reflected in their differing relationships with the GZNDM-dominated PAs. In Moher, the Development Committee has been much more successful during the EPRDF regime than in previous

periods. This contrasts dramatically with the situation in Enamor. In Moher, the development committee (MDC) continued with its relationships established under the Derg. It maintained its direct engagement with the PA leaders who in conjunction with MDC established a rural sub-committee of known elders and PA leaders, which conferred with the MDC and co-ordinated the PAs efforts in the high school construction. The telephone project was also based on a partnership of the PAs, the MDC and rural Idirs. MDC has also been involved in lobbying the Worreda and zone officials over the siting of water and health facilities. Some committee members claim that the Worreda uses MDC networks to mobilise the rural population in government-sponsored projects. There is a significant difference between Moher and the area around Gunchire in the relationship between state and indigenous institutions. In Moher, the government uses Idirs and the rural sub-committee to mobilise the population in government-initiated development interventions. The PAs also use Idirs and Shango sanctions for development and other purposes.

The relationship between the Enamor Development Committee (EDC) and the Enamor Worreda is much more challenging and, with the exception of partnerships with international NGOs, it does not seem to have been active during the EPRDF period. According to pro-government sources, prominent members of the committee attempted to mobilise the rural community in support of GPDF and faced a great deal of hostility from the rural population. Few activists in the EDC were prepared to discuss their relationship with the government other than saying that it was a sensitive issue but was improving. One activist who was sentenced to death by the Derg stated, "we went there [Enamor] to work during the Derg period as if going through fire, without being afraid of being burned. We were called many names, such as reactionaries. We were sometimes put in prison, but we went there. Now we do not have any work, as the government has killed all our initiatives." The leadership claim that the organisation has the capacity and motivation to implement wide-ranging development but have been prevented from doing this by the government. However, due to internal factors such as the death and illness of prominent

activists, the Addis-based committee for Enamor meets rarely and their first urban General Assembly for several years attracted only 20 participants.

3.3 Competing models of development

An additional dimension to this contested arena is that a new Gurage organisation, the Gurage Development Association, was formed in 1992, becoming the Gurage Zone Development Association (GZDA) in 1998. The organisation was formed by GZNDM. GZDA has had a significant impact on relationships between GPSDO and the state. For the first time, there was direct competition with another 'indigenous' development association operating in Gurageland. The following comments are based on the views of the informants I spoke to about this development. It is not the place of this thesis to pass judgement on GZDA's activities.

The activities of GZDA reflect the government's perception of the needs of the rural Gurage community, particularly the government's focus on increasing the productive capacity of the rural population to limit migration, especially of children, and to reduce dependence on urban kin. Therefore, government and GZDA development endeavours tend to focus on natural resource conservation and improving agricultural techniques in order to achieve rural self-sufficiency. I argued in Chapter 5 that indigenous perceptions of the purpose of development reflect Gurage migratory survival strategies and that the nature of development for Gurages was to facilitate or modernise their survival strategies. However, the government's perception of the needs of rural Gurages contradicts the urban-rural relationships that underpin their survival strategies, as it focuses on increasing the productive capacity of Gurageland.

The different conceptions of appropriate urban rural relationships are also apparent in the organisational structures of GZDA and GPSDO. GZDA claims to have established

permanent rural structures in order to build the capacity of the rural population to identify local needs and produce solutions. However, currently GZDA is focusing on establishing its rural organisational structure and undertaking natural resource conservation under the direction of government extension workers rather than building the capacity of the grass roots of the organisation.

The essence of the government critique of GPSDO can be summarised in the statement of a GZDA activist who suggested that it should be renamed 'the Sebat Bet Gurages living in Addis Ababa development organisation'. This links two of the overarching criticisms of GPSDO: that its basis of association is inappropriate as it only represents the interests of Sebat Bet Gurages, and secondly that it is dominated by urban dwellers. I briefly outline the substance of these critiques and then look at the GPSDO response in relation to Sebat Bet Gurage identities and discourses around ethnicity and development.

As GPSDO is based on house and Sebat Bet identities, it is perceived by the government as not representing the interests of all Gurages. GPSDO is seen as reflecting and possibly exacerbating divisions within the ethnic group, such as those between Sebat Bet and other Gurages and between the Sebat Bet houses. Internal competition within GPSDO can take the form of house-based conflict, however as I discuss in Chapter 8, this is related to the ways in which grievances are articulated by relating them to historical issues. This is linked to government perceptions, that house, clan and other associations are essentially parochial and competitive. Government and party officials stressed that the lack of co-ordination between different indigenous development associations had led to the replication of services, such as roads and schools. However whilst government officials and others provide a long list of projects where services have been replicated and resources allegedly wasted, few if any of these involved GPSDO or its affiliates.

In the government discourse, the uneven development of Gurageland is seen as a consequence of the activities of GPSDO, as certain areas are portrayed as benefiting at

the expense of others. However uneven development seems a logical consequence of self-help, as those areas who are able to help themselves can become involved in virtuous circles of development, whilst the less developed areas become marginalised. Differential rates of development in Sebat Bet Gurageland can be explained by the historically advantageous access to education in Cheha and the wealth of certain clans. The government discourse harnesses the way that discontent with GPSDO over the allocation of resources has been articulated as competition between houses (see Chapter 8), and then juxtaposes it with the pan-Gurage ideology of GZDA. The government discourse is rooted in an interrelation between ideological distrust of 'parochial' affiliations as the basis of political and social organisation, and practical preferences for territorially-based organisations, where the scope of organisations' activities matches government administrative units. The government desires a pan-Gurage development organisation that is structured according to Worredas rather than house affiliations. This would facilitate control by the government and party, which would accommodate the government's territorially based planning process.

A PA leader in Enamor commented, "once they [the Enamor Development Committee] came here and they were told, 'development doesn't start from the towns but from here'". This reflects the second major criticism of GPSDO, that it is dominated by urban Gurages. This criticism reflects EPRDF emphasis on rural self-sufficiency and the government perception of the appropriate urban-rural relationships, which, as discussed above, contradicts Gurage survival strategies. According to the government, in addition to having little accountability to the rural community and no internal democracy, GPSDO lacks accountability to the government. The government has appropriated elements of the dominant development discourses to criticise the internal structures of GPSDO and its relationship with the rural community. The government presents GPSDO as an elitist, top-down, urban-based organisation with little legitimacy in the rural areas. This is juxtaposed with GZDA as a participatory organisation, which is accountable to the rural community, albeit through GZNDM, as the elected representatives of the people. In the context of its

overwhelming victory when it won all the Gurage seats in the federal and regional assemblies, GZNDM perceives itself to be the sole source of legitimacy in Gurageland¹⁵.

Rural informants openly discussed the relationship between GZDA and the GZNDM and suggested that GZDA acts as a vehicle for increasing the legitimacy of the GZNDM. Whilst accusing prominent members of the EDA of attempting to use that association as a political vehicle, an Enamor PA leader made a telling comment about the relationship between GZDA and GZNDM. "In the end, the people here refused to accept them [well-known urban GPSDO activists] as their representatives, because they were trying to establish their structures here as EPRDF has done with GZDA".

Critics of the government suggest that its suspicion of GPSDO's urban bias reflect government strategies of domination, which includes control of development and all other activities within the zone. In particular they believed that attacks on GPSDO reflect the government's aim to eliminate all non-GZNDM intermediaries between itself and the rural community. GPSDO is the most obvious example of Gurage urban-rural networks, which cut across the government's relationship with the rural community. This issue is particularly salient as urban Gurages and especially the elite appear to be hostile to the current government. I explain the reasons for this below. This hostility was manifested in the rebuttal of attempts by GZDA to use Kebeles to mobilise urban resources. GZDA is seen by much of the Gurage urban elite as an unnecessary imposition by the government. It is seen as transplanting an alien Tigrayan model of development to an area with a long-established, successful and genuinely indigenous development organisation. An urban intellectual, who was often critical of GPSDO, commented, "the way that the party [EPRDF] responded to this particular challenge is very typical of the way it responds to similar issues. When there are independent organisations, both politically speaking...and even development associations, that do not take their orders from the government or party cadres, instinctively what they do is to create another organisation. Rather than co-opting

¹⁵ In the 2000 General Election GZNDM lost 2 of its 14 seats in the Federal Parliament.

the existing organisation, which may require some kind of compromise, they create another and weaken the other. This is a typical example. The unfortunate part of this [case] is that they ended up weakening everyone. They have undermined GPSDO, without having benefiting from it. So essentially community based activities have been stopped.” The criticisms of GZDA by urban dwellers focused mainly on its political linkages, which for them implicated the organisation in the undermining of GPSDO.

Much of GPSDO’s success during the imperial and Derg periods has been attributed to the pivotal role played by well-placed patrons in the civil service and military. There now seem to be fewer Gurage high-ranking civil servants prepared to promote GPSDO openly. According to Gedamu, during the imperial period the urban elite were offered honorary titles, land and promotion as an incentive to work for development associations (Gedamu 1972). In the Derg period, provincial officials could also benefit from supporting GRCO. Currently, there is little incentive for government employees to promote GPSDO openly, and it is possible that open support for GPSDO would harm their careers. All government employees are expected to become active members of their respective development associations such as GZDA.

Due to decentralisation, the sectors of the Gurage elite who previously promoted GPSDO are geographically marginalised from influential networks. In the past, under more centralised political systems, prominent urban Gurages were able to circumvent rural opposition by using their personal contacts or status to persuade decision-makers at the centre. Theoretically, power is now decentralised with more autonomy located at the Zonal and Worreda level. Therefore, it is likely that urban Gurage activists have less influence on rural decision-making than previously, as their contacts and access to key decision-makers are in Addis. However, if one examines the flows of accountability in the rural areas, the exclusion of GPSDO and its supporters from the key decision-making processes is even more apparent. Here the flows of accountability are upwards and within GZNDM at the zone level, then to the Southern Peoples Democratic Front at the regional

level, and ultimately to the EPRDF. Few if any of GPSDO's activists, even those working as civil servants, appear to have any influence over these parties. Linked to this is the desire for GZNDM to control all activities in the zone. The activities of GPSDO were one of the few things not under the direct control of the party. This is reflected in part of the GZNDM discourse, which urges GPSDO to relocate its headquarters to Welkite, the zone capital.

4 Conclusions

I conclude by examining how the Gurage elite and intellectuals have conceptualised the current relationship with the government by relating it to the constructions of their accommodations with previous regimes, outlined above. The overarching discourse is that, once the true nature of GPSDO as a non-political development organisation is presented to the government, the conflict will end as it did under the previous regimes. Hence, GPSDO officials and documentation refer to their conflict with the government as a 'misunderstanding', which implies that it can be resolved through the government understanding the true nature of the organisation. This conception could also be linked to traditions of arbitration of disputes by elders reaching a consensus. However, using the term 'misunderstanding' could also be a means of presenting disputes to outsiders in a non-confrontational manner.

GPSDO projects an image of a non-political people's organisation, which stands above politics and is permanent, when compared to the various regimes. Gurage intellectuals articulate a perception that an organisation too closely associated with a regime will share its fate when the regime eventually falls. This discourse was applied to GZDA by almost all urban informants who were aware of its existence. The following statement by an urban Gurage not active in GPSDO typifies this attitude. "They are like any other party-based development association, it has very little legitimacy outside the political process. The

minute the political change comes, they will disappear. Their existence is dependent on the party and its political structures.” Gurage intellectuals usually juxtaposed this with the constructed history of GPSDO independence outlined above. Ironically, the official government discourse seems to share this view. A leader of GZNDM stated of AWRCA, it “was created by General Yilma who was killed by the Derg and the organisation died a natural death after him.”

There are however broad similarities between the GPSDO and government discourses. Both appropriate elements of the dominant development discourses to legitimise their current activities, to explain the past and to differentiate and comment on each other. Thus, the GPSDO discourse, which presents the organisation as a people’s organisation, has adopted aspects of the participation discourse to explain the nature of its linkages with the urban and rural communities. However, as discussed in Chapter 6, the nature of this participation is radically different from the participation as empowerment paradigms.

In this chapter, I have outlined the dominant Gurage development discourse, which stresses that the main reason for the success of GPSDO is that it has avoided politics. Throughout most of its history, the Gurage elite astutely projected an image of the organisation as non-political in the sense that the organisation was not openly critical of the government. Whilst engaging with government structures on their own terms, GPSDO managed to maintain a high degree of autonomy from them. However, this implies a rather narrow definition of political activity, which is limited to competitive politics. One can suggest that the organisation has been apolitical, as it has maintained a balance between avoiding mobilising Gurage resources against the government or indeed being openly critical of the government, whilst also enjoying a degree of autonomy from government structures. However, if one uses a broader conception of politics which encompasses activities that impact on wider socio-economic power relationships, it can be seen that the organisation has had a political role because it has rarely been involved in challenging the status quo. On the contrary, through its flexible accommodations with a range of rural

actors and political structures it can be seen to have legitimised and possibly reinforced those power structures favoured by the government. Furthermore, many of its activities, such as increasing the ease of communication and education, have the potential to cause political side effects. As discussed in Chapter 5, more recently GPSDO and its allies have become involved in challenging and modernising the legal underpinning of rural power relationships through its role as facilitator in the Ya Kitcha process. This process is likely to directly affect power relationships, particularly gender relationships within households.

Thus, according to Gurage discourses, the survival of GPSDO up to the EPRDF assumption of power was largely due to the organisation avoiding politics. Paradoxically, the perception that GPSDO and Gurages in general, had avoided engaging in anti-Derg activities led to them being viewed with suspicion by the EPRDF. It seems logical to suggest that a government, which regards an essentialist form of ethnicity as the only legitimate form of political and social organisation, also conceptualises social action in the same essentialist terms, with ethnic groups acting as homogenous units. Many urban Gurages regard themselves as a targeted group, as they believe that the EPRDF regards the Gurages as collaborators with the Derg who benefited materially from the regime, in contrast to the suffering of other ethnic groups, particularly the Tigrayans. These suspicions would also have been heightened by the fact that the GPSDO president between 1989 and 1998 was a member of WPE, the party established by the Derg in the 1980s, in addition to being a leader of GPDF, a party that opposed EPRDF in the 1990s.

There is a fundamental conflict between the material interests of Gurages and the 'ethnisation' of territory that underpins ethno-federalism. The government's focus on rural self-sufficiency is at odds with Gurage survival strategies based on cyclical migration. Although the government is focusing on natural resource conservation and improving agricultural techniques to increase the productive capacity of the rural areas, it is actively discouraging chat production in Gurageland and has prohibited its trade in other regions, due to the social, economic and medical harm allegedly caused by its consumption.

However, chat is the second largest source of the rural income, after migrants' remittances, and is the main source of government revenue in the Gurage zone (Gurage Zone Planning Department 1999).

Many urban Gurages claim that ethno-federalism has limited their opportunities for trade and employment in areas outside Gurageland and Addis. Gurage citizenship is defined by their migration patterns and all the informants I spoke to believed that, if migration is prohibited, the rural economy will not be sustainable. Furthermore, as I have argued, Gurage survival strategies are closely linked to their notions of citizenship and civic virtue, and enable them to take advantage of and adapt to changes in the political and economic environment. However, at present there are fundamental contradictions between the dominant Gurage notions of citizenship and the model of citizenship constructed by EPRDF.

Even so, it is important to avoid suggesting that these contradictions are set in stone and that there is no re-negotiation of the relationships between these different layers of organisation and the state. For example, an examination of the activities and structures of GPSDO and GZDA suggests that they are in many ways complementary. GPSDO and its sub-committees focus on large-scale, capital-intensive infrastructure, whereas GZDA emphasises localised, labour-intensive, natural resource conservation. At the Worreda level, GZDA does not have the capacity to finance large-scale capital-intensive projects, whereas GPSDO in most areas does not have the rural structures to monitor regular labour-intensive activities demanded by natural resource conservation.

The new GPSDO leadership and the zone and Worreda authorities are currently renegotiating their relationships. Meetings have taken place between the GPSDO transport sector and zone officials and there has been a recent increase in the frequency of its operations. Most significantly, GPSDO and GZDA are collaborating on a development project, alongside a range of other development actors, including the state

and organisations representing Siltes and Kistanes. This compensatory education project is funded by American Gurages (BGLD – Gurage Houses Development Association) and is chaired by the ex-leader of GPSDO. All parties seem to have established a good working relationship.

Officially, GPSDO is now welcome to return to rural development, provided that it avoids becoming involved in politics and accepts the authority of the zone as embodied in the recently-established Gurage Zone Development Forum. The new leadership of GPSDO is aware that seeking a new accommodation with the state is critical to the organisation's survival.

Chapter 8

Conclusions: the role of identity in Gurage development associations

1 Introduction

The growing body of research into African indigenous development associations, such as Hometown Associations, ethnic unions and migrants' associations, has analysed in some detail both their contributions to their communities and their role in civil society. However, the bulk of this research has overlooked the relationship between identity and communal action. This oversight has led identities to be treated as largely unproblematic and has implied, therefore, that identities, particularly ethnicity, are primordial and fixed. Some of the research on Hometown Associations has detected an instrumental use of identity within these associations related to their role in civil society (Woods 1994). When researchers have analysed the role of identity within these associations, they have tended to focus on how these associations have been involved in competitive politics and have thus presented identity as primarily instrumentally mobilised ethnicity. However, there has been little examination of the nature of the identity-based affiliations, which underpin these associations. Instead, identities are regarded as pre-existing resources to be harnessed for developmental purposes.

The dominant approaches to the study of ethnicity focus principally on the construction and maintenance of ethnic boundaries. Until recently, following this logic, research has tended to focus on a group's interactions with other groups. The constructivist approaches, and particularly the contributions from Lonsdale (Lonsdale 1992), have significantly altered the focus of research into ethnicity. This form of constructivism is concerned with the moral aspects of culture that are used to define the group's position in the world in relation to an imagined past. Central to this process are debates within the

group about the nature of 'civic virtue', the moral framework of rights and obligations, and conceptions of justice and equality. This approach significantly broadens previous definitions of ethnicity and allows an analysis of the relationship between ethnicity and development to go beyond regarding ethnicity as merely a resource mobilised by elites for their own purposes.

In previous chapters of this thesis, I have argued that the dominant Gurage conception of civic virtue is based on the rights and obligations embedded in their migratory survival strategies and that adherence to these notions is crucial to be regarded as members of the group. Furthermore, the dominant Gurage notion of civic virtue has been extended to include participation in development, and the meanings that Gurages attach to development are related to civic virtue. Thus, development has become a central element in the creation and maintenance of Gurage identities. This chapter will now show how identities have been harnessed for development purposes and will reflect on how these processes have led participation in development to become a social obligation for Gurages and thus embedded within Gurage identities.

Although I acknowledge that interactions with other groups have shaped Gurage identities, the task of this thesis is to explain how Sebat Bet Gurage identities have both changed and interacted with their perceptions of and involvement in development processes, particularly through GPSDO. In section 2 of this chapter, I begin by outlining the main currents of thought on the construction of Gurage identities. I then examine the salience of the various layers of affiliation that go to make up the Sebat Bet Gurage identity. It should be underlined that the identities discussed in the chapter are those of male Gurages, as they constitute the activists and main participants in the indigenous models of Gurage development. Women's identities are beyond the scope of this thesis for the reasons outlined in Chapter 3. In section 3, I examine the role that identities have played in GPSDO, arguing that a range of Gurage ethnically-based identities have been harnessed for development and that identities are used to articulate grievances within

GPSDO and interpret contemporary internal problems. In section 4.1, I draw together analysis from previous chapters to illustrate how development has become a central aspect of the construction and maintenance of Gurage identities. Section 4.2 discusses how socio-economic and demographic changes have created tensions between new urban Gurage identities and the previous model of the developmental Gurage identity. In the final section, I conclude the thesis by looking at the relationship between development and Gurage notions of civic virtue.

2 Constructions of Gurage identities

2.1 The history of Gurage identity

Contemporary Gurage discourses outlined by elders suggest that in pre-imperial times the relationships between the various houses and clans was characterised by fluid alliances and enmities, although Sebat Bet Gurages had co-operated in fighting external foes. In particular, the period before incorporation into the Ethiopian State was characterised by intense feuding between the Sebat Bet houses. Elders do not talk of pre-imperial times as a golden age but rather focus on the insecurity and destruction caused by the feuding. Elders refer to it as a time when a strong man could take a weaker man's son and sell him into slavery. All indigenous and foreign research into Gurages suggests that, before incorporation into the imperial state, they were segmentary societies with no history of unitary political authority. Much of the early work into Gurage social organisation such as Shack (1966) and Gedamu (1972) is synthesised by Markakis (1998) in a constructivist account of the creation of Gurage identities. According to Markakis, Gurages came to be perceived by others as a distinct ethnic group in the early 20th century in a process "not different in essence from what happened elsewhere in Africa at the same time" (Markakis 1998 p131). Thus, it was conquest, and the need of the conquerors for clear and expedient principles to guide their administration, that were the impetus for the creation of

a Gurage ethnic identity. "The congregation of most Gurage into a single administrative unit was the first stroke of fashioning a single Gurage ethnic identity" (Markakis 1998 p132).

Critically for the construction of new identities, colonialism led the Gurage to be incorporated into the Gabbar system (a Feudal system imposing land appropriation by the Shoan Amhara elite and incorporating a system of tithes payable by serfs) which alienated them from their lands and imposed taxation that could only be paid through migration. In line with anthropological work in other parts of Africa, much emphasis is placed, by all researchers, on the role of urban migration in the creation of ethnic identities. Markakis emphasises migrants' use of ethnic networks for mutual social and economic aid in the creation of identities (Markakis 1998). However, Gedamu emphasised the importance of house-based ties with each house focusing on a specific economic niche (Gedamu 1972). My research suggests that contemporary Gurage networks are closer to the position of Gedamu than Markakis, as the networks most important to their economic and social advancement are based on sub-ethnic attachments of family, village, clan and house rather than ethnic networks. However, it should be noted that Markakis states that the late Derg and transitional periods created a social, economic and cultural environment where Gurages placed greater emphasis on sub-ethnic affiliations. By contrast, the data on which this chapter is based were collected in an environment where Gurages reflected on their own history in the light of contemporary political and cultural factors.

Markakis suggests that the work of Shack (1966), which presented the Gurages as an ethnic group with a shared culture and unified social organisation, "put a scientific gloss on outsiders' perceptions of Gurages as a solid ethnic entity", and that it suited the interests of Gurage migrants to accept this as it broadened their social network (Markakis 1998) p132). This perception of a unified Gurage ethnic identity suited the interests of the elite as they could legitimise their activities by claiming to be acting on behalf of all Gurages. Markakis acknowledges that the work of Shack caused much controversy,

however, he focuses primarily on dissent from sources other than the Sebat Bet, particularly Gedamu (1972) who at the time proposed that the Kistane (Sodo) Gurages had a distinct ethnic identity¹⁶ However, Markakis overlooks Sebat Bet criticisms of Shack, outlined in Chapter 3, which have also played a part in shaping Gurage identities and relationships between the houses. It should also be noted that Markakis is at the instrumental end of constructivism, and his analysis, whilst appreciating the importance of indigenous actors in the construction of their identities, focuses primarily on how Gurages construct their identities to further their material interests. As I argued in Chapters 3 and 6, the dominant Sebat Bet Gurage understandings of their identities are constructed in a complex process which includes responding to emerging material opportunities by reference to 'traditions', and involves status building for individuals and groups. Thus, as I outlined in Chapter 3, Sebat Bet Gurage collective identities were redefined in a process that involved the interpretation of Shack's early research by the Sebat Bet Gurage intellectual strata.

2.2 Internal constructions of Gurage identities

Gurage identity is multi-dimensional, contextual and composed of a hierarchy of inter-related identities extending from the level of the family to the clan, the house, Sebat Bet and Gurage. These affiliations are intersected by religious and territorial identities, such as village, and are subsumed within an overarching Ethiopian identity. These various identities become salient according to the environmental circumstances in order to give meaning to the specific interaction. Throughout the thesis, I have stressed that rights and obligations are embedded within Gurage identities.

¹⁶ Although in his thesis Gedamu suggested that Kistane Gurages were a distinct ethnic group, he has subsequently revised this view. "I would revise my thesis in the sense that there is a common Gurage culture but different languages...I spent 3 years defending the Gurageness of the Kistane." (personal communication Nov 2000)

The dominant Gurage discourse outlined by elders and outlined by the Gurage zone culture department in its publication 'Gogot: the history of the Gurage' suggests that the creation of the Gurage ethnic group involved the synthesis and assimilation of a variety of groups (Alemu 1999). This is widely accepted by Sebat Bet Gurage elders as the most accurate portrayal of Gurage histories. However, according to this discourse it is currently impossible for a non-Gurage to become Gurage¹⁷. This shows congruence with Turton's proposition that ethnic identities are meaningless unless they are perceived to be primordial by the participants (Turton 1998). Throughout the fieldwork, informants stressed that Gurage identities are fixed according to the sub-ethnic affiliations of clan and then house, which make up Sebat Bet Gurage ethnic identity. Therefore, for Sebat Bet Gurages their ethnic boundaries are presented as fixed. Furthermore the relationships between the various Sebat Bet Gurage seem to differ significantly from Andersonian 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1991). Due to the importance of sub-ethnic attachments in defining membership of the Sebat Bet, it is possible for rural and urban intellectuals, who serve as gatekeepers, to locate all male Sebat Bet Gurages in terms of their sub-clan and clan affiliations. Thus, for Sebat Bet Gurages their community is tangible rather than imagined. This supports Shack's view that Gurages need to be able to locate themselves socially in relation to other clans and houses (Shack 1966).

Although the ethnic boundary for Sebat Bet Gurages appears to be fixed at present, the nature of what happens within the group is not. I now look at these internal processes.

Family is the basic unit of loyalty, and obligations are particularly powerful on children to provide financial assistance to their parents. There are also strong obligations to assist siblings and their sons in migration. Shack (1966) suggested that Gurages have no obligations to their mothers' relatives, however informants suggested that, at least at the level of the first two generations, the rights and obligations were shared equally between

¹⁷ It must also be noted that this perception contrasts strongly with Gedamu's research, which suggests that Kistane (Sodo) Gurages have assimilated other ethnic groups, principally Oromos. However, according to Gedamu the Kistane seem to have stronger territorial attachments than clan attachments.

the mother's and father's relatives. Within the family, obligations are unavoidable and are seen as the building block of Gurage society. These obligations are backed by powerful sanctions such as curses and ostracism.

Affiliations to the home village cut across clan and house-based ties. Although some areas are seen as dominated by particular clans, this does not exclude outsiders from residence or participation in village level associational life. There is much co-operation within the village in communal affairs, which was the basis of Gurage mutual aid and self help. The main form of agricultural production is village or sub-village level Debos. In the past and currently much communal development work is focused on improving the physical infrastructure of the village, such as Jafforo clearance and bridge building. The village is also the basis for one type of Idir and Ikubes. This co-operation by villagers is adapted by migrants in urban areas, particularly amongst young migrants. In Chapter 4, I argued that, outside the family, it is villagers who give the most assistance to new migrants and form the original basis of the new migrant's social world. In addition to assisting migrants, there are many village level Idirs that serve to maintain links to the home village. These Idirs are also instrumental in development work in the rural area and provide a point of access to the urban community.

Shack characterises the Gurage clan as "a system of exogamous lineages within which genealogical relationships are not traced, although the clan is usually believed to have a single founding ancestor" (Shack 1966 p101). This is supported by the Moher and Enamor elders and Gogot (Alemu 1999), which all traced linkages between the various Gurage clans and sub-clans. Shack suggests that clan, as a jural community, is the widest grouping within which there are moral obligations and a means for peaceful dispute settlement. Ideally, there should be no feuding within clans as elders and clan heads mediate disputes (Shack 1966). My informants suggested that clan identity is important to male heads of household in urban and rural areas for dispute settlement and protection. However, it should also be noted that Shack's work probably focused primarily on rural

relationships. Although the moral obligations within the clan are stronger and more enforceable than those outside the clan, there are also moral obligations to the house, which have been harnessed and transformed by the activities of the development associations, as I illustrated in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Clan obligations have become the basis for much of Gurage associational life, particularly Idirs. As discussed in section 4.1, these obligations and rights are not automatic and are dependent on individuals demonstrating their commitment to the clan through participation in Idirs and assisting fellow clansmen in times of need. Thus, membership of the clan may not automatically lead to assistance from the clan unless it is reinforced by participation in clan affairs, such as Idirs and other forms of affiliation.

According to Shack "the system of lineages on which the clan is built is highly dynamic, breaking away and merging at various times and various places" (Shack 1966 p100). However, this fluidity was due to the impact of warfare and contrasts strongly with the perception of contemporary Sebat Bet Gurages that clan identities are currently fixed.

House is a group of related clans who share a common territory. They were constructed as alliances for military co-operation in response to threats from other houses and non-Gurages. These histories of conflicts and alliances between the houses have produced a perception of traditional enmities, which have shaped their contemporary orientations to others. According to Shack (1966 p102), house is based on clan, is the largest unit of common values and has a strong sense of tribal loyalty. Shack emphasises that houses are not based on genealogical principles or myths of common descent, but on a continuous territory. The importance of house is supported by Markakis, who also suggests that house is generally the most important identity to Sebat Bet Gurages, although his terminology is somewhat confusing. "Amongst the western Gurage the clan (bet) provides the main basis of identity" (Markakis 1998 p130). Thus, Markakis neatly side steps the problematic issue of analysing the nature of house by treating it as clan.

This approach is distinctly at odds with Sebat Bet Gurage perceptions of their own identities.

For Sebat Bet Gurages, to be a member of a house, the father must be a member of a given clan, which is perceived to have originated from that house. They suggest that, as it is impossible to change clan, it is also impossible to be assimilated into another house. One quote from an urban intellectual sums up all the approaches. "To be a Cheha you must be born into an indigenous clan in Cheha. Gurages do not forget their original clan, where they came from, what their clan is. He may come for better land or as a reward for a warrior [but] he does not forget his clan even if he may live in another place. You can move but you can not change clan. You are still called a Cheha even if you live in another part of the Gurage. You remain in the Cheha tribe."

For Shack (1966), house was the largest unit of political significance, however, this view underplays the political and legal significance of the Sebat Bet Shango, which he labelled Ya Joka, the place where the Shango convened at the time of his fieldwork. The significance of Ya Joka as the highest level of the Sebat Bet legal system reflects the importance of the Sebat Bet identity. However, in the 40 years since Shack carried out his fieldwork in Ethiopia, Gurageland and the Gurages have experienced dramatic political, economic and social changes, including the activities of development associations, which have affected the nature and salience of the various layers of Gurage identity.

With respect to these different forms of Gurage identity, ethno-federalism seems to have had a contradictory impact. On one hand, the official definitions of ethnicity are based on language (although language could well be a code for more Stalinist conceptions such as 'national psyche'). Thus, Gurages, with their variety of languages, would be seen as distinct ethnic groups. Some urban Gurage intellectuals also suggest a more Machiavellian motive for dividing the Gurage into different groups. They suggest that, as their size at the fall of the Derg was roughly the same as the Tigrayans, they should be

entitled to an equal access to political power. However, the Zonal administration has its own interests in maintaining the integrity of the Gurage zone. They have actively tried to create a pan-Gurage identity through commissioning indigenous anthropological research in order to emphasize the shared histories, traditions and cultures of the various Gurage houses. Indeed, much of the activities of the Gurage zone administration and organisations linked to it, such as GZDA, are legitimised by a pan-Gurage ideology that is seen as superior to more parochial sub-ethnic attachments embedded within GPSDO and other actors in the indigenous models of Gurage development.

During the course of the research, it became apparent that Sebat Bet Gurages use the terms Sebat Bet and Gurage interchangeably. For example, many informants used the term 'the Gurage people' when talking about the Sebat Bet and similarly called the Sebat Bet Shango the 'Gurage Shango or the Gurage appointment'. Indeed, GRCO was named the Gurage Road Construction Organisation and later the Gurage People's Self-help and Development Organisation rather than using the term Sebat Bet. When discussing their relationship with non-Sebat Bet Gurages, informants would stress that they viewed them as fellow Gurages, saw themselves as closer in cultural terms and would have some unspecified, loose obligations to them. This could certainly be an Andersonian imagined community. However, informants tended to present Sebat Bet Gurages as 'more Gurage' than the northern and eastern Gurages.

I thus suggest that there is now a complex relationship between membership of the imagined community, the Gurage, which is based on membership of the tangible communities of house and clan. All these interrelated identities have ethnic characteristics as they gain meaning through interaction.

3 The salience of ethnic identities in GPSDO

On commencement of the fieldwork, it was anticipated that the focus of the thesis would centre on the role of ethnicity in Gurage development associations. As outlined in section 2, Gurage ethnic identity is composed of a range of sub-ethnic affiliations that become salient in different situations. Although house is the central organising principle in GPSDO, I argue that the development associations have harnessed the range of affiliations that together make up Gurage ethnic identities. I then go on to examine how identities are used to articulate grievances about the allocation of resources by GPSDO and the sub-committees, and how they are used by factions within the leadership as a means of mobilising support and constructing alliances in competition for power within GPSDO.

3.1 House as the organising principle

Although 'Gurage' is used in the name of GPSDO, the organisation has never claimed to represent all Gurages. Instead, it has focused on development in the Sebat Bet areas of Gurageland. GRCO was founded at the instigation of the rural elders and rural and urban institutions. In Addis it took the form of a loose coalition of house-based committees reflecting existing affiliations based on house. An ex-leader of GPSDO explained, "GRCO was based on house in order to get the proper support and co-operation of all the community. The people in the seven sub-regions were already organised into smaller groups and it was easier to approach the organised groups instead of trying to contact individual personalities. They worked as a unit, each with its own representatives. Before GRCO, the sub-committees were already formed [as] they had their own smaller units dealing with local affairs. Each group came together as a unit at the Sebat Bet Shango in order to deal with community conflicts and social life as a whole. It was easier to deal with existing [institutions] to form a development organisation, to make use of the existing facilities ... for development. It made it easier as these were people who were accepted

and had credentials within the community.” Thus, the development associations were based on pre-existing ethnic institutions, particularly the house Shango and by extension the Sebat Bet Shango. These institutions were led by people with much authority within their communities and, as shown in Chapter 7, were linked to imperial administrative structures. These institutions also had a long history of co-operation and, most importantly, it was the leaders of these institutions who instigated the process of founding of GRCO.

Previous chapters have illustrated the central role of identity-based institutions in GPSDO such as Idirs. These institutions have become the principle means of consulting the community, securing legitimacy and most importantly mobilising resources. These identity-based institutions reflect the wider forms of social organisation, such as the house-based Shangos, which have shaped the organisational structure of GPSDO, particularly in the urban setting where the sub-committees mirror house affiliations. The organisational structure of GPSDO thus reflects, both Sebat Bet Gurage identities and affiliations, and an element of accommodation with government structures. For example, from its inception, the urban branches used house identity whilst the rural branches followed government administrative units in the Derg and imperial regimes.

Under the current structure of GPSDO, the house-based committees have high levels of operational autonomy and each has its own independent sources of funding. In this context, all development projects, even those facilitated by GPSDO headquarters, are the responsibility of the individual houses. Thus, the sub-committees rarely co-operate on projects or share experiences and skills. Activists often describe the relationship between the sub-committees as friendly competition. Usually the sub-committees only have superficial knowledge of each other’s activities, organisational structures, or their relationships with the urban and rural communities. The implication of this is that the organisational structure of GPSDO reflects house affiliations which, when taken with the

autonomy of the sub-committees, leads to the mobilisation of communal resources and competition for resources within GPSDO taking on a house form.

In line with the organisational structure of GPSDO, the most important identity used to harness resources is house. The autonomy granted to the seven sub-committees in resource mobilisation and implementation of projects means that with the exception of road construction all projects are focused on a particular house. Indeed, in projects designed by GPSDO rather than the sub-committees, great care is taken to ensure that all projects have seven locations, one for each house. Even during the road construction phase, each road was designed primarily to benefit a particular house. Urban resources are mobilised directly through clan and house based institutions, such as Idir or by using them as a means of accessing the community.

Although clan institutions are regularly used to mobilise resources and enforce sanctions, it seems that there is little mobilisation on the basis of clan by GPSDO or the sub-committees other than informal competition between the clans in order to raise their prestige by mobilising the greatest amount of resources. An urban informant commented, “in development, it comes to house. Gurages do not think of their clan, they think of the house. Within that house, different clans may be elected and run their development [but] they contribute money expecting that their house will get a share of Gurage development.” However, as outlined in section 3.2, clan has been used to articulate criticisms of the location of specific projects.

The scope of beneficiaries of development interventions also constrains the role of identities in the Gurage model, particularly in relation to resource mobilisation. This is related to Gurage notions of public goods and the importance of providing benefits for legitimacy. The scope of the benefits is geographically limited and will rarely benefit all Gurages. Most interventions have a geographically defined set of beneficiaries and no

projects could have benefited the whole Gurage ethnic group. Even within the smaller Sebat Bet community, projects could not have benefited all, or at least not equally.

3.2 The articulation of grievances and legitimisation of project location

One of the most significant uses of house identity by the sub-committees is in legitimising its choice of location of projects to overcome objections based on residence. In the relatively small area served by the Moher committee, all projects must benefit the whole house. House identity is used, by the leadership, to overcome objections based on village and, to a lesser extent, clan affiliations. Thus, the Moher committee claims to be acting on behalf of the whole of Moher and will not directly assist projects that benefit a smaller area, although its resource mobilising networks may be used. It is the associational leaders, in conjunction with rural elders, who determine whether a proposed project benefits the whole community. This seems somewhat elastic as previous projects, such as the telephone and high school and lobbying for water projects, have focused on the Cheza area, because it is the main market centre. There have been some complaints from Mohers in outlying areas who claim that their areas have been forgotten.

Enamor is a far larger area than Moher and the committee also promotes projects that benefit the whole area. There seems to have been more complaints about the leadership benefiting their home areas at the expense of others, and this was expressed in clan terms by some critics. The long-standing leader of the EDC is a clan head from a rather remote area and thus criticisms over the allocation of resources could well harness long-standing competition between certain clans. Thus, clan affiliations are used to explain and articulate grievances over the allocation of resources. However, it should be noted that, on a short visit, the area predominantly settled by this clan appeared to have far less physical infrastructure than the area around Gunchire. The criticisms thus appeared to be related to one specific project and could be linked to political agitation. For an outsider it was

impossible to verify whether clan affiliations do indeed affect the choices of location for projects.

As noted in Chapter 7, the most common criticism of all agents of development, including GPSDO, the sub-committees and the government at the Worreda and Zone level, was that they tended to favour their home areas at the expense of others. These criticisms tended to be articulated using identity and territorial affiliations. Thus GPSDO was criticised for favouring certain houses, and the sub-committees were occasionally criticised for favouring certain areas or clans at the expense of others. Similar criticisms were levelled at the various tiers of local government, with the Worreda authorities being criticised in Moher for favouring the other houses sharing their Worreda or favouring their home areas, whilst the Zone authorities were criticised for favouring the eastern Gurages over the Sebat Bet. I suggest that, in all these cases, disputes and perceptions over the unfair allocation of resources were expressed in either identity or territorial-based claims depending on which made the most sense to the informants. As previously stated, competition for access to resources often referred back to 'traditional' rivalries and alliances between clans and houses. However, these constructions of contemporary disputes contradict other statements made by these informants, as when they were pressed over the nature of these rivalries they always referred back to at least the 1940s and stated that relationships between the houses were now cordial. Much of the competition between and within house-based sub-committees appears to take the form of being caused by identity, however, identities are used to analyse contemporary events and disputes affecting GPSDO by referring them to the past.

Thus, although much of the competition within GPSDO takes the form of inter-house rivalries, house antagonisms are not the primary cause of these disputes. There are disputes between personalities of the elite and competition for resources between and within the sub-committees. However, they appear to take the form of inter-house conflict due to the organisational structure of GPSDO. In addition, this is the way that the

intellectual strata, particularly rural elders, make sense of these disputes by relating these contemporary disputes back to historical antagonisms and alliances between the houses. Thus, these disputes and competition for resources are rendered meaningful to the constituencies, and particularly participants at the general assemblies and the Shangos, by reference to house identities. These house identities, and the 'traditional rivalries' that shape them, are further used to mobilise support for various factions and to construct alliances across houses. The rural informants who were critical of GPSDO tended to express their understanding of the weaknesses of GPSDO by relating them to long-term tensions and historical alliances between houses. Thus, although competition between the houses is explained by reference to inter-house antagonisms, they are not in themselves the direct causes.

3.3 Competition within GPSDO

Within GPSDO, house identities become particularly salient during competition for places on the GPSDO executive committee and for resources from GPSDO. These contests are structured as contests between houses, which vote as blocks for their preferred candidates. For example, in Chapter 6, I outlined how Moher elders had constructed an understanding of contemporary issues within GPSDO by referring them to antagonisms dating back to the 1960s. There is much criticism of dominance by certain houses at the expense of others, and certain individuals appear to be more astute at forging alliances across house lines in order to gain control of GPSDO and to implement particular policies. For example, the previous leadership suggests that, from its inception to 1989, Cheha and other houses dominated the leadership of GPSDO. This seems to be borne out by Gurage historical accounts. The leaders from 1989 – 98 attempted to legitimise their leadership on the basis that they represented the small and remote houses that previously had been excluded from equal representation on GRCO executive.

Gurage intellectuals explain the dominance of leadership of GRCO / GPSDO by certain areas on the basis of variations in access to education. This was outlined by an ex-leader of GPSDO who suggested that access to education facilitated consciousness of the importance of development and the skills and access to decision-makers needed to transform it into developmental action. “[GRCO] was established by people who had access to education, those closer to the cities. In Sebat Bet Gurage, Cheha is closer to the towns, then Eza. Moher, Enor, Gomare, and Geta are detached and do not have access to education and development concepts. The Cheha had access to education very long ago, through the missionaries. The leaders and others who established the organisation and led it for a long time were from these groups. The others were remote they had no educated people to bring into the picture and they were not conscious about what was going on.” This led to the leadership of the organisation being dominated by Cheha. According to an official history of GRCO in the imperial period all the executive were from Cheha and Eza (Mariam 1972).

During a period of crisis in the mid-1990s, the concerns over the representation of the houses on the GPSDO executive committee became particularly salient. According to the then leader, “to stop the rumours, when the issue of elections and other conflicts came into the picture, I drew up a general report on the evolution of the organisation. Percentage-wise, [the] assumption of leadership by the remote corners was 1%. The others were: over 50% from Cheha, 40% from Eza, then Gomare, fourth was Moher and Akilil, then the others Enor, Geta, and the least Indegagn. The people who had historically held responsibilities assumed that they were the exclusive owners of the organisation. They excluded people from the remote corners. They never thought that such strong people would come up from these corners.” The concerns about the historical dominance of Cheha were articulated only at a time of intense conflict within the Gurage urban elite and attacks on GPSDO from the state. These differences in access to the leadership were used to legitimise the monopoly of power during the 1990s of a leadership who assumed

office in 1989 and according to the GPSDO constitution were supposed to seek re-election in 1991.

It should be noted that after the removal of the group discussed above, the GPSDO General Assembly decided that henceforth positions on the GPSDO executive would be equally distributed between the houses. However, whilst this has been accepted by most informants as a positive advance there were continuing criticisms of the election process particularly the formation of alliances between the more astute representatives of certain houses.

GPSDO has used a range of identities to construct a unified interest between urban and rural Gurages and within the urban Gurage community. Currently house is the principal identity used in this process, although during the road construction phase *Sebat Bet* identity was harnessed. These tangible identities are part of a construction of Gurage identity in which the notions of civic virtue emphasise both equality and commitment to the wider community. Due to its organisational structure, there has been no attempt to redress the imbalance in development between the houses. According to GPSDO discourses, the uneven development within *Sebat Bet* Gurageland is a consequence of differences in the organisational capacity of the leadership of the sub-committees and the financial base of the urban populations. However, dissent within GPSDO over the distribution of power and allocation of resources has been articulated with reference to identities based on house and clan. This section has focused on the ways in which identities have been used to mobilise resources and articulate and manage grievances. In the next section, I examine the impact of these processes on *Sebat Bet* Gurage identities.

4 Doing development and being Gurage

4.1 The embeddedness of development in Gurage identities

In section 3, the central role of identity-based institutions in consulting the community and mobilising resources was outlined. However, orientations to and participation in these institutions also define the scope of the community.

The primordialist explanations of the relationship between identity and communal action imply that people behave in a certain way because of pre-existing identities. Thus, ethnicity and other forms of identity are seen as the driving force of communal action. Some instrumentalist approaches imply that identities are merely inventions created by elites for specific purposes. Thus, identities, such as ethnicity, are created by ethnic entrepreneurs for particular purposes by generalising sectional interests as ethnic interests. Although the development associations continue to harness identities for development, analysis of the complexities of this historical process require a greater sophistication than instrumentalism can provide. A constructivist analysis of the evidence presented in previous chapters shows how participation in development has become a central element in the creation of Gurage identities and is now part of the social obligations that must be fulfilled to be seen as a member of Gurage communities. I suggest that the development associations initially harnessed Gurage identities for instrumental purposes but that, over time, this process led to development becoming an embedded element of Gurage identities. My argument is as follows.

First, the urban elite and prominent elders constructed a new form of Gurage citizenship from pre-existing cultural raw materials, such as identity based Idirs, Shango and particularly the rights and obligations embedded in Gurage migration. In this process, they were responding to changing circumstances, such as the increased financial and organisational capacity of urban Gurages and an expansion of political space. Identities

were used to legitimise and co-ordinate a range of interests that were served by road construction, such as the material interests of migrants and the rural community. Road construction also enhanced elders' prestige and reinforced the legitimacy of the elite in their relationship with government. These shared interests are unified and legitimised by Sebat Bet and house identities.

Second, this process involved input from the urban and rural intellectual strata who, rather than inventing traditions and identities from nothing to serve current interests, harnessed elements of the complex web of Gurage cultures, networks, institutions, obligations and histories of co-operation and public action. This process was dependent on the Gurage elite making accommodations with government structures and policies, to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by the access of members of the urban elite to government decision-making structures. Thus, development became part of the obligations of being a Gurage.

Third, an alliance of sections of the urban and rural elites and the rural elders acting through the development associations used Gurage identities to mobilise resources. People participated in development because development activity had become part of belonging to Gurage communities and because they had little choice. The alliance of the urban and rural elites together with the rural intellectual strata successfully rooted formal development endeavour within Gurage institutions. In the process of constructing the Gurage model of development, histories of co-operative labour, mutual assistance and migratory obligations became the points of reference when constructing new notions of Gurage citizenship in relation to development. This initiated a process whereby participation in development became an element of the obligations that go to make up Gurage identities. In this process participation in development became embedded within the web of obligations on community members. Thus, in the golden age used by the dominant Gurage discourse as a point of reference to analyse contemporary events,

people are Gurage because they fulfil their obligations to the rest of the community including participation in development.

In the postscript to Chapter 6, I noted that the dominant Sebat Bet Gurage development discourse is contested from within the Sebat Bet Gurage communities. This counter discourse challenged the effectiveness of indigenous Gurage development endeavour and questioned its relevance to young Gurages born in Addis Ababa. However, it did not question the centrality of development to the identities of the older generation of Gurages and contemporary migrants.

According to Gedamu (1972) and other contemporary Gurage accounts, the foundation of Gurage development associations had the secondary aim of raising the image and status of urban Gurages. With its long-term success, the Gurage model of development has become one of the key points that Gurages use to differentiate themselves from other ethnic groups. In Lonsdale's (1992) terms, development has become part of the internal morality of ethnic identity, which the group uses to distinguish itself from others. Development is thus symbolic of other aspects of Gurage civic virtue such as hard work, self-sufficiency and the role of social institutions. Many urban Gurages contrast the indigenously generated development in Gurageland with the cyclical famines in other parts of Ethiopia. They contrast the hard-working migratory Gurage peasant with the northern Ethiopian peasantry who are dependent on external aid. Their model of development has provided concrete evidence of the strengths and uniqueness of their culture and forms of social organisation.

Thus, to summarise:

1. The meanings of development are rooted in Gurage notions of citizenship, and in tangible public goods to the rural areas, which are distributed equally.

2. Participation in development has become an essential means of demonstrating commitment to Gurage civic virtue and therefore membership of the Gurage community.
3. Development is the clearest evidence of Gurage civic virtue as it demonstrates the distinctiveness of Gurage civic virtue and shows who the Gurages are.

4.2 Tensions in contemporary Gurage identities

The picture painted in section 4.1 reflects the dominant Gurage development discourse which pulls together several related discourses relating to the golden age of Gurage development and an idealisation of Gurage citizenship as personified by successful migrants who accept their obligations to other Gurages. From the responses of the vast majority of informants, developmental obligations continue to be embedded within Gurage identities. However, significant changes have taken place in the nature of Gurage migration which have called into question the accuracy of the idealised Gurage migrant discourse, outlined in Chapter 4. In addition to the changes to the political environment facilitated by ethno-federalism, discussed in section 2.1 and Chapter 7, significant socio-economic changes and demographic trends have helped to bring about changes in urban survival strategies and the de-linking of sections of the urban Gurage community. Thus, the political and socio-economic context under which Gurage identities are constructed has altered, which has led to fractures appearing in Gurage identity. One challenge is to what extent adherence to Gurage civic virtue continues to produce benefits. For example, some sections of the Gurage community question the utility of the orientations to other Gurages and Gurageland that are embedded in Gurage notions of citizenship. Thus, although the model of the developmental Gurage was widely presented by urban and rural informants, this may well represent a discourse relating to a past golden age of Gurage development rather than a reflection of current realities.

Another challenge is the awareness amongst the Gurage intellectual strata that significant changes are taking place in Gurage identities, which are affecting the Gurage model of development. This has led to an attempt by the urban elite and elders to refine the nature of migratory survival strategies by increasing focus on the importance of education, as discussed in Chapter 5.

A further challenge is the relationship between de-linked, urban Gurages and the Gurages for whom development is an integral part of their identities. In Chapter 4, I outlined a process of de-linking by the urban elite and Gurages born in Addis. I suggested that this group was developing alternative non-ethnic affiliations, as membership of the Gurage community was becoming less relevant to them. Furthermore, for new migrants the context of migration is changing. In Chapter 5, I suggested that the Gurage elite was aware of the reduced and changing opportunities for urban income generation. The traditional model of Gurage migration, based on the migrant progressing from a Listro to a trader is now far more difficult. These changes have led to a reassessment of the role of identity-based institutions, as Ikube, Idir, and trade networks are likely to become less important for social and economic survival.

This de-linking process has had several impacts on the Gurage development activity:

First, the Gurage community has shrunk or has become less visible. In this thesis, I have argued that in the dominant construction Gurage notions of community are limited to those who either institutionalise their linkages with the community, maintain connections with the rural area or can be contacted through informal trade networks. If these connections are of less importance to both new migrants and established residents of Addis, the ability of the development associations to access and mobilise the community will be compromised.

Second, the effectiveness of the social pressures and sanctions that had previously been used to mobilise urban resources are now less powerful. With de-linking from the Gurage community and the development of alternative non-ethnic ties, the sanctions have less relevance in social and economic terms. The urban community has fewer connections with the rural areas, they have less information about the social and economic conditions in Gurageland, and thus they are less likely to contribute to development. Furthermore, the loosening of ties to Gurageland means that rural kin can exert less pressure on them to contribute. There is also less incentive for urban people to contribute to development in order to increase their status in both the urban and rural sectors of the community.

Third, the response by GPSDO has varied. Some sub-committees are almost non-active, while others seek support from international NGOs. The sub-committees are aware of the impact of these socio-economic changes, as their activists tended to be older. However, it is difficult to disentangle these demographic and socio-economic problems from the wider political environment, as the inactivity of some committees could be due to political prohibitions and conflicts within GPSDO. Nevertheless, there is still much activity in the wider indigenous model of Gurage development and there are many contacts between localised development actors and the urban community. Many of the sub-committees are still highly active. In addition, the increased political space in Addis has led to a resurgence of identity-based Idirs there.

Finally, one of the major problems facing GPSDO and the sub-committees is the ageing of much of the activists. The leadership of many sub-committees were extremely worried about the lack of participation by young urban Gurages, particularly professionals. Some rural informants were highly critical of young professionals suggesting that they were selfish and had ignored the community that had provided them with education and social support. According to this group, the lack of interest in development from young professionals reflected a wider lack of willingness to fulfil their obligations to the rest of the community. However, the majority of informants were more sympathetic and suggested

that the urban community had a massive amount of obligations and lack of time and that they were forced to focus on providing for their immediate families. In particular, much sympathy was expressed for civil servants whose incomes and job security had been undermined.

5 Conclusions

I have argued that essentialist explanations of communal action are basically descriptive as they treat ethnicity as a main driver for activities such as development. The ultimate logic of this approach is that Gurages behave in a certain way because they are Gurage. However, this approach to the relationship between identity and communal action also underpins the official GPSDO discourse, as according to this discourse all Gurages participate in development because they are Gurage. My characterisation of these discourses is outlined in Figure 8.1. The GPSDO discourse has a more complex meaning related to its purpose, which is to encourage resource mobilisation on the basis of identity. Thus, the discourse and the perception of Gurageness that underpins it facilitates the Gurage model of development. Although GPSDO has not attempted to mobilise Gurages on the basis of a pan-Gurage ethnic identity, ethnicity as civic virtue plays a central role in Gurage development. The Gurage model of development is built on Gurage notions of civic virtue and has also become a central aspect in their construction.

The evidence presented in previous chapters suggests that the proposition that ethnic or other identities drive developmental activities should be reversed. People are Gurage because they conform to the behaviour expected of Gurages. Being a Gurage entitles one to a web of rights such as assistance in welfare and access to networks that facilitate trade. However, being a Gurage also entails responsibilities and obligations. In Chapter 4, I highlighted the importance of individuals institutionalising their relationships with other members of the clan or house in order to gain access to communal assistance. This

perception also underpinned the definitions of community outlined in Chapter 6, which limited membership of the community to those who maintain relationships with rural kin and participate in associational life, such as contributing to development.

Figure 8.1

Models of the relationship between ethnicity and collective action

	Relationship between ethnicity and collective action	Relationship between ethnicity and the Gurage approaches to development
Essentialist	Ethnic identity causes collective action.	People participate in development because they are Gurage.
Instrumentalist	Ethnicity is created to legitimise collective action.	Gurageness is created for the purpose of development.
Constructivist	Collective action is built on, reconstructs and affirms ethnic identity.	People are Gurage because they participate in development.

Although Gurage identity is based on meeting certain criteria such as clan, and therefore house membership, these identities are meaningless unless they are activated by participation in institutions or some other means of fulfilling obligations such as visiting rural areas and helping kin. Thus, at present, although being a Gurage is automatic by virtue of birth, an individual must also accept the responsibilities that go with group membership. One is born a Gurage but to be Gurage in a meaningful sense one must behave like a Gurage by fulfilling the obligations related to being a Gurage.

As outlined in Chapter 6, participating in development through providing resources and leadership has become an integral aspect of being a Sebat Bet Gurage. However, currently, it seems impossible for a person without the appropriate sub-ethnic affiliations of clan and house to become a Gurage. As I outlined in section 2, being Gurage, whilst

entailing membership of an imagined community, is based on membership of tangible communities, such as house and clan. The criteria used by Gurages to define their identities have both apparently fixed and active elements. At present, the apparently fixed elements are membership of the appropriate clan and house. Although house and clan identities are fixed, they are not seen as primordial by Gurage elders and other intellectuals who can date their origins. However, for the fixed criteria to become activated and form the basis of identities, they must be reinforced by the more active elements, such as participation in Gurage associational life as a means of discharging ones obligations to the community.

This case study has illustrated the complexities of the relationships between Gurages, their survival strategies, their social networks, and their notions of citizenship and perceptions of communal action. This thesis has analysed a specific set of social relationships, which are unique to Gurages. However, this approach, analysing development as a form of civic virtue, has implications for the study of other indigenous development associations.

The dominant development discourses stress the importance of indigenous agency in development, through indigenous organisations and beneficiary participation. My approach can contribute towards a better understanding of the ways that development associations and their beneficiaries construct a relationship of trusteeship based on forms of social organisation and the values embedded within them. This approach is also applicable to analysing how beneficiaries conceptualise their relationship with non-indigenous agencies of development. My analysis of how the values constructed around development interact with notions of social responsibility and citizenship can inform methodological debates within development studies, as it contributes toward developing conceptual approaches that centre on beneficiaries' understanding of the process of development.

The approach used in the thesis also has implications for the study of ethnicity in Africa. It demonstrates that constructivist analysis can be applied to situations where politicised forms of ethnicity are not apparent and therefore widens the scope for the analysis of ethnicity. It also contributes towards a better understanding of the relationship between processes within ethnic groups and the construction of relationships with other groups. This thesis illustrates that the relationship between ethnicity and development is a complex process, which can become self-sustaining. It demonstrates that an instrumentalist analysis of ethnicity can only reveal a partial picture of these processes at work. Although ethnicity is harnessed as a resource to achieve specific ends by ethnically-based development associations, it is also the medium through which the process of development is experienced. Fundamentally, this thesis demonstrates that ethnicity does not necessarily produce negative outcomes and is not always the result of political manipulation. I provide evidence that ethnicity can be part of a complex process of improving the socio-economic conditions of ethnic groups.

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