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Chapter 1: Profile

Introduction

The Horn of Africa is shaped like the horn of a blacksmith's anvil. It is the eastern part of the African continent jutting into the Arabian Sea and is mostly comprised of Ethiopia. Ethiopia is completely landlocked, surrounded by Eritrea to the north, Djibouti and Somalia to the east, Somalia and Kenya to the south, and Sudan to the west. Almost twice the size of Texas at 1.13 million square km (435,186 square miles), Ethiopia is covered with mountains and plateaus, and provides a major source of water for the Nile River.



Plateaus

Covering two-thirds of the country, the high or central plateaus are home to most of the Ethiopian population. Higher elevations range between 1,828 and 3,048 meters (6,000 to 10,000 feet) above sea level, and temperatures vary dramatically throughout the plateaus.

The Great Rift Valley

The Great Rift Valley, extending about 7,200 km (4,475 miles) from Jordan to Mozambique, was formed by the separation of the African and Arabian tectonic plates. Large enough to be seen from space, this rift in the Earth is active, subject to earthquake activity, and contains hot springs and volcanoes.¹ Just north of Lake Nyasa, the Great Rift splits in two. The Western Rift forms a series of lakes along fault lines, creating features like Lake Victoria and Lake Tanganyika—one source for the White Nile. Further west is the Congo Plain. The Eastern Rift is bordered by the mountainous plateaus of Kenya and Ethiopia as the Great Rift Valley descends into the Arabian Ocean and the Red Sea. The majority of Ethiopia's land is on plateaus, with lowland savannahs and deserts around the edges. Both mountain ranges and deep river canyons exist on the plateaus.²



Danakil Depression

Along the Great Rift Valley, the earth's crust thins as it stretches due to diverging tectonic plates. Because of this thinning, the land in the Danakil Depression has sunk to more than 93.5 m (371 ft) below sea level to become one of the lowest points on Earth. Here, lava flowing to the surface is constantly creating new land. Water seeps down from the surface only to come back up as

¹ James Wood and Alex Guth, "East Africa's Great Rift Valley: A Complex Rift System," Geology.com, No date. <http://geology.com/articles/east-africa-rift.shtml>

² Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Ethiopia," 2005, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Ethiopia.pdf>

steam. Earthquakes number in the hundreds every year, and the temperature can reach 50°C (145°F), making it one of the hottest places on Earth. There is no rain for nine months of the year; there are few plants, and only a few shallow salt lakes dot the terrain. Even in these adverse conditions, the Afar people call the Danakil Depression home.³

Climate

Temperature throughout the Central Plateau is fairly moderate, from 15°C (59°F) to 30°C (86°F). In lower plain areas, it can range from pleasantly warm to extremely hot with occasional high humidity.

Temperatures in the plains range from 30°C (86°F) to 50°C (122°F).

Some of the southwestern highlands receive as much as 2,000 mm (78.74 in) of rain in a year. The central and most of the eastern portions of Ethiopia have two rainy seasons and one dry season. The main rains, called *kiremt*, last from June to September. The *kiremt* rains are important because 90 to 95% of the crops grown in the country depend on them.⁴ The small *belg* rains arrive from February through May. The dry *bega* season is from October to January. Ethiopia's other regions have two distinct periods of rain and drought, creating four alternating weather periods throughout the year.



© Laurence Thurion
Flooding in Addis Ababa

History

Prehistory

The remains of earth's oldest discovered hominid (one of the family of humans) were unearthed in Ethiopia. In 1974, archeologists digging in the Great Rift Valley in Ethiopia uncovered part of a female skeleton estimated to be 3.2 million years old. The discoverer, Dr. Donald Johanson, called her "Lucy." The Ethiopians called her *dingenesh* ("you are amazing"). Her bones are now in the Ethiopian National Museum.⁵ Cushitic and Omotic tribes were the first modern humans to settle in the area around 7000 B.C.E.



Courtesy of Wikipedia
Skeleton of Lucy

³ Virginia Morell, "Africa's Danakil Desert: Cruellest Place on Earth," *National Geographic*, October 2005, <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0510/feature2/index.html>

⁴ Foreign Agricultural Service, "Ethiopia Annual Rainfall," September 2003, http://www.fas.usda.gov/pecad2/highlights/2002/10/ethiopia/baseline/Eth_Annual_Rainfall.htm

⁵ Oxfam.org.uk, "Ethiopia: Birthplace of our Earliest Ancestors," 2007, <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/kidsweb/world/ethiopia/ethanc.htm>

Ancient History

Sabaeans from Arabia traveled across the Red Sea, bringing with them a written Semitic language and knowledge of stonework. These nomadic tribes later became farmers and herdsmen as part of the Aksumite Empire.⁶ The Aksumites rose to power around 300 B.C.E., flourished in the next six or seven centuries, and declined over the next four hundred years. The core of the kingdom was in the highlands of southern Eritrea, Tigray, and Welo, with its major centers in Aksum in present-day Ethiopia and the port city of Adulis in Eritrea.⁷ The



© Justin Clements
Ruins of Queen Sheba's Palace

Ethiopian Orthodox faith asserts that Menilek I, the son of the Abyssinian Queen of Sheba (Sabea) and King Solomon, became the first Emperor of Ethiopia (ca. 930 B.C.E.).⁸ Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity rose in the region after a shipwrecked Byzantine came to the Aksumite court. King Ezana (325–360 C.E.) converted to Christianity and made it the state religion.

With the spread of Islam, contact with the Christian world other than the Coptic Church in Egypt became more difficult. Aksumite records were written in both Greek and Ge'ez, which is presumed to be the predecessor to Amharic and Tigrinya.⁹ Among the lasting contributions of the Kingdom of Aksum were the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, a written language, and a tradition of a multi-ethnic empire ruled by a King of Kings, a title taken by King Ezana that continued into the 20th century.¹⁰ The Aksum dynasty was succeeded by the Zagwe, who continued the Ethiopian Orthodox tradition.

About 1270 C.E., an Amharic nobleman named Yekuno Amlak expelled the last Zagwe ruler and proclaimed himself king. The new dynasty came to be known as the “Solomonic” dynasty, claiming direct descent from Solomon and the Queen of Sheba.¹¹ When the Zagwe Dynasty declined, the empire crumbled into many separate kingdoms. The Amhara Dynasty settled in the central part of the region. Eventually, Emperor Menilek II of this dynasty was responsible for assembling the remnants of the Amharic Kingdom into what is present-day Ethiopia.¹²

⁶ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, “Country Profile: Ethiopia,” 2005, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Ethiopia.pdf>

⁷ UNESCO, “Aksum,” 2010, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/15>

⁸ Paul Kobel, “Ethiopian Americans,” Everyculture.com, 2010, <http://www.everyculture.com/multi/Du-Ha/Ethiopian-Americans.html>

⁹ John W. Turner, “Chapter 1—Historical Setting. The Aksumite State,” in *A Country Study: Ethiopia*, Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1991, [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+et0013\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+et0013))

¹⁰ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, “Country Profile: Ethiopia,” 2005, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Ethiopia.pdf>

¹¹ John W. Turner, “Chapter 1—Historical Setting. The ‘Restoration’ of the ‘Solomonic’ Line,” in *A Country Study: Ethiopia*, Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1991, [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+et0016\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+et0016))

¹² Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, “Country Profile: Ethiopia,” 2005, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Ethiopia.pdf>

Modern History

Menilek II (1844–1913) defeated the Italians in the Battle of Adwa in 1896, thereby protecting Ethiopia's independence from the European powers attempting to colonize the area. Menelik II made Addis Ababa the capital city and worked diligently to modernize the country. Upon his death, he was succeeded by his grandson Lij Iyasu. Iyasu alienated his countrymen by favoring Muslims. He also antagonized the British, French, and Italians by supporting the Central Powers (including the Muslim Ottoman Empire) in World War I. Iyasu was deposed in 1916. Judith Zawditu, a daughter of Menilek, became Empress, with Ras Tafari Makonnen as regent and heir apparent. Makonnen was given additional powers by the Empress in 1928. On her death in 1930, he was crowned emperor as Haile Selassie I ("Strength of the Trinity"). Selassie, Ethiopia's last emperor, wrote the country's first constitution in 1931 and incorporated many Western political ideas to modernize the country.¹³



Courtesy of Wikipedia
Menilek II

Selassie introduced the two-house parliamentary system that exists to this day, abolished slavery, and ended the practice of brutal punishment for crimes. When Italy invaded in 1935, Selassie left the country. After a seven-month war, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia were occupied by Mussolini's Italian army from 1936 to 1941. Except for that occupation, Ethiopia was never colonized by Europeans.¹⁴ Selassie returned to Ethiopia after British and South African forces defeated the Italians. At the end of the war, Ethiopia became a charter member of the United Nations.¹⁵

A military-socialist regime known as the *Derg*, Amharic for "council" or "committee," removed Emperor Selassie from power in 1974.¹⁶ The *Derg* was led by Lieutenant Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam. Mengistu formed a socialist government aligned with the Soviet Union and became president of the newly instituted republic. The *Derg* attempted to nationalize and redistribute land as well as speed up literacy reforms. Famine and attacks from outside and inside the country weakened government control. In 1991, Mengistu resigned and left the country.¹⁷

The current constitution of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia was formally adopted in 1994. Ethiopia held its first multiparty parliamentary election in 1995.

¹³ Factmonster.com, "Ethiopia—History," No date, <http://www.factmonster.com/ce6/world/A0858046.html>

¹⁴ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Ethiopia," 2005, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Ethiopia.pdf>

¹⁵ John W. Turner, "Chapter 1—Historical Setting. Ethiopia in World War II," in *A Country Study: Ethiopia*, Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1991, [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+et0030\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+et0030))

¹⁶ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Glossary—Ethiopia," No date, http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/ethiopia/et_glos.html#Derg

¹⁷ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Ethiopia," 2005, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Ethiopia.pdf>

Government

Ethiopia has a parliamentary form of constitutional government with two Federal Houses, a President, Prime Minister, and Council of Ministers. The upper house is the House of Federation, whose members are elected by state parliamentarians. The lower house is the House of People's Representatives, which is popularly elected by citizens allowed to vote at age 18. Ethiopia has nine states that are primarily defined by ethnicity, and each has a state parliament.¹⁸ These are: Afar, Amhara, Benishangul Gumaz, Gambela, Harari, Oromia, Somali, Southern Nations—Nationalities and Peoples Region, and Tigray.



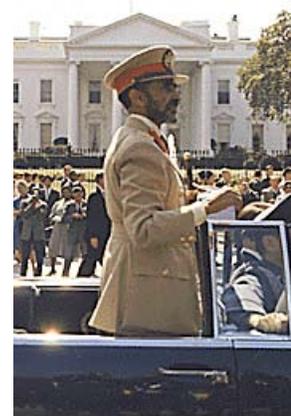
Courtesy of Wikipedia
President Girma Woldegiorgis

The President, Girma Wolde-Giorgis, was first elected in 2001 and won reelection in 2007.¹⁹ In the Ethiopian Parliament, the head of the party that wins the majority in the lower chamber becomes Prime Minister. Meles Zenawi won in 1995, 2000, and 2005. The Prime Minister has executive powers and authority over the military.²⁰

Today, Ethiopia's biggest concerns are weather-induced famine and ongoing border conflicts with Eritrea. Relations between the United States and Ethiopia were strained during the years of the *Derg*. Despite these differences, the U.S., along with other countries, donated surplus grain to alleviate the suffering caused by the devastating famine in 1984. Since then, communications between the two countries have improved, and the U.S. has given millions of dollars in aid to assist with the problems of hunger and poverty, and has funded education and military training.²¹

Foreign Relations

The Italians were driven out of Ethiopia by Menilek II in 1896, but they retained control of the northeastern corner of the region, naming it Eritrea.²² In 1961, Emperor Selassie seized Eritrea, claiming it had always been part of Ethiopia. Control of Eritrea gave landlocked Ethiopia access to valuable seaports at Assab. The Eritrea People's Liberation Front (EPLF) gained momentum after Selassie was removed and the *Derg* took control of Ethiopia in 1974. It wasn't until 1991 that the EPLF was able to wrest control of Eritrea, and negotiations began to end the fighting. In 1993, Eritrea voted for independence, which was reluctantly granted. Tensions remained, and war broke out again in 1998. A peace agreement was finally signed in 2000, but conflict



© ARC
Haile Selassie

¹⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, "Ethiopia," in *The World Factbook*, 8 December 2010, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/et.html>

¹⁹ EthioWorld.com, "The Executive Branch," 2001, <http://www.ethioworld.com/Politics/Government/executivebranch.htm>

²⁰ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Ethiopia," 2005, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Ethiopia.pdf>

²¹ "Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Ethiopia," 2005, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Ethiopia.pdf>

²² Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Ethiopia," 2005, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Ethiopia.pdf>

continues over the Yirga triangle, a 414-square-kilometer (160-square-mile) stretch of land between the two countries.²³ Ethiopia also has ongoing disputes over small portions of its borders with Sudan and Kenya, and its entire southeastern border with Somalia.

Media

At the same time the *Derg* emerged, the government began controlling the media. After the *Derg*'s 1974 revolution, the media became a tool for socialist propaganda. Because poverty and illiteracy rates are high, not much print media is available. The Ministry of Information and National Guidance closely controls the content of the *Ethiopian Herald*, the *Addis Zemen*, and the *Hibret*, a Tigrinya-language publication. Other media in Ethiopia must answer to the Ministry for content as well, including the nine radio stations and *Ethiopian Television*, the only broadcast TV station. Even though information streams into the country via satellite transmission and is thus outside government control, the existing powers have been firm in controlling free press.



© Javaman2000 / wikipedia.org
Monument celebrating the struggle against and overthrow of the Derg

Economy

Sources of Income

The main source of income for the country is agriculture that relies on rainfall as its only source of water. Agriculture constitutes 43% of the GDP and employs 85% of the workforce.²⁴ In Ethiopia, agriculture can be separated into three components: small crop farmers, cash-cropping, and raising livestock. The largest segment of agriculture is made up of the small farmers who grow grains such as *teff*, wheat, barley, oats, sorghum, corn, or millet. Cash crops include exports such as coffee, beeswax, fresh *qat* (a leafy psychoactive stimulant with an amphetamine-like effect), castor beans for oil, and sugarcane.²⁵ Coffee is the most critical of these crops to the Ethiopian economy, but low prices caused by greater global competition are pushing farmers toward more *qat* production. Livestock is raised mainly in the lowlands surrounding the central part of the country.²⁶



© Overseas Development Institute
Coffee farmer and his crop

In addition to agriculture, another 43% of the GDP is in the service sector while the remaining 14% is in industry.²⁷ Leading manufactured goods include processed foods, beverages, textiles,

²³ Bureau of African Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Ethiopia," 5 November 2010, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2859.htm>

²⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, "Ethiopia," in *The World Factbook*, 8 December 2010, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/et.html>

²⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, "Ethiopia," in *The World Factbook*, 8 December 2010, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/et.html>

²⁶ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Ethiopia," 2005, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Ethiopia.pdf>

²⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, "Ethiopia," in *The World Factbook*, 8 December 2010, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/et.html>

tobacco, leather goods, and footwear. Most of these products are for consumption by Ethiopians and not for export. Ethiopia has a growing cottage industry of small businesses that provide alternative avenues of employment. Ethiopia is also the source for civet musk, a secretion from the civet cat's perineal glands that is used worldwide in perfumes.²⁸

Problems and Opportunities

Although agriculture is the base for the country's economy, there is little irrigation and, by one estimate, only 20 % of arable land is used. With almost all farming dependent on rainfall, subsistence farmers that make up the bulk of the population struggle with recurring droughts.²⁹ Droughts caused famines from 1973 to 1979. More droughts, along with crop failures and political instability, created another massive famine from 1980 to 2004, resulting in expensive food imports from the rest of the world.³⁰ The World Bank granted Ethiopia debt relief in 2001, but the harsh conditions have been unrelenting.



© International Rivers
Dam on the Tekeze River

Egypt, itself greatly dependent on the Nile waters downstream, has been highly aggressive against Ethiopia taking any water for irrigation from the Blue Nile. The restructuring of land ownership in 1975 by the *Derg* reduced farms to inefficient sizes. The land that was nationalized then is still owned by the government; small business farmers are not able to use leased land as collateral for loans.³¹

By 1997, less than 2% of the potential hydropower was being used by the country. Most power in Ethiopia is used for cooking and comes from wood or charcoal, resulting in vast deforestation.³² Developing hydropower would reduce dependence on wood by providing alternate sources of power, benefiting a fledgling industry, and providing a marketable export to the rest of northeastern Africa. Additionally, oil and gas exploration continues in the southeastern lowlands and the Gambela region bordering Sudan.³³

²⁸ Citizenship and Immigration Canada, "Ethiopia—Cultural Profiles Project," No date, <http://www.cpc.ca/english/ethiopia/>

²⁹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Ethiopia," 2005, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Ethiopia.pdf>

³⁰ Jeremy Black, ed., *The Atlas of World History* (London: Dorling Kindersley Publishing, 2005), 169,

³¹ Central Intelligence Agency, "Ethiopia," in *The World Factbook*, 8 December 2010, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/et.html>

³² Solomon Seyoum Hailu, "Hydropower of Ethiopia: Status, Potential, and Prospects," *Mediaethiopia.com*, 1998, http://www.mediaethiopia.com/Engineering/hydropower_of_ethiopia.htm

³³ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Ethiopia," 2005, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Ethiopia.pdf>

Ethnic Groups

One barrier to national integration has been the existence of some 70 different languages. The imperial government recognized the need for a unifying language and adopted its own Amharic as the official language. This led to the suppression of other major languages, which created considerable resentment. Under Mengistu, the policy was changed to give several other languages official status as well, but Amharic was still the language of government business. People who didn't speak, read, or write Amharic had no chance of rising in national affairs.³⁴

The population of Ethiopia is estimated to be 88,013,491 as of November 2010.³⁵ Of this, 72% speak a language that belongs to one of three primary language groups: Semitic, Cushitic, and Omotic. Ethnicity is defined by how a person sees himself, and how others see him. In Ethiopia, this depends both on how long ago any mixing between two or more groups occurred and on social status. Often, people generally recognized as belonging to a particular tribe do not see themselves the same way. The Amhara, for example, are found in Gojam, Gonder, Welo, and Shewa in the West, Northwest, Northeast, and Central Highlands. But those in one area tend to view those in another area as different. So although the southerners saw the Christian Shewa as Amharic, the Amhara from Gojam and Gonder saw them not as Amhara but Oromo.³⁶

Historic tribal memories can be long-lived. The pre- and post-revolutionary Amhara dominance in the political and social fabric of Ethiopia has resulted in some extreme forms of resistance. Eritrea and Ethiopia have just ended a war, partly a result of Tigray desire for independence. The Amhara relationship with the Tigray has been influenced by a historical event: the only Tigray to rule Ethiopia, Yohannis IV (1872–89), was removed from power by Menilek II, an Amhara.



© azulnocturnal / flickr.com
Mother with sleeping child

³⁴ Yohannis Abate, "Chapter 2—The Society and Its Environment. Social Relations," in *Ethiopia: A Country Study*, Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1991, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@fieldDOCID+et0066>)

³⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, "Ethiopia," in *The World Factbook*, 8 December 2010, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/et.html>

³⁶ Yohannis Abate, "Chapter 2—The Society and Its Environment. Ethnic and Social Relations," in *Ethiopia: A Country Study*, Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+et0065\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+et0065))

Oromo

Called Galla by the Amhara, the Oromo migrated to the many regions they currently inhabit from their homeland in the southern highlands, beginning in the 16th century. Some Oromo, such as the Borana, remain pastoralists, while the great majority have become plow cultivators or are engaged in mixed farming.³⁷ About half the Oromo population is Muslim, while others are Orthodox Christian, and still others retain their indigenous beliefs.^{38, 39}

Population reports differ wildly, with the Ethiopian government reporting much lower numbers (approximately 15 million in 1994) than the separatist Oromo Liberation Front (28 million in 2005). Both reporting entities have reason to deflate or inflate numbers, respectively. The Oromo are a political minority who claim suppression by the government but are a numerical majority in Ethiopia, while the politically organized Amhara enjoy a high level of governmental representation and linguistic dominance.



© Charles Roffey
Oromo women in Harar

Amhara

Natives of the Ethiopian Highlands of the central northwest, the Amhara are the most politically represented ethnic group of Ethiopia, and thus Amharic is the official language. Their population of approximately 23 million is overwhelmingly Christian (over 90%). A major divide in present-day Ethiopian politics is the disparity between the underrepresented Oromo and the historically connected Amhara, who determined the present Ethiopian boundaries.⁴⁰

³⁷ Yohannis Abate, "Chapter 2—The Society and Its Environment. Ethnic and Social Relations," in *Ethiopia: A Country Study*, Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1991, [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+et0065\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+et0065))

³⁸ Ezra Markos, "Factors Associated with Marriage and Family Formation Processes in Southern Ethiopia," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 34, 4 (2003): 509

³⁹ Allrefer.com, "Ethiopia," No date, <http://reference.allrefer.com/country-guide-study/ethiopia>

⁴⁰ Mekuria Bulcha, "Modern Education and Social Movements in the Development of Political Consciousness: The Case of the Oromo," *African Sociological Review* 1 (1997), 30–65

Tigray

Traditionally governed by a monarchy, the Tigray live in the northernmost part of Ethiopia. The area has a population of more than five million, 94.8% of whom speak Tigrinya.^{41,42} The Tigray people have a high percentage of Christians (95.5% Ethiopian Orthodox, 0.4% Catholic) and a small number of Muslims (4.1%). In addition to the ethnic Tigray, there are minority populations of Saho (0.7%) to the northeast and Kunama (1800 in all) to the northwest, both of which are also present in Eritrea.⁴³

The region inhabited by the Tigray is both poverty-stricken and underdeveloped. Malaria is still endemic in 60–70% of this area.⁴⁴ Major droughts in 1972 and 1984, combined with political conflict, led to the displacement and death of many people.⁴⁵ Though drought is likely to be an ongoing problem, the appeal to migrate within and outside of Ethiopia has been reduced by an increasingly efficient and equitable food relief.⁴⁶



© Evgeniy Zotov
Tigray woman

Afar

The Afar call their land *cafar-barro*. Although viewing themselves as a single ethnicity, the Afar are geographically and politically divided across three countries (Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Djibouti). When the Eritreans defeated the Ethiopians, they claimed land for their new state. These recently created borders split clans and families, giving rise to such groups as the Ugugumo (the Afar Revolutionary Democratic Unity Front).⁴⁷ There are ongoing disputes between the Afar and the equally nomadic Issaq-Somali, who come up from the southeast. The two groups have been known to kill each other over livestock and pastureland.⁴⁸

By far the most important resource of the Afar is their salt mines. Although no longer used, *amole*, or salt blocks, were once traded as currency.⁴⁹ Muslim Afar and Christian Tigrayans from

⁴¹ Central Intelligence Agency, “Ethiopia,” in *The World Factbook*, 8 December 2010, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/et.html>

⁴² Lovise Aalen, “Ethnic Federalism in a Dominant Party State: The Ethiopian Experience 1991-2000,” Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2002: 39, [http://bora.cmi.no/dspace/bitstream/10202/186/1/Report 2002-2.pdf](http://bora.cmi.no/dspace/bitstream/10202/186/1/Report%202002-2.pdf)

⁴³ Lovise Aalen, “Ethnic Federalism in a Dominant Party State: The Ethiopian Experience 1991-2000,” Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2002: 39, [http://bora.cmi.no/dspace/bitstream/10202/186/1/Report 2002-2.pdf](http://bora.cmi.no/dspace/bitstream/10202/186/1/Report%202002-2.pdf)

⁴⁴ Lovise Aalen, “Ethnic Federalism in a Dominant Party State: The Ethiopian Experience 1991-2000,” Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2002: 41, [http://bora.cmi.no/dspace/bitstream/10202/186/1/Report 2002-2.pdf](http://bora.cmi.no/dspace/bitstream/10202/186/1/Report%202002-2.pdf)

⁴⁵ Lovise Aalen, “Ethnic Federalism in a Dominant Party State: The Ethiopian Experience 1991-2000,” Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2002: 40, [http://bora.cmi.no/dspace/bitstream/10202/186/1/Report 2002-2.pdf](http://bora.cmi.no/dspace/bitstream/10202/186/1/Report%202002-2.pdf)

⁴⁶ Lovise Aalen, “Ethnic Federalism in a Dominant Party State: The Ethiopian Experience 1991-2000,” Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2002: 47, [http://bora.cmi.no/dspace/bitstream/10202/186/1/Report 2002-2.pdf](http://bora.cmi.no/dspace/bitstream/10202/186/1/Report%202002-2.pdf)

⁴⁷ Virginia Morell, “Africa’s Danakil Desert: Cruellest Place on Earth,” *National Geographic*, October 2005, <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0510/feature2/index.html>

⁴⁸ Virginia Morell, “Africa’s Danakil Desert: Cruellest Place on Earth,” *National Geographic*, October 2005, <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0510/feature2/index.html>

⁴⁹ Virginia Morell, “Africa’s Danakil Desert: Cruellest Place on Earth,” *National Geographic*, October 2005, <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0510/feature2/index.html>

the Ethiopian highlands work together for 10 months of the year to mine salt and transport it to sell at Ethiopian markets and beyond.⁵⁰ As the salt caravans crisscross the desert, they exchange *dagu*, or news. It is through *dagu* that the Afar learn of newcomers to the desert, the condition of water holes and grazing land, or of caravans that might be missing.⁵¹

Somali

Many of the Somali clans located chiefly in Ethiopia have close associations with groups in Somalia.⁵² Somali society's genealogy is patrilineal, and organizes itself into groups such as the clan-family, clans, lineages, and sub-lineages. Though the clan-family has no actual political, economic, or social mission, the other groups do. These functions often include political and economic competition, which can lead to conflict between parallel social units.⁵³ Due to the Somalis' geographical dispersion as well as their lineal ties, disputes within Somalia proper can affect this area of Ethiopia.

There has been fighting in the Ogaden area, the western part of Ethiopia adjoining Somalia that is inhabited mainly by ethnic Somali. Fighting between Ethiopia and Somalia continued until the 1990s, although active fighting ceased in 1987. The situation escalated when about 35,000 Isaaq Somali arrived in Ethiopia after fleeing their homes in northern Somalia to escape persecution by the Barre regime.⁵⁴



© Andrew Heavens
Pastoralist woman in Gode

Berta

The Berta live in Benishangul Gumaz, about 686 km (426 miles) west of Addis Ababa. Benishangul comes from two words, *Ben* and *Shangul*, and means "People of the Quarry."⁵⁵ Members of the tribe take their names from the mountains that sheltered their ancestors. For example, the clans of Fashita and Fatsore are named after the Shita and Tsore mountains, respectively. Other clans in the area, such as the Aracabia, Alahangia, Asurakab, are believed to be of Arab origin.⁵⁶ The Berta are predominately Muslim and speak a language called Bertagna, as well as Arabic and Amharic.⁵⁷

⁵⁰ Virginia Morell, "Africa's Danakil Desert: Cruellest Place on Earth," *National Geographic*, October 2005, <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0510/feature2/index.html>

⁵¹ Virginia Morell, "Africa's Danakil Desert: Cruellest Place on Earth," *National Geographic*, October 2005, <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0510/feature2/index.html>

⁵² Allrefer.com, "Ethiopia," No date, <http://reference.allrefer.com/country-guide-study/ethiopia>

⁵³ Allrefer.com, "Ethiopia," No date, <http://reference.allrefer.com/country-guide-study/ethiopia>

⁵⁴ Yohannis Abate, "Chapter 2—The Society and Its Environment. Ethnic and Social Relations," in *Ethiopia: A Country Study*, Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1991, [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+et0065\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+et0065))

⁵⁵ Muluneh Gebre, "Ethiopia: Traditional Practices among the Berta Nationality," AllAfrica.com, November 5, 2004, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200411290923.html>

⁵⁶ Muluneh Gebre, "Ethiopia: Traditional Practices among the Berta Nationality," AllAfrica.com, November 5, 2004, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200411290923.html>

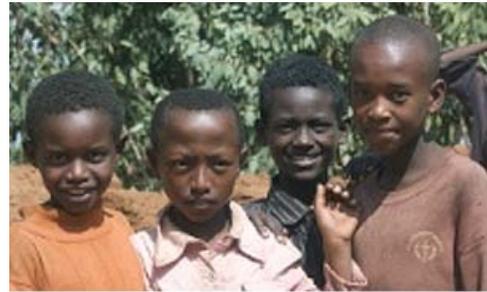
⁵⁷ Muluneh Gebre, "Ethiopia: Traditional Practices among the Berta Nationality," AllAfrica.com, November 5, 2004, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200411290923.html>

Nuer

The Nuer, a pastoral people, are located in the area of central western Ethiopia and the Sudanese border. Due to a scarcity of water and pastureland for their cattle, some Nuer have been migrating to areas inhabited by the Holls and Nyarweng communities.⁵⁸ This movement has led to grazing wars.

Sidama

The Sidama have a reported population of 857,000 and, like the other Highland East Cushitic speakers, cultivate a banana-like plant called *ensete* as a cash crop, as well as coffee. Those living at lower elevation (below 1,500 m/4,900 ft) keep cattle.⁵⁹ Though some Sidama have responded to the call of Protestant missionaries, others have held on to their traditional religious systems.⁶⁰



© John Diefenderfer
Ethiopian children in Sidama

Harari

Located predominately around the ancient city of Harar, the Harari (People of the City) speak a Semitic language. While they do not represent a unique ethnicity, this group has been able to retain many features of its cultural heritage even while blending with adjacent groups.

Tribal Issues

One continuing source of tribal differences has been land as the basis of wealth. During imperial times, social elites owned land, which they leased to landless peasants. Most southern farms were owned by Northerners who employed or leased land to non-Christian natives. In 1974, the *Derg* redistributed and then nationalized all privately owned land, changing the status indicators. The new elite were the well-educated children of the traditional nobility. The new social hierarchy was based on power, influence, and education. Economic privileges of power accrued to senior civil servants, military officers, party members, and government ministers.



© April Rinne
Pastures in Amhara

The urbanization of Ethiopia is a consequence of more accessible education and additional jobs. It has created a new group of city dwellers less dependent on tribal identity. Their lifestyle is significantly different from the estimated 89% of the population in rural areas. Clan members who migrate to the cities often take up residence near other members of their own clan out of a need for the familiar. However, they also develop additional associations based on occupational

⁵⁸ Encyclopedia Britannica.com, "Nuer," No date, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/422112/Nuer>

⁵⁹ Allrefer.com, "Ethiopia," No date, <http://reference.allrefer.com/country-guide-study/ethiopia>

⁶⁰ Allrefer.com, "Ethiopia," No date, <http://reference.allrefer.com/country-guide-study/ethiopia>

status. Government workers, lawyers, teachers, military, or priests tend to see themselves as members of professional networks rather than belonging to specific tribes.

Religion has played a part in tribal urbanization. The Amhara, usually Christian, traditionally have held high government posts. They did not push Muslims to convert to Ethiopian Orthodoxy, but neither did they promote them to national positions. Many of the Muslims moved into trade and commerce where religion was not a handicap.⁶¹ Historically, Muslims were considered subjects, meaning they were prevented from owning land, holding political office, or participating in assemblies or local meetings.

There are large numbers of Muslims in the south, southeast, and northeast in the provinces of Bale, Harare, and Welo, and in Eritrea. The same Muslims also belong to different ethnic groups. Centuries of Christian–Muslim conflict, fears of Arab nationalism, and Arab and Somali support for Eritrean separatism all fed Ethiopian fears of “Muslim encirclement.” This created a wall of distrust between the Christian and Muslim populations.⁶²

Predictably, the elite have become less attached to tradition than the rest of Ethiopian society. Education, occupation, lifestyle, and disposable income have come to mean more than tribal affiliation. This has even led to marrying across ethnic lines (though almost never across religions). The social divide still exists between urban/rural, educated/illiterate, office worker/farmer.⁶³

⁶¹ Yohannis Abate, “Chapter 2—The Society and Its Environment. Social Relations,” in *Ethiopia: A Country Study*, Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1991, [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+et0066\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+et0066))

⁶² Yohannis Abate, “Chapter 2—The Society and Its Environment. Social Relations,” in *Ethiopia: A Country Study*, Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1991, [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+et0066\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+et0066))

⁶³ Yohannis Abate, “Chapter 2—The Society and Its Environment. Social Relations,” in *Ethiopia: A Country Study*, Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1991, [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+et0066\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+et0066))

Profile Assessment

1. Ethiopia is known for its scenic port cities.

False

Ethiopia is completely landlocked, surrounded by Eritrea to the north, Djibouti and Somalia to the east, Somalia and Kenya to the south, and Sudan to the west.

2. Ethiopia continues to be vulnerable to famine.

True

Droughts caused famines from 1973 to 1979. More droughts, along with crop failures and political instability, created another massive famine from 1980 to 2004, resulting in expensive food imports from the rest of the world. The World Bank granted Ethiopia debt relief in 2001, but the harsh conditions have been unrelenting

3. The Great Rift Valley is visible from space.

True

The Great Rift Valley, extending about 7,200 km (4,475 miles) from Jordan to Mozambique, was formed by the separation of the African and Arabian tectonic plates. Large enough to be seen from space, this rift in the Earth is active, subject to earthquake activity, and contains hot springs and volcanoes.

4. The service sector employs the majority of Ethiopia's workforce.

False

Agriculture and the service sector *each* contribute 43% of the GDP, but 85% of the country's workforce is employed in agriculture.

5. "Lucy," the oldest discovered hominid, was found in Ethiopia.

True

In 1974, archeologists digging in the Great Rift Valley in Ethiopia uncovered part of a female skeleton estimated to be 3.2 million years old. Lucy's bones are now on display in the Ethiopian National Museum.

Chapter 2: Religion

Introduction

Christianity

Christianity, as practiced by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, is a prominent religion in Ethiopia. Christianity was accepted by the Aksumite King Ezana around 340 C.E. and, when designated as the official state religion, it spread throughout the kingdom. Separated from the Christian world by a developing Muslim empire, contact was maintained only with the Coptic Church in Egypt. A doctrinal split, prompted by two different views of Jesus, developed between Christians in the northern Mediterranean and those south of the growing Muslim empire. In Byzantium, people believed that Jesus was both human and at the same time divine, in two separate natures (the body and the soul or spirit). In what became known as monophysitism (Greek for “one nature”), the Coptic and Ethiopian Churches came to believe that Jesus was both human and divine, but in one body—there was no separation. The name of the Ethiopian church, from the Ge’ez word *Tewahedo*, refers to the “one nature” of Jesus.⁶⁴ Not all Ethiopians identify with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Protestants are growing in numbers, especially in the south and in urban areas.⁶⁵



© Ondřej Odcházal
Ethiopian Orthodox Priest

Islam

Islam came to Ethiopia in the seventh century C.E. on the crest of a successful wave of military and religious proselytizing. Ethiopia holds a special place in early Islamic history for several reasons. First, an Ethiopian man named Bilal was the first *muezzin* asked by Muhammad to call the community to prayer. To this day, Ethiopian Muslims in particular and African Muslims as a whole feel a special kinship with Bilal and pride in the fact that Muhammad trusted an Ethiopian with a task that has become such a symbol of Islam.⁶⁶ Second, Ethiopia was a haven to some of Islam’s first converts, who fled persecution in Mecca before Islam took hold there and found sanctuary under Ethiopia’s Christian king.⁶⁷ Islam is practiced by approximately 40 percent of the nation. The believers are Sunni Muslims mostly located in the south.



© Steve Evans
Muslim man

⁶⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Monophysite,” 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/389961/monophysite>

⁶⁵ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, “Ethiopia: International Religious Freedom Report 2004,” <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2004/35355.htm>

⁶⁶ David Robinson, *Muslim Societies in African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 54–55.

⁶⁷ David Robinson, *Muslim Societies in African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 111.

Other Religions

Other smaller denominations include some traditional animist religions that exist mostly in the southern foothills. A Jewish community settled approximately 2,000 years ago in northern Ethiopia around the Lake Tana area. Through the years, their faith evolved into a mix of Judaic and Ethiopian traditions. Those who practice this faith call themselves *Beita Yisrael* (House of Israel), but are known as *Falasha* (Amharic for stranger or landless ones) by the rest of the country. Their scripture, the *Orit*, is written in Ge'ez and includes the Old Testament and some apocryphal books. When the *Falasha* were endangered by civil war and famine, the government airlifted thousands of them to Israel during the 1980s. Small groups of *Falasha* still live in Ethiopia, mostly in Addis Ababa, where there is a synagogue.⁶⁸

Religion and Government

The Role of Religion in the Government

The Ethiopian Constitution enshrines freedom of religion. While that freedom is generally respected, the government requires religious groups to be registered. Churches and other non-governmental organizations must re-register every three years with the Ministry of Justice. Any religious organization engaged in formal development work must also register as a non-governmental organization. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Islam share roughly equal percentages of the population, between 30-45 percent each, though each religion claims larger numbers of followers. Religious groups are not tax-exempt, but can apply for state-owned land on which to build churches, schools, hospitals, or cemeteries. Any school or hospital, regardless of how long it has existed, can be closed by the government and have its land confiscated.⁶⁹



© A. Davey
Painting of historical scene

Official holidays include Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Epiphany, Eid al-Adha (the Muslim day of sacrifice associated annually with the *hajj*, or pilgrimage), the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, and Eid al-Fitr (which concludes Ramadan). One example of religious freedom is that it is possible for students to petition for changes in class times, to allow for prayers at noon. Official business ceases for two hours on Fridays beginning at noon, to facilitate prayer practices of Muslims.⁷⁰ There are laws against religious political parties but they have never been tested.

Islamic law, *sharia*, plays no role in the government. Most religious tension is directed toward the government in the form of grievances. Inter-religious violence or open hostility is rare. Although there are scattered reports of friction between religious groups, the various sects appear

⁶⁸ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Falasha," 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/200649/Falasha>

⁶⁹ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "Ethiopia: International Religious Freedom Report 2004," <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2005/51472.htm>

⁷⁰ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "Ethiopia: International Religious Freedom Report 2004," <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2005/51472.htm>

to have found balance. For the most part, that balance is maintained and enforced by the government.⁷¹

Influence of Religion on Daily Life

Accommodation is made on many levels for practicing either Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity or Islam, but it is best to avoid discussing religion in Ethiopia if possible. Religion is a sensitive topic to citizens, and most people are not tolerant of comments about their faith. While many look at hospitality toward Muslims by Aksum's early Christians as a standard to be followed, Muslims who feel disenfranchised or hostile toward their Christian compatriots may tell a different story.⁷²

Relationships among different religions in Ethiopian society have generally been amicable. This contributes to a feeling of religious freedom. The main tensions affecting daily life have been intra-religious, such as the questions dividing Muslims between traditionalists and strict fundamentalists.⁷³



© Ondřej Odcházal
Daily prayer

Influence of Religion on Male/Female Interaction

In the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, prayers are offered on a daily basis. A white fringed prayer shawl is worn by both men and women at mass and also for daily prayers at home. Because men and women are seated separately during mass, it is respectful for visitors to remain in their respective gender areas during prayers.⁷⁴

Celebrations

Religious Events

Mass is celebrated on Sunday, and some devout followers observe Saturday Sabbath as well. Services at the Ethiopian Orthodox Church are quite important and can last overnight on holidays. A large portion of the service is sung, accompanied rhythmically with drums and sticks. When not attending mass, followers show devotion through daily prayers and regular fasting. The dates of



© Andrew Heavens
Timket celebrations

⁷¹ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "Ethiopia: International Religious Freedom Report 2004," <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2005/51472.htm>

⁷² David Robinson, *Muslim Societies in African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 112

⁷³ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "Ethiopia: International Religious Freedom Report 2004," <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2004/35355.htm>

⁷⁴ "The Liturgy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church," 31 January 2010, <http://www.eotc.faithweb.com/liturgy.htm#main10>

almost all the religious celebrations are variable, depending on the Islamic or Orthodox calendars.⁷⁵

The faithful observe over 200 days of fasting in the Ethiopian Orthodox tradition. Fasting is observed on Wednesdays and Fridays; before Christmas; and during the Lenten season. Additional fasting commemorates events such as the gift of the Holy Spirit to Christ's apostles. On fasting days, only vegetarian food is cooked; no meat or dairy products are prepared. These special meals are served not only in private homes but also in public places such as restaurants and schools. Fasting may also be a complete abstention from food and water.⁷⁶

The year is blanketed with feasts and commemorations, the most important of which include 9 feasts of the Lord and 33 feasts and festivals devoted to the Virgin Mary.⁷⁷ Examples include the Epiphany, or *timket*, which is a three-day celebration observed two weeks after Christmas. On the first day, Epiphany Eve, crowds gather and march in colorful processions to Gondar, where Christ's baptism by John is reenacted on the second day. The third day is the Feast of St. Michael.⁷⁸

Meskel, a commemoration of the "Finding of the True Cross," celebrates an event from around 325 C.E. Helena, the mother of the Christian Roman emperor Constantine the Great, is said to have had a temple destroyed in Jerusalem, thus uncovering remnants of the cross of Christ. Because it is believed that Helena followed smoke from a bonfire to find the relics, *Meskel* celebrations involve a large bonfire. Afterwards, the faithful use the charcoal to paint a cross on their forehead. This celebration occurs annually on September 27 or 28. *Meskel* is the Amharic word for "cross."⁷⁹

Festival of Maryam Zion

On this holiday in late November, pilgrims flock to Aksum by the thousands to pray to the Virgin Mary, who is highly venerated in the Ethiopian Orthodox tradition. The majority of pilgrims are women, who ask for help with fertility, rainfall, or illness in front of the shrine to Our Lady of Zion.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Ethiopia," 2005, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Ethiopia.pdf>

⁷⁶ "Religious holidays and calendar," No date, <http://www.ethiopianorthodox.org/english/calendar.html>

⁷⁷ "Religious holidays and calendar," No date, <http://www.ethiopianorthodox.org/english/calendar.html>

⁷⁸ Tourismethiopia.org, "Cultural attractions," No date, <http://www.tourismethiopia.org/pages/detail/detailfestival.asp>

⁷⁹ Ethiopiantreasures.co.uk, "Religious festivals," 2010, <http://www.ethiopiantreasures.co.uk/pages/festival.htm>

⁸⁰ Matt Phillips and Jean Bernard Carillet, *Ethiopia & Eritrea* (Lonely Planet, 2006), 141.

Buildings of Worship

Ethiopian Orthodox Churches in Ethiopia are usually round or octagonal. Each church has its own *tabot*, a chest that contains stone tablets representing the tablets in the Ark of the Covenant. The *tabot* is very sacred and is kept in a chamber called the Holy of Holies (mirroring the ancient Jewish temples), but with 12 doors representing the 12 apostles of Jesus. Only priests and monks are allowed to enter this chamber.⁸¹ The rock-hewn churches in Lalibela, each made from a single block of stone, are considered a wonder of the modern world.⁸²



© Aluka Digital Library
Church in Lalibela

According to the Ethiopian Church, the Our Lady Mary of Zion church in Aksum houses the actual Ark of the Covenant, the sacred container for the Ten Commandments that Moses carried with the Israelites.⁸³ The building is surrounded by armed guards. It is closed to all but one monk, who is designated as caretaker and is required to spend the rest of his life confined to the church.⁸⁴

There are also monasteries sprinkled throughout the country. In the Ethiopian Church, monasteries are highly spiritual places. The monks who reside in them do not marry but live quietly, devoting their days to solitary prayer.⁸⁵

Church Etiquette

Visitors are normally welcome in churches, but some special rules may apply. If you have a question, it is always better to ask.



© Travlr / flickr.com

Men of the church in Addis Ababa

⁸¹ Nita Bhalla, "Ethiopia's neglected island monasteries," *BBC Online News*, 24 September 2001, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1560736.stm>

⁸² Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Lalibela," 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/328345/Lalibela>

⁸³ Michael Dumper and Bruce E. Stanley, *Cities of the Middle East and North Africa* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO Inc., 2007), 20.

⁸⁴ Candice Millard, "Keepers of the Faith: The Living Legacy of Aksum," *National Geographic.com*, July 2001, http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/data/2001/07/01/html/ft_20010701.fulltext.6.html

⁸⁵ Nita Bhalla, "Ethiopia's neglected island monasteries," *BBC Online News*, 24 September 2001, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1560736.stm>

Exchange 1: May I enter?

Soldier:	(May I enter?)	megwaat echeelaalo?
Civilian:	Yes.	aawo

When entering a church, you should remove your shoes and be sure that your body is covered.

Exchange 2: Do I need to cover my head?

Soldier:	Do I need to cover my head?	raaseyn meshefen aalaabin?
Civilian:	Yes.	aawo

Smoking, drinking, and talking loudly are prohibited in churches. Be sensitive when taking photographs; it is probably best to get permission first. Sometimes you might be allowed to take pictures of the church interior in exchange for a fee. Do not try to enter the Holy of Holies. It is a sacred area reserved for priests and monks.⁸⁶



© Wojtek Ogradowczyk
Priest offering incense

Exchange 3: Who conducts the mass this morning?

Soldier:	Who conducts the mass this morning?	zaarey te-aawat qedaasi manaw yemeek-adasaw?
Civilian:	Father Seyum.	aaba seyoom

Exchange 4: Does he say the mass in English?

Soldier:	Does he say the mass in English?	qedaasewoon be-engelizeenya naw yemeek-edesoot?
Civilian:	No.	aay

Some of the rules in church may differ from other churches you may have visited. Again, it is good to ask if you are unsure.

⁸⁶ Nita Bhalla, "Ethiopia's neglected island monasteries," *BBC Online News*, 24 September 2001, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/1560736.stm>

Exchange 5: I would like to receive Communion.

Soldier:	I would like to receive Communion.	qurbaan mequrab ifeligalaw.
Civilian:	Ok, but have you gone to confession?	eshee gin nuzaazey gebtehal?
Soldier:	What day and time is confession?	yenoozaazey k-en-ena se-aat mechey naw?
Civilian:	Friday and Saturday at 5:00 in the afternoon.	aarb ena kedaamey ke se-aat ba-asra aand se-at laay.

Cemeteries

Just as religious communities are important in Ethiopian life, religious identification remains significant after death. Thus, cemeteries are often either Christian or Muslim. Cemeteries are viewed as sacred places in both Muslim and Christian faiths. When visiting a cemetery, do not speak loudly or laugh, and do not ask personal questions about the deceased. Show proper respect in what is considered to be a holy site. People are not allowed to walk on or sit on graves or to enter the tombs.

Anyone is allowed to go to a Christian cemetery, including women. A cross marks a grave, and some graves may have elaborate statues of angels. Tombstones in Muslim cemeteries are simpler and have plainer stones.



© Evgeniy Zotov
Cemetery in Lalibela

Religion Assessment

1. Christianity spread throughout Ethiopia in the Late Middle Ages.

False.

Christianity was accepted by the Aksumite King Ezana around 340 C.E., and, when designated as the official state religion, spread throughout the kingdom.

2. Islam spread to Ethiopia in the early modern era.

False.

Islam came to Ethiopia in the seventh century C.E. on the crest of a successful wave of military campaigns and religious proselytizing.

3. Islam is a prominent religion in Ethiopia.

True.

Christianity, as practiced by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, is a prominent religion in Ethiopia, as is Islam. Both represent between 30-45 percent of the population, though each religion claims larger numbers of followers.

4. Islam and Christianity are the only religions practiced in Ethiopia.

False.

Other, smaller communities include some traditional animist religions (mostly in the southern foothills) and a Jewish community that originally settled around the Lake Tana area approximately 2,000 years ago.

5. The Ethiopian Constitution protects the freedom of religion.

True.

The Ethiopian Constitution enshrines freedom of religion. The government requires religious groups to be registered, and those engaged in formal development work must also register as a non-governmental organization.

Chapter 3: Traditions

Greetings and Interactions

Ethiopia is a highly hospitable and friendly culture. Visitors are usually greeted with a cheery hello or a handshake, especially from children. Ethiopians believe that generosity and kindness signify goodwill in relationships.⁸⁷ Different greetings are appropriate at different times of day.



© Evgeniy Zotov
Family in Simien Mountains

Exchange 6: Good morning!

Soldier:	Good morning!	indemen aaderk!
Civilian:	Good morning.	dehinaa indemen aaderk

Exchange 7: Good afternoon!

Soldier:	Good afternoon!	indemen walk!
Civilian:	Good afternoon.	dehinaa indemen waalk

Exchange 8: Good evening.

Soldier:	Good evening.	indemen aameshaKh
Civilian:	Good evening.	dehinaa indemen aameshaKh

Exchange 9: Good night.

Soldier:	Good night.	dehinaa ider
Civilian:	Good night.	dehinaa ider

⁸⁷ Matt Phillips and Jean-Bernard Carillet, *Ethiopia & Eritrea* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2006), 43.

Greetings may be extensive and repetitive. Good male friends may continue holding hands during the conversation that follows, which includes a number of questions about the health of the family, about crops, or the weather. They may also extend good wishes to the family. It is considered impolite not to follow this convention.⁸⁸



© April Rinne
Greeting "hello"

Exchange 10: Are you doing well?

Soldier:	Are you doing well?	dihinaa neKh
Civilian:	Yes.	aawo

Part of this greeting is also a nod or a quick bow to show respect. Depending on the closeness of the bond with the person met, three kisses on the cheek are acceptable while holding your right elbow with your left hand, saying *amisegalano*.⁸⁹

In Ethiopia, people considered equals shake hands, but visitors to the country are usually expected to shake hands with everyone.

Exchange 11: How are you?

Soldier:	How are you?	indemen neKh
Civilian:	Fine, thank you.	dehinaa, yeemesgen

When being introduced, Ethiopians will give only their first name. You should do the same. Ethiopians do not use last names or surnames, only a personal name given at birth. If they have a second name, it is likely the personal name of the father. A third name is usually the personal name of the paternal grandfather.⁹⁰ The term "Mister" is *Ato*. "Mrs." is *Woizero*, abbreviated *Wzo*. "Miss" is *Woizerit* (*Wzt...*). A man named Tesfaye Desta would be introduced as *Ato Tesfaye*. His wife, Almaz Teferra, would be introduced as *Woizero Almaz* under a highly formal circumstance.⁹¹ In formal situations, the last name is used.

Exchange 12: Hi, Mr. Kebada.

Soldier:	Hi, Mr. Kebada.	selaam aato kabede
Civilian:	Hello.	salaam

⁸⁸ Citizenship and Immigration Canada, "Ethiopia—Cultural Profiles Project," No date, <http://www.cp-pc.ca/english/ethiopia/>

⁸⁹ Matt Phillips and Jean-Bernard Carillet, *Ethiopia & Eritrea* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2006), 43.

⁹⁰ Citizenship and Immigration Canada, "Ethiopia—Cultural Profiles Project," No date, <http://www.cp-pc.ca/english/ethiopia/>

⁹¹ UN Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia, "Ethiopia: Country Profile," 2002, http://www.africa.upenn.edu/eue_web/livcond.htm#liv21

Male-Female Relationships

The honor of women is quite important in Ethiopian culture, especially among Muslims. Although it is acceptable to ask about the health of the family in general, you should not ask specifically about a wife or daughter.

Women in Ethiopian Orthodox communities enjoy greater equality than those in the Muslim community. Christian women share more responsibility for family and wealth.⁹² The Muslim community is still dominated by men.



© Internews Network
Young couple from Welco

Exchange 13: God bless you and your family.

Soldier:	God bless you and your family.	egzyab-her anten enaa beyta-sabahen yeebarka
Civilian:	Thanks to God.	egzyab-her yeemesgen

While in Ethiopia, it is common to see people of the same sex holding hands. This is a sign of friendship only. However, it is not acceptable for people of the opposite sex to hold hands or engage in any display of public affection, even if married.⁹³

Dress Code

Western clothing is commonly worn in urban areas, but in rural areas, conservative dress is called for. Sleeveless shirts or shorts are considered offensive. Women should not show cleavage and should cover their shoulders and knees. When in a formal meeting or visiting a home, it is respectful to wear a dress shirt and tie, or better yet, a suit.⁹⁴ Even those in urban areas who wear Western clothes still wear traditional clothing on holidays such as Christmas, at festivals, or to weddings.⁹⁵



© Evgeniy Zotov
Amhara women

⁹² Stefan Dercon and Pramila Krishnan, "In Sickness and in Health... Risk-Sharing within Households in Rural Ethiopia" (working paper, Centre for the Study of African Economies, Institute of Economics and Statistics, University of Oxford, 1997), 33, <http://www.csae.ox.ac.uk/workingpapers/pdfs/9712text.pdf>

⁹³ Amharic Lessons, "Ethiopian Culture," 2010, <http://amhariclessons.com/?q=node/11>.

⁹⁴ Matt Phillips and Jean-Bernard Carillet, *Ethiopia & Eritrea* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2006), 43.

⁹⁵ Senayit Girma, "Ethiopians Are Proud of Their Traditional Clothes," Silver International, 2002, <http://silverinternational.mbhs.edu/v163/V16.3.04b.Ethiopianclothes.htm>

Exchange 14: Is this okay to wear?

Soldier:	Is this okay to wear?	yehinin melbas icheelaaluH
Civilian:	Yes.	aawo

Traditional clothing worn by many Ethiopians in rural areas varies from region to region.⁹⁶ Despite these differences, the *shamma* and *netela* are quite common. The *netela* is worn by women.⁹⁷ The Muslims of Harar near Somalia dress using a great deal of color: the men in short trousers with a colored wrap, the women in dresses of purple, black, and red.

Exchange 15: How should I dress?

Soldier:	How should I dress?	endeyt aaynet libs lilbas
Civilian:	Dress casually.	yetelemeda libs-libas

Traditional dress is highly weather dependent. In the north, night chill necessitates heavier clothing than in the much warmer south. On ceremonial days such as those at *Meskal*, Oromo horsemen of the southern highlands arrive for parades adorned with lion manes or baboon-skin headdresses, and carrying hippo-hide spears and shields.⁹⁸

Food

Ethiopia's main dish is a spiced stew called *wot* that can contain any combination of meat, poultry, and vegetables. Ethiopians eat it by hand using a large, thin, slightly sour flatbread called *injera*. Christians, Muslims, and Jews in Ethiopia abstain from eating pork.⁹⁹ A beer (called *talla*) brewed from barley or maize is common, as are a honey-based mead (*tej*) and a sorghum-based brandy (*katikalla*). The most famous drink of Ethiopia is coffee from Kefa, a highlands area in the south. It claims to be the original home of the coffee bean.



© Travlr / flickr.com
Ethiopian food platter

Fresh vegetables are a staple of Ethiopian cuisine because they are abundant and inexpensive.¹⁰⁰ They also play an important role in local diets because of the many fasting days when meat is not eaten. Fruits, such as bananas, watermelons, pineapples, mangoes, papayas, grapes and citrus, are available seasonally. Apples and pears may be available in stores that typically cater to foreigners, but these fruits are imported and sell for a high price. Plums and strawberries are also

⁹⁶ Selamta, "Ethiopian Culture," 2010, <http://www.selamta.net/culture.htm>.

⁹⁷ Senayit Girma, "Ethiopians Are Proud of Their Traditional Clothes," Silver International, 2002, <http://silverinternational.mbhs.edu/v163/V16.3.04b.Ethiopianclothes.htm>

⁹⁸ Selamta, "Ethiopian Culture," 2010, <http://www.selamta.net/culture.htm>

⁹⁹ Citizenship and Immigration Canada, "Ethiopia—Cultural Profiles Project," No date, <http://www.cp-pc.ca/english/ethiopia/>

¹⁰⁰ Ethnomed, "The Traditional Foods of the Central Ethiopian Highlands," 1971, <http://ethnomed.org/clinical/nutrition/the-traditional-foods-of-the-central-ethiopian>

pricier than other fruits. Before they are eaten, all fresh foods should be soaked in disinfectant, not just rinsed with water.¹⁰¹

Hospitality

Because of the friendliness of the Ethiopians, visiting friends is commonplace. Foreigners are often invited to dine with an Ethiopian family. If at all possible, accept graciously and thank the host for the invitation.

Exchange 16: I really appreciate your hospitality.

Soldier:	I really appreciate your hospitality.	silaa ak-abelachooH inaameseganaalen
Civilian:	You're welcome.	menim aaydelem

Cleanliness while eating is important because of both hygiene and manners. Food is taken from a communal dish, so before beginning a meal, everyone washes their hands. Out of respect for elders, it is customary to stand when an elderly person enters a room and to remain standing until they are seated. An Ethiopian host will typically wait for the guest at his table to initiate eating, which the guest signals by pulling *injera* bread from the area in front of them without reaching across the plate or in front of others. It is considered impolite to put food back on the serving tray.¹⁰² All eating is done with the right hand alone, and licking one's fingers or touching one's mouth is improper.¹⁰³



© azulnoturnal / flickr.com
Woman cooking a meal

Exchange 17: Did you make this meal yourself?

Soldier:	Did you make this meal yourself?	yehinin megib aanta naKh yagazehaawo?
Civilian:	Yes, I did.	aawo iney ning

It is considered polite to actively engage in conversation during the meal.¹⁰⁴ Topics to avoid are politics and religion. It is usually safe to talk about the weather, or ask about things the Ethiopians would be proud to talk about, such as the Lalibela Churches, Obelisks of Aksum, or even sports.

Exchange 18: The meal was very good.

Soldier:	The meal was very good.	megboo bet-aam t-eroo neber
Civilian:	Thanks.	aameseganaalo

¹⁰¹ UN Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia, "Ethiopia: Country Profile," 2002, http://www.africa.upenn.edu/eue_web/livcond.htm#liv21

¹⁰² Everyculture, "Ethiopia," No date, <http://www.everyculture.com/Cr-Ga/Ethiopia.html>

¹⁰³ Matt Phillips and Jean-Bernard Carillet, *Ethiopia & Eritrea* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2006), 72.

¹⁰⁴ Everyculture, "Ethiopia," No date, <http://www.everyculture.com/Cr-Ga/Ethiopia.html>

Should your Ethiopian friend present you with a gift, you must accept it using both hands. If you use only one hand, you are showing a lack of appreciation for the gift.¹⁰⁵

Ceremony

You may be invited to a coffee ceremony,, a significant part of Ethiopian life. When you arrive, everything is laid out on a mat of sweet-smelling grasses: a traditional round, a black, clay coffee pot called a *jebena* with a straw stopper; green coffee beans; a mortar and pestle; and an iron frying pan. The hostess washes the beans in the frying pan, then pours out the water and sets the pan with the beans over a charcoal fire. As she shakes the pan, the dry husks are blown away. When the beans are a rich, oil-shined and black, she puts the now-roasted beans in the mortar and grinds them to a fine powder with the pestle. The powder is added to the coffee pot with fresh, cold water, and put on the charcoal fire.



© Matthew Goulding
Preparing a coffee ceremony

Once it is brewed, and then strained several times to remove the coffee grounds, it is time to serve. In a home, the youngest member present serves the first cup (called *abol* or “first round”) to the eldest, then the next eldest, and so on. All continue through the second round, or *tona*, to the third round, *baraka*. It is considered impolite to drink less than three cups because Ethiopians believe the *baraka* transforms the spirit. As the Ethiopians say, *buno dabo na*, or “Coffee is our daily bread.”^{106, 107}

Favorite Pastimes

Favorite sports include soccer, running, riding, hiking, and swimming. In urban areas, movie theaters, bars, and night clubs are available. In some bars, one can play *biliardo* or billiards.

A game called *genna*, resembling hockey, can be observed especially in rural areas. *Genna* is played with a bent stick called a *t'ing* and a wooden ball, *irur*. The game has no defined playing area, or any limit on playing time or the number of players. The goals are any two predetermined spots, which may spread across two villages.^{108, 109}



© Andrew Heavens
Wrestling competition

¹⁰⁵ F.L. Gordon, *Ethiopia, Eritrea & Djibouti* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2000).

¹⁰⁶ Emily Doyle, “Ethiopian Coffee Ceremony,” *Epicurian*, No date, <http://www.epicurean.com/articles/ethiopian-coffee-ceremony.html>

¹⁰⁷ Matt Phillips and Jean-Bernard Carillet, *Ethiopia & Eritrea* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2006), 70.

¹⁰⁸ Citizenship and Immigration Canada, “Ethiopia—Cultural Profiles Project,” No date, <http://www.cp-pc.ca/english/ethiopia/sports.html>

¹⁰⁹ Matt Phillips and Jean-Bernard Carillet, *Ethiopia & Eritrea* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2006), 48.

Superstition

Ethiopians of all faiths cultivate a number of superstitions and extra-religious beliefs. One of the most common involves the “evil eye” and the fear that those possessing it have the power to curse and harm others. The term *buda* is sometimes used to describe such people; they are considered strange, outcast, and dangerous. Scarecrows are erected to protect crops not from birds, but from curses that might endanger the harvest. These notions are often accompanied by a belief in nature spirits that may be benevolent or ill-willed. Amulets and hand signs may ward off the evil eye, but in the Orthodox Church, deacons (*dabtara*) may provide charms or white magic. From the time of baptism, Christian children may be given charms and talismans as protection.¹¹⁰



© Matthew Goulding
Painting in Gondar Church

Calendar

The Ethiopian calendar has 12 months of 30 days each, running from September 11 to September 10, with 5 or 6 days added (*pagume*: 13th month).

The names of the months and dates are:

Meskrem	(New Year): 11 September–10 October
Tikemt	11 October–9 November
Hidar	10 November–9 December
Tahsas	10 December–8 January
Tir	9 January–7 February
Yekatit	8 February–9 March
Megabit	10 March–8 April
Miyazya	9 April–8 May
Ginbot	9 May–7 June
Sene	8 June–7 July
Hamle	8 July–6 August
Nahase	7 August–5 September
Pagume	6–10 September ¹¹¹

Non-Religious Celebrations

¹¹⁰ Matt Phillips and Jean-Bernard Carillet, *Ethiopia & Eritrea* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2006), 42.

¹¹¹ UN Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia, “Ethiopia: Country Profile,” 2002, http://www.africa.upenn.edu/eue_web/livcond.htm#liv21

Ethiopian national holidays include the anniversary of the Battle of Adawa (March 2); May Day (May 1); Patriots' Victory Day (May 5); Downfall of the *Derg*, now Ethiopia's National Day (May 28); and Ethiopian New Year's Day (September 11).



© Tristram Sparks
Memorial for National Day

Exchange 19: Will you celebrate the festival next week?

Soldier:	Will you celebrate the festival next week?	yemeeket-alo saamint ba-aal takavraalachooH
Civilian:	Yes.	aawo

Weddings

Marriages are commonly arranged and usually involve a dowry given by the groom's family to the bride's.¹¹² One recent study found that a majority of women (55%) feel they were pressured into their marriages. Parents, who are overwhelmingly the primary source of that pressure, typically choose the husband for their daughters, and 75% of all women did not know the groom before the wedding. Women are also often married at a very young age. Although the mean marrying age for women in Ethiopia is slowly rising, many women are still married by the age of 15.¹¹³ Many of the wedding customs and ceremonies blend ethnic traditions.¹¹⁴ Yet each ethnic group has unique customs and rituals for social events.



© Evgeniy Zotov
Traditional Christian wedding

Exchange 20: Congratulations on your marriage.

Soldier:	Congratulations on your marriage.	silaa tegaabachooH inkwaan des yaalachooH
Civilian:	Thank you.	inaameseganaalen

*Ethiopian Orthodox Weddings*¹¹⁵

Christian weddings usually occur in churches, although the ceremonies may differ widely. In a traditional (and increasingly less common) *takelil* wedding, the bride and groom agree in a special ceremony never to divorce. In other types of weddings, the dress for both bride and

¹¹² Ethiopian Treasures, "Marriage," 2010, <http://www.ethiopiantreasures.co.uk/pages/marriage.htm>

¹¹³ Bogalech Alemu, "Early Marriage in Ethiopia: Causes and Health Consequences," Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 2006, http://www.kit.nl/net/KIT_Publicaties_output/showfile.aspx?e=1417

¹¹⁴ Everyculture, "Ethiopia," No date, <http://www.everyculture.com/Cr-Ga/Ethiopia.html>

¹¹⁵ Everyculture, "Ethiopia," No date, <http://www.everyculture.com/Cr-Ga/Ethiopia.html>

groom is very Western, consisting of tuxedos and formal wedding gowns. When witnessing a wedding or even being invited to one, it is appropriate to congratulate the couple.

Exchange 21: I wish you both much happiness.

Soldier:	I wish you both much happiness.	lehuletaachehum desta emaanyalaachuhaalo
Civilian:	Thank you.	inaameseganaalen

Funerals

Funeral traditions within Ethiopia's diverse ethnic community may vary greatly. The Sidama people traditionally held an elaborate, three-day mourning ceremony for the deceased, not scheduled until several months after the death. Due to conversions to Islam and Christianity, many of these tribal practices are fading. Muslims bathe the dead and wrap them in a white shroud, burying them as quickly as possible, often in a ceremony that involves scripture readings. Orthodox Christians place their dead in caskets in the ground or in tombs after a period of mourning and prayer.¹¹⁶



© Medé Libé
Funeral Procession

Exchange 22: I sympathize with you.

Soldier:	I sympathize with you.	haazeniKh yeesaamanyaal
Civilian:	Thank you so much.	aamaseginaalo egzyaber yistiling

Keep in mind that funerals are always somber events. If you are close to a funeral procession or a group of mourners, do not laugh or point. Be respectful and let them pass; give your condolences if possible.

Exchange 23: I would like to offer my condolences.

Soldier:	I would like to offer my condolences to you and your family.	haazenaachinen lebeytasebo enaak-erbalen egzyabyer yatnaachooH
Civilian:	Thank you.	aameseganaalo

Exchange 24: Please be strong.

Soldier:	Please be strong.	t-enkaara hun
Civilian:	Thank you so much.	aamaseginaalo egzyaber yistiling

¹¹⁶ Everyculture, "Ethiopia," No date, <http://www.everyculture.com/Cr-Ga/Ethiopia.html>.

Do's and Don'ts

Do not smoke in front of locals, and especially priests. Many Ethiopians do not smoke, but it is not regulated in public.

Do not take pictures of buildings and public areas without first asking. Taking pictures of certain areas is prohibited, and doing so may result in a fine.

Do not discuss sexual relations of any kind in public. This is highly offensive to Ethiopians.

Do not show the bottom of your feet when interacting with Muslims.

Do not talk to women when male relatives are around. Address the males instead.

Do not talk about politics or ongoing conflicts.

Do not use foul language—some locals may be able to understand you. English four-letter words are highly offensive.



© Jordan Sitkin

"Women are not allowed inside"

Traditions Assessment

1. It is unusual to see two people of the same sex holding hands.

False.

It is common to see people of the same sex holding hands in Ethiopia. This is a sign of friendship only. However, it is not acceptable for people of the opposite sex to hold hands or engage in any display of public affection, even if married.

2. Ethiopian Orthodox Christian women typically have more of a role in the financial well-being of the family than their Muslim counterparts.

True.

Women in Ethiopian Orthodox communities enjoy greater equality than those in the Muslim community. Christian women share more responsibility for family and wealth. The Muslim community is still dominated by men.

3. When introducing yourself to an Ethiopian, you should only use your first name.

True.

When being introduced, Ethiopians will give only their first name, except in formal situations.

4. Ethiopian names are typically composed of four parts.

False.

Ethiopians do not use last names or surnames, only a personal name given at birth. If they have a second name, it is likely the personal name of the father. A third name is usually the personal name of the paternal grandfather.

5. Ethiopian custom dictates that people wash their hands before eating.

True.

Because Ethiopians take food from a communal dish by hand, cleanliness is especially important. Before beginning a meal, everyone washes their hands.

Chapter 4: Urban Life

Introduction

Ethiopia is primarily rural, with only 15 % of the population living in urban centers. Urban centers in Ethiopia often have fewer than 5,000 residents. Except for larger cities such as Addis Ababa, they are essentially extensions of rural communities lacking urban resources and infrastructure.¹¹⁷



© Travlr / flickr.com
View of Addis Ababa

The cities of Ethiopia are a mix of apartment buildings and nice homes at their centers, surrounded by grazing farm animals. Addis Ababa in particular boasts modern comforts such as hotels and restaurants. Ethiopian cities are ethnically and economically diverse, but the cost of urban housing is rising and transportation issues are mounting. In urban areas, phone service is adequate.¹¹⁸

Exchange 25: May I use your phone?

Soldier:	May I use your phone?	silk met-ekem icheelaaluH?
Civilian:	Sure.	eshee

Exchange 26: What is your phone number?

Soldier:	What is your phone number?	silk qutriH sinti naw?
Civilian:	My phone number is 132 5447.	silki qutrey aant sost hoolet aamist aarat aarat sab-at naw.

Education

Ethiopia has made progress in recent decades promoting primary education, but secondary and postsecondary education enrollment is still quite low. The World Bank estimates that almost two-thirds of Ethiopian children are not in school. Following common patterns in the developing world, education opportunities in Ethiopia are not as readily available for girls as for boys, and that divide worsens with successive grade levels. Girls' primary school enrollment levels are about 27 %, compared to about 55 % for boys. Children in urban areas



© Clare H-P
School in Addis Ababa

¹¹⁷ Thomas P. Ofcansky and LaVerle Berry, eds., "Ethiopia: Urbanization," in *Ethiopia: A Country Study*, Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1991, <http://countrystudies.us/ethiopia/44.htm>

¹¹⁸ Matt Phillips and Jean-Bernard Carillet, *Ethiopia & Eritrea* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2006), 76.

have greater opportunities for education than those in rural areas. A child in a rural area is one-third as likely to receive a primary-level education.¹¹⁹

Exchange 27: Do your children go to school?

Soldier:	Do your children go to school?	lejocheH timherta beyt yeheedaalo?
Civilian:	Yes.	aawo

While there are many primary schools scattered through the country, secondary schools can usually be found only in larger cities. Since so few secondary schools exist, attendance at school drops off rapidly after primary school. Even in areas where schools are accessible, attendance drops as children age because they become more valuable as workers at home.

After the 10th grade, students are divided into two groups: those who will be given more intense academic instruction in order to attend a university, and those who will receive commercial, polytechnic, teaching, or professional training.¹²⁰ These divisions are made after children take aptitude tests.¹²¹ Addis Ababa has a university and junior colleges. Other junior colleges in Ethiopia are found in provincial towns.¹²² The government is implementing education reforms aimed at encouraging vocational training.

Exchange 28: Is there a school nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a school nearby?	bek-erboo timherta beyt aala?
Civilian:	Yes.	aawo

Health Issues

With almost half the nation living below poverty level, the indices of health in Ethiopia are poor. Hospitals are available to a limited extent in dense urban areas.¹²³



© Travlr / flickr.com
Research Institute in Addis Ababa

¹¹⁹ The World Bank, *Education in Ethiopia: Strengthening the Foundation for Sustainable Progress* (Washington, DC: 2005), 113

¹²⁰ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Ethiopia," 2005, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Ethiopia.pdf>

¹²¹ The World Bank, *Education in Ethiopia: Strengthening the Foundation for Sustainable Progress* (Washington, DC: 2005), 24.

¹²² Ministry of Education, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, "List of Public Universities in Ethiopia," 2009, <http://www.ethiopia.gov.et/English/MOE/Information/Pages/Education%20and%20Learning%20Institutions.aspx>

¹²³ Matt Phillips and Jean-Bernard Carillet, *Ethiopia & Eritrea* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2006), 371.

Exchange 29: Is there a medical clinic nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a medical clinic nearby?	ezeeKh aakaababee kleenik aala?
Civilian:	Yes, over there.	aawo ezaaga

Clinics outside the capital are inadequate at best.¹²⁴ Some clinics manage to function in rural areas, but it is difficult or too far for most people to attempt the journey. In 2000, the country counted one hospital bed per 4,900 people and one doctor for every 48,000 people. There were 20 health providers per 100,000 people.¹²⁵

Exchange 30: Is there a doctor here?

Soldier:	Is there a doctor here?	ezeeKh Haakeem aala?
Civilian:	No.	aay

The government is working to reduce poverty and to increase funds for education, health, sanitation, and water supply. Another program is geared to develop primary health care, and in 2005, distribution of antiretroviral drugs was implemented to help those infected with HIV.¹²⁶

AIDS/HIV has threatened the general welfare of the country.¹²⁷ Young adults between the ages of 15 and 24 are most at risk of being infected. An estimated 4 to 18 % of the general population is infected, while 30 % of deaths among young adults have been linked to the AIDS virus.

Malaria is common, and a yellow fever immunization is required for those traveling to Ethiopia. It is advisable to bring a personal supply of prescription drugs if needed, because refills will be hard to come by.

With Ethiopia's health care situation as it is, you might need to be able to ask a doctor questions, or to help if someone needs medical attention.

**Exchange 31:** My knee is broken doctor, can you help me?

Soldier:	My knee is broken doctor, can you help me?	dokter gulbaatey tesebruwaal leeredung geechilaalooH?
Civilian:	Yes, I can help you.	aawo leradaaH icheelaalo

¹²⁴ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Ethiopia: Country Specific Information," 7 May 2010, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1113.html#medical

¹²⁵ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Ethiopia," 2005, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Ethiopia.pdf>

¹²⁶ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Ethiopia," 2005, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Ethiopia.pdf>

¹²⁷ Matt Phillips and Jean-Bernard Carillet, *Ethiopia & Eritrea* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2006), 372.

Exchange 32: Do you need my help?

Soldier:	Do you need my help?	ke-eney erdaata tefelegaala?
Civilian:	Yes.	aawo

Exchange 33: Do you know what is wrong?

Soldier:	Do you know what is wrong?	min endehona tawk-aaleH?
Civilian:	No.	aay

Daily Life of Urban Dwellers

Traffic

Ethiopians drive on the right side of the road, and the speed limit in most towns and villages is 60 km/h (37 mi/h). Driving can be erratic, because many residents do not use rearview mirrors or turn signals, and they ignore the posted speed limit. The main roads of Addis Ababa are paved but not well maintained. Many side streets are still unpaved, badly potholed (especially during the rainy season), and rough on tires. Both drivers and pedestrians tend to ignore traffic lights.¹²⁸



© Sam Efron
Congested traffic

Exchange 34: Is there a gas station nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a gas station nearby?	nedaaj / banzeen maadeya beq-erb aala?
Civilian:	Yes.	aawo

Traffic police, while often overburdened, are effective and laws are enforced. Cars and trucks that break down on major roads are simply parked where they have stopped and a circle of stones are put around the vehicle to warn other drivers.¹²⁹

Exchange 35: Is there a good auto mechanic nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a good auto mechanic nearby?	t-ero mekaaneek bezeeKh aakaababee aala?
Civilian:	Yes.	aawo

¹²⁸ Matt Phillips and Jean-Bernard Carillet, *Ethiopia & Eritrea* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2006), 170.

¹²⁹ UN Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia, "Ethiopia: Country Profile," 2002, http://www.africa.upenn.edu/eue_web/livcond.htm#liv21

Exchange 36: Do you know how to fix this?

Soldier:	Do you know how to fix this?	yehinin masrat ticheelaaleH?
Civilian:	No.	aay

Urban transportation consists of city buses and taxis. Buses are available on the main routes, but do not service some of the city's residential areas.



© Pierre Boisselet
Blue cab in Addis Abeba

Exchange 37: Will the bus be here soon?

Soldier:	Will the bus be here soon?	awtoboos ahun yimet-al?
Civilian:	Yes.	aawo

Taxis, distinguished by their blue bodies and white roofs, often have the same availability or crowding problems as the buses and are much more expensive. Many Ethiopian taxis do not have meters, so fares must be agreed upon in advance.¹³⁰

Exchange 38: Can I get a cab around here?

Soldier:	Can I get a cab around here?	bezeeKh aakaababee taaksee aagenyaalo?
Civilian:	Yes.	aawo

Finding a rental car is nearly impossible, and only in Addis Ababa may you find such services, if at all. Even then, it is advisable to hire a driver.

Exchange 39: Can I rent a car from you?

Soldier:	Can I rent a car from you?	kaanta mekeenaa mekeraayit icheelaaluH?
Civilian:	No, you cannot.	aay aats-chilim

¹³⁰ Matt Phillips and Jean-Bernard Carillet, *Ethiopia & Eritrea* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2006), 105.

Transportation

The Ethio-Djibouti Railroad runs three times a week from Addis Ababa to Djibouti, via Nazret, Awash, and Dire Dawa. The trip could be done in 40 to 42 hours, but it often takes longer because of repairs or other problems.¹³¹



© Travis / flickr.com
Train in Ethiopia

Exchange 40: Is there a train station nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a train station nearby?	baabur t-aabiyaa bek-erbu aala?
Civilian:	No, there is not.	aay, yelem

Ethiopian Air Lines flies to about thirty domestic airports and offers international flights. Jet service is offered to Dire Dawa and to Asmara in Eritrea. Although international service is fairly punctual, domestic service can vary and is weather dependent.¹³² There have been occasional hijackings of flights carrying American citizens, but Ethiopia is considered to be compliant with international aviation safety standards. There is a “no-fly” zone in effect near the border with Eritrea.¹³³

Exchange 41: Which direction to the airport?

Soldier:	Which direction to the airport?	aaroplan maarifyaw beyet bekul naw?
Civilian:	That way.	bezaa bekul naw

¹³¹ UN Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia, “Ethiopia: Country Profile,” 2002, http://www.africa.upenn.edu/eue_web/livcond.htm#liv21

¹³² UN Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia, “Ethiopia: Country Profile,” 2002, http://www.africa.upenn.edu/eue_web/livcond.htm#liv21

¹³³ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Ethiopia: Country Specific Information,” 2006, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1113.html

Restaurants

Restaurants are readily available in Addis Ababa and most other major cities.¹³⁴



© Travlr / flickr.com
Serving coffee

Exchange 42: Are you still serving breakfast?

Soldier:	Are you still serving breakfast / lunch / dinner?	k-urs / mesaa / eraat / taak-erbaalachooH?
Civilian:	Yes.	aawo

If you are invited to eat, you are not expected to pay. It is usual to invite someone who just provided services to you, such as a driver or a guide, to join you for a coffee or a meal.

Exchange 43: I'd like a coffee / tea.

Soldier:	I'd like a coffee / tea.	boonaa / shaay efelegaalo
Civilian:	Sure.	eshee

In this case, it is customary that you will pay their bill when you pay yours. The favor will be returned at some point.

Exchange 44: Can you get me my bill?

Soldier:	Can you get me my bill?	ebaakiH heesaabun sit-eng?
Civilian:	Sure.	eshee

Exchange 45: Put this all on one bill, OK?

Soldier:	Put this all on one bill, OK?	yehinin heesaab aandelaay argo, eshee?
Civilian:	OK	eshee

¹³⁴ Matt Phillips and Jean-Bernard Carillet, *Ethiopia & Eritrea* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2006), 72.

When getting the attention of a waiter or porter, it would be offensive to whistle or snap your fingers. Instead, say *yikerta* (excuse me), or clap your hands to get their attention.¹³⁵



© Travlr / flickr.com
Restaurant in Addis Ababa

Exchange 46: I'd like some soup.

Soldier:	I'd like some soup.	shorba felegaalo
Civilian:	Sure.	eshee

Diners take a seat on low wooden stools at round tables, and food is served on large platters. Ethiopians find the thought of individual dishes silly and redundant.¹³⁶ Typically, cloths and water jugs are presented before a meal, so that you may wash your hands before eating.

There is no silverware since food is eaten using the right hand only.

Exchange 47: What type of meat is this?

Soldier:	What type of meat is this?	yihey yemen segaa naw?
Civilian:	Lamb.	yebeg

Complimenting the cook is always a friendly gesture.



© Selena Hoy
Ethiopian Vegetarian Plate

Exchange 48: This food is delicious.

Soldier:	This food is delicious.	yiH megib yit-aafetal
Civilian:	Thank you.	aamasegenaalo / egzyabheyr yestiling

¹³⁵ Matt Phillips and Jean-Bernard Carillet, *Ethiopia & Eritrea* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2006), 72.

¹³⁶ Matt Phillips and Jean-Bernard Carillet, *Ethiopia & Eritrea* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2006), 72.

Exchange 49: Do you have any dessert?

Soldier:	Do you have any dessert?	t-aafach neger aalachooH?
Civilian:	We have fruits.	feraafarey aalen

In Ethiopia, it is normal for waiters to remove the dishes immediately from the table. To leave dirty dishes in front of a customer would be an insult to the customer. Don't be surprised if your plates are taken away the moment it appears you have finished.

Exchange 50: Do you have any more water?

Soldier:	Do you have any more water?	ch-emaaree wuhaa aalachooH?
Civilian:	Sure.	aawo

The following exchange will help you find the facilities.

Exchange 51: Where is your bathroom?

Soldier:	Where is your bathroom?	metaat-ebiya beyt yet naw?
Civilian:	Over there.	ezaaga

Market Place

Shops in the cities are typically open every day except Sunday, but they are closed for an extended lunch hour from 1 to 3 p.m. Most prices are set, so haggling over discounts is not necessary. Virtually no shops accept credit cards, so carrying hard currency is best.¹³⁷



© Evgeniy Zotov
Woman selling textiles

Exchange 52: Do you accept credit cards?

Soldier:	Do you accept credit cards?	kredeet kard tek-ebelaalachooH?
Civilian:	No.	aay

Money can be exchanged into local currency at most banks, but exchange on the black market is illegal and is punished with fines or imprisonment. Shop owners will be highly reluctant to accept foreign currency, so carry the local Ethiopian *birr* instead.

Exchange 53: Do you accept U.S. currency?

Soldier:?	Do you accept U.S. currency?	ya-amereekaan genzib tek-abelalachooH
Civilian:	No, we only accept Birr.	aay biri bechaa naw yemenik-abelaw

¹³⁷ Matt Phillips and Jean-Bernard Carillet, *Ethiopia & Eritrea* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2006), 265.

Traditional markets can be found not only in rural areas, but in certain places in the city as well.

Exchange 54: Is the market nearby?

Soldier:	Is the market nearby?	gebeyaw kirbi naw?
Civilian:	Yes.	aawo

These markets may move to different places on different days.



© Dietmar Temps
Market in Bati

Exchange 55: How much longer will you be here?

Soldier:	How much longer will you be here?	ezeeKh senti gezey tek-oy aaleH?
Civilian:	Three more hours.	sost se-aat

In traditional markets and bazaars, or when hiring transportation, bargaining *is* acceptable, even anticipated. One should not bargain if one has no intention of buying. It would be good to have an idea of how much something is actually worth before haggling with the vendor.

Exchange 56: I can give you this much money for this.

Soldier:	I can give you this much money for this.	lezeeKh yehinin yahel genzeb letsetiH echeelaalo
Civilian:	No.	aay

Exchange 57: Can you give me change for this?

Soldier:?	Can you give me change for this?	lezeeKh menezzaarey letset-eng ticheelaaleH
Civilian:	No.	aay

It is acceptable to pick up a vendor's wares in order to inspect them.



© PicturesFromWords / flickr.com
Vendor in Addis Ababa

Exchange 58: May I hold this and inspect it?

Soldier:	May I hold this and inspect it?	yehinin be-ijay mayaaz echeelaalo?
Civilian:	Sure.	eshee

Exchange 59: Do you have any more of these?

Soldier:	Do you have any more of these?	endezeeKh aaynet betich-emaree aala?
Civilian:	No.	aay

The following exchanges will help you when shopping for a specific item.

Exchange 60: Do you have this in a smaller/larger size?

Soldier:	Do you have this in a smaller/larger size?	kezeeKh yaanesa / yetelek-a aalachooH?
Civilian:	Yes, we do.	aawo aalen

Exchange 61: Do you have this in a different color?

Soldier:	Do you have this in a different color?	yehay beleelaa k-elem aala?
Civilian:	Yes.	aawo

Street vendors

Avoid buying food from street vendors. You can never be sure about the safety of this food.



© Evgeniy Zotov
Tela (beer) Vendor

Exchange 62: Did you prepare this food?

Soldier:	Did you prepare this food?	yehinin megib anchee nesh yegizaashoo?
Civilian:	No.	aay

Exchange 63: Is this food fresh?

Soldier:	Is this food fresh?	yehey megib yezaaree naw?
Civilian:	Yes.	aawo

Some street vendors can be aggressive in demanding that you buy something from them.

Exchange 64: Buy something from me.

Civilian:	Buy something from me.	ke-eney ande neger gizaa
Soldier:	No, go away.	alfeligem wedia heed

Beggars

It is common to find beggars in the larger cities, especially Addis Ababa, but also anywhere foreigners stop. Because of learned behavior, the beggars know to target foreigners for assistance. What to give or to whom will be a personal choice.¹³⁸



© Paolo Di Tommaso
Beggar in Addis Ababa

Exchange 65: Give me money.

Civilian:	Give me money.	ganzeb sit-eng
Soldier:	No, I don't have any.	aay, menim yelgnm

Crime

Ethiopia is considered a safe country, although there are some problems in urban areas. Take the usual precautions: Avoid walking around the city alone at night and try to look as if you know where you are going. Thieves tend to target those who look lost or unsure of themselves. Petty crimes such as pick-pocketing and “snatch and run” are common in major cities.¹³⁹



© Andrew Heavens
Students and Riot Police

Gathering Information

There might be a time when you are given information that will be of use. It's good to be helpful, but if you are unsure of the reason for a question or its validity, use the chain of command.

¹³⁸ Matt Phillips and Jean-Bernard Carillet, *Ethiopia & Eritrea* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2006), 258.

¹³⁹ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Ethiopia: Country Specific Information,” 2010, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1113.html

Exchange 66: Can I help you?

Soldier:	Can I help you?	min lerdaaKh?
Civilian:	I have information for you.	yeminegriH gil goodaay aaleng
Soldier:	Thank you, I will pass it to my command center.	aamaasegenaalo le-aazaajey aastelelefwaalo

Urban Life Assessment

1. More girls than boys attend primary school.

False.

Following common patterns in the developing world, educational opportunities in Ethiopia are not as readily available for girls as for boys. Girls' primary school enrollment levels are about 27%, compared to about 55% for boys.

2. Children in urban areas have greater access to education.

True.

Children in urban areas have greater opportunities for education than those in rural areas. While there are many primary schools scattered throughout the country, secondary schools can usually be found only in larger cities.

3. There are more health clinics in urban areas than rural.

True.

Hospitals are available to a limited extent in dense urban areas. Clinics outside the capital are inadequate at best. Some clinics manage to function in rural areas, but it is difficult or too far for most people to attempt the journey.

4. Ethiopia faces no health epidemics.

False.

HIV/AIDS, malaria, and yellow fever are dangers in Ethiopia.

5. The person who invites the other to eat is expected to pay the bill.

True.

If you are invited to eat, you are not expected to pay. If you invite someone else out for a meal, it is customary that you will pay their bill when you pay yours. The favor will be returned at some point.

Chapter 5: Rural Life

Rural Employment

Of Ethiopia's population, 80 percent practices subsistence agriculture: either raising livestock, herding, or tending crops.¹⁴⁰ The agricultural sector suffers from frequent droughts and poor cultivation practices. Plunging world prices have spurred many farmers to convert from once lucrative coffee to *qat* for a better source of income. *Qat*, also called *khat*, is a mild stimulant found in leaves that are chewed shortly after being harvested.¹⁴¹

Unfortunately for Ethiopians, the problems of drought and livestock disease have worsened since the 1970s. The population has continued to increase, but the harvest has been insufficient to feed everyone. This resulted in widespread famine and poverty in Ethiopia in the 1980s. Raising livestock is fundamental for making a living in the lowlands, where the arid land is not suitable for farming. Livestock includes cattle, sheep, and goats.¹⁴²



© Evgeniy Zotov
Painter in Lalibela

Exchange 67: Where do you work, sir?

Soldier:	Where do you work, sir?	gaashey yesney yemeeseroot
Civilian:	I am a farmer, sir.	gaashey eney geberey neng

Exchange 68: Are you the only person in your family who has a job?

Soldier:	Are you the only person in your family who has a job?	kebeytesebochiH aanta bechaana yemitseraw
Civilian:	No.	aay

¹⁴⁰ Matt Phillips and Jean-Bernard Carillet, *Ethiopia & Eritrea* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2006), 42.

¹⁴¹ UN Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia, "Ethiopia: Country Profile," 2002, <http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Hornet/qat.html>

¹⁴² Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Ethiopia," 2005, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Ethiopia.pdf>

Land Distribution

Land distribution changes usually transfer inequality from one group to another. The resulting conflicts are rooted in local history and competition over control of a valuable resource. Weaker growers are often shoved aside. For Ethiopian Christians, the system of landownership was referred to as *rist*, a pre-*Derg* (military junta) system based on inheritance. Rights were inviolate except by someone with a superior claim or the Emperor. Muslims—many of whom were landless nomads now settled—saw themselves with at least temporary rights to land ownership through contracts. Lease payments were usually one-third of the produce to the landlord under *rist*.



© dordontour / flickr.com
Common homes near Lalibela

Exchange 69: Do you own this land?

Soldier:	Do you own this land?	yihey mareyt yaanta naw
Civilian:	Yes.	aawo

Land was redistributed under the *Derg* in 1975, in order to equalize landownership between Muslims and Christians. But even before the revolution against the *Derg* ended in 1991, land was redistributed again by the victorious rebels who form the current Ethiopian government. Today land redistribution remains a contentious issue with both Christians (from the first redistribution in 1975) and Muslims (from the later redistribution) feeling that history has treated them poorly.¹⁴³

Nomadic Way of Life

Only the Somali in southeastern Ethiopia, the Tigray, and the Afar in the northeast live as nomads. Herders do not travel far from a secure source of water. As in most dry African and Asian lands, camels are extremely important for pastoralists in Ethiopia. Camels provide milk and meat and play a central role in providing transport, as well as signifying the wealth and social status of their owners. Ethiopia's camel population is the third-largest in Africa after Somalia and the Sudan, and fourth in the world (including India).¹⁴⁴ Camels inhabit dry Ethiopian lowlands, except the western areas where high humidity and trypanosomiasis (a parasitic



© Kambiz Kamrani
Nomad herding goats

¹⁴³ University of Sussex at Brighton, "Inter-Group Conflict over Land Tenure," in Briefing: Institutions for Natural Resource Management (Forum for Social Studies [Ethiopia], Centro de Experimentação Florestal [Mozambique] and the University of Sussex [UK], No date), <http://www.geog.susx.ac.uk/research/development/marena/pdf/ethiopia/Eth14.pdf>

¹⁴⁴ Tezara Getahun and Kassa Belay, "Camel Husbandry Practices in Eastern Ethiopia: The Case of Jijiga and Shinile Zones," *Nomadic Peoples* 6 (June 2002):158.

disease) are common. These areas include major parts of the Somali and Afar states and some parts of the state of Oromia.

Nomads can be an excellent source of information because they are familiar with the territory they roam.

Exchange 70: Do you know this area very well?

Soldier:	Do you know this area very well?	yehenin aakaababee bedemb tawq-ewaaleH?
Civilian:	Yes.	aawo

Transportation Issues¹⁴⁵

Of the approximately 24,000 km (14,913 miles) of roads in Ethiopia, roughly 13 percent are paved. The rest are dirt or gravel—even the roads that link the capital with the rest of the country.¹⁴⁶ Improvements are being made to the infrastructure. The World Bank allotted funds in 1998 to make improvements. In 2003, efforts were launched to improve most of the paved roads and two-thirds of the unpaved roads.¹⁴⁷



© Yigal Chamish
Donkey pulling wagon

Travel on both paved and unpaved roads is considered safe, but land mines left over from various conflicts can be found on isolated stretches. Other hazards are excessive speed, unpredictable local drivers, pedestrians, and livestock on the roads.

Many vehicles lack basic safety equipment such as lights and good brakes. Road lighting in cities is inadequate at best; it does not exist at all in rural areas. This makes road travel after dark dangerous. There is the added danger of bandits in remote areas. Scant police presence in these areas heightens the danger of being robbed.¹⁴⁸

Exchange 71: Can you help me, my car broke down?

Civilian:	Can you help me, my car broke down?	maakinaaye tebulashtuwal letredaang ticheelaaleH?
Soldier:	I need to check with my commander.	azaajen met-eyek alebeng

¹⁴⁵ UN Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia, “Ethiopia: Country Profile,” 2002, http://www.africa.upenn.edu/eue_web/livcond.htm#liv21

¹⁴⁶ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, “Country Profile: Ethiopia,” 2005, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Ethiopia.pdf>

¹⁴⁷ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, “Country Profile: Ethiopia,” 2005, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Ethiopia.pdf>

¹⁴⁸ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Ethiopia: Country Specific Information,” 7 May 2010, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1113.html

Health

Rural areas are the most devastated by drought, poverty, and poor nutrition. The health care situation is especially dire because large parts of rural Ethiopia do not have any medical facilities. Some local churches and the Red Cross operate small clinics, and a few government-run health care centers can be found in certain areas.¹⁴⁹

Due to the different types of bacteria and parasites present, it is not advisable to swim in stagnant bodies of water such as freshwater lakes, even if the natives do.

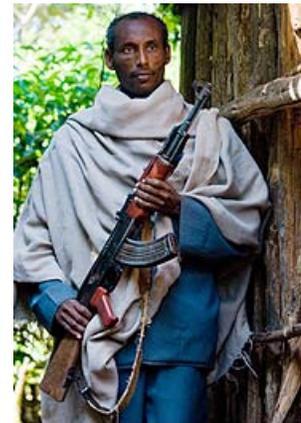
Even healthy people can expect a bout of altitude sickness in mountainous areas. Symptoms include shortness of breath, nausea, fatigue, headaches, and insomnia.

Weapons

Since 1997, a proliferation of illegal firearms has been circulating throughout Africa. In unstable areas, such as the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea, guns have profoundly affected traditional ethnic groups. There have been reports of armed Ethiopians venturing across the border into Kenya.¹⁵⁰ The average rural farmer is not likely to own illegal guns, but knowing that marauders or rustlers have them is a concern.



© Andrew Heavens
Boy in flooded village of Abiabo



© Richard Stupart
Guard at Bahir Dar monastery

Exchange 72: Did these people threaten you?

Soldier:	Did these people threaten you?	enezeeKh sewuch asferartewahaal?
Civilian:	No.	aay

¹⁴⁹ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Ethiopia: Country Specific Information,” 7 May 2010, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1113.html

¹⁵⁰ Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Arms Transfers and Trafficking in Africa,” 9 July 2001, <http://www.defense-aerospace.com/article-view/verbatim/16134/arms-transfers-and-trafficking-in-africa.html>

Landmines

Decades of conflicts have made Ethiopia one of the most mined countries in the world. The largest concentrations of land mines are found in the Tigray and Afar regions near Eritrea. In one estimate, there are 500,000 land mines between Eritrea and Somalia.¹⁵¹ Mines cause thousands of injuries and fatalities each year. The government has been active in educating Ethiopians about the dangers of land mines.¹⁵² It is important to stay on marked paths and roads, and to avoid riverbeds. Before driving off-road, check with local authorities to ensure that the area is mine-free.¹⁵³



UN Photo by Jorge Aramburu
United Nations mission

Exchange 73: Is this area mined?

Soldier:	Is this area mined?	yehey aakaababee yetik-abara fenjee aalo?
Civilian:	Yes.	aawo

Education

Access to education is limited in rural Ethiopia. Schools and teachers are in short supply. Girls, particularly in rural areas, have the least access of all. Although education is compulsory, girls seldom enroll because their families cannot pay for uniforms, fees, and materials. Boys are often given priority because parents feel that it is wiser to invest in their male children. There is also plenty of work for the girls to do at home. Even when enrolled, female students are at a disadvantage because of responsibilities before and after school (such as cooking and cleaning). Access to higher education is extremely competitive. Many students who manage to excel on the standardized tests and enroll in universities cannot study their preferred majors because of quotas in various departments. Opportunities are especially limited for rural children.¹⁵⁴



© Terri O'Sullivan
School building and teacher

¹⁵¹ The Advocacy Project, "Landmine Survivors Network Ethiopia," No date, <http://www.advocacynet.org/page/lsnethiopia>

¹⁵² GlobalSecurity, "Ethiopia—Land Mines," 2000, www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2000/10/war-001005-afhorm.htm

¹⁵³ Matt Phillips and Jean-Bernard Carillet, *Ethiopia & Eritrea* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2006), 258.

¹⁵⁴ Everyculture, "Ethiopia," No date, <http://www.everyculture.com/Cr-Ga/Ethiopia.html>

Gender Roles

Gender roles are clearly defined in rural areas: Women are considered subservient to men and do most of the domestic work (including cooking, brewing beer, cutting hops, buying and selling spices, making butter, collecting wood and dung for fuel, and carrying water). While men are responsible for most of the heavy farm work like plowing, women do help with the harvest. If a man were to participate in domestic activities such as cooking, he would suffer a social stigma.¹⁵⁵



© Ondřej Odcházal
Woman carrying water jug

Rural Life

Adults and children may be away from the home most of the day, walking long distances to feed their cattle and cultivate the crops.¹⁵⁶ A trek to obtain water can involve carrying some 20 liters (about 5.25 gallons) of water one or more times per day. That amount weighs slightly over 19 kilos (42 pounds), excluding the container. Only 28 percent of households have access to safe water.¹⁵⁷ For many with no potable water nearby, it can mean an hour's walk.

When crops begin to mature, family members must guard the fields during the day by yelling or using slingshots to hurl stones at the onslaught of birds and baboons. Children sometimes act as living scarecrows—another disincentive to sending them to school. At night, someone must sleep in the fields in temporary shelter, banging on pots and yelling at intervals to drive off creatures that could ravage a crop in a few nights. Farm work is done manually as it has been done for centuries; it takes a heavy physical toll on everyone, including children.¹⁵⁸



© ILRI/Stevie Mann
Man ploughing with cattle

Average rural homes are round with thatched roofs supported by single poles in the middle.¹⁵⁹ Walls are made of wood packed with clay. Most households have a garden and a place to keep livestock, which provides valuable fertilizer for the fields. More modern homes may be square or rectangular and covered with tin roofs.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁵ Everyculture, "Ethiopia," No date, <http://www.everyculture.com/Cr-Ga/Ethiopia.html>

¹⁵⁶ Ann Heinrichs, *Ethiopia: Enchantment of the World* (New York: Scholastic, 2005).

¹⁵⁷ UNICEF, "Promoting Girls' Education in Bora Dugda," No date, http://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/ET_real_Emebet.pdf

¹⁵⁸ Joan Johnson Lewis, "Ethiopia—Role of Women," in *Encyclopedia of Women's History*, 1991, http://womenshistory.about.com/library/ency/blwh_ethiopia_women.htm

¹⁵⁹ Matt Phillips and Jean-Bernard Carillet, *Ethiopia & Eritrea* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2006), 57.

¹⁶⁰ Ann Heinrichs, *Ethiopia: Enchantment of the World* (New York: Scholastic, 2005).

Markets

In rural areas, Saturday is market day. Some Ethiopians may walk long distances to bring their products to sell at the market. Items for sale range from firewood to produce, livestock, and crafts. Bargaining is usually acceptable at markets, but if you are not sure, ask a vendor or shopkeeper, or local shopper.¹⁶¹ Markets can be bustling with activity, so watch your personal belongings.



© Ondřej Odcházel
Market in Bahir Dar

Exchange 74: Will you be going to the market today?

Soldier:	Will you be going to the market today?	zaaree gebeeya tehayjaalesh?
Civilian:	Yes.	aawo

Exchange 75: Can you take me there?

Soldier:	Can you take me there?	izaa litwesden teecheelaaleh?
Civilian:	Yes, I can. Follow me.	aawo teketeleng

Who is in Charge?

In any village with a large Muslim population, the religious leader or *imam* will be in charge. Under Haile Selassie, Muslim communities were able to appear in Islamic courts to deal with personal and family law issues. Civil courts were not avoided completely because they were more generous in granting female children the same inheritance rights as males. This is particularly important when the inheritance concerns livestock.¹⁶² In villages with a large Christian population, any elder can conduct business on behalf of the village. Considering the respect all Ethiopians have for their elders, asking for one is appropriate in any community.¹⁶³



© Internews Network
Getting assistance from an Elder

¹⁶¹ Matt Phillips and Jean-Bernard Carillet, *Ethiopia & Eritrea* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2006), 258.

¹⁶² "Ethiopia: Local Character of Belief and Practice," in *Ethiopia: A Country Study*, Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, No date, <http://countrystudies.us/ethiopia/66.htm>

¹⁶³ Phillipa Bevan, Alula Pankhurst, and Tom Lavers, eds., *Ethiopian Village Studies II* (Bath, UK: University of Bath, 2006), 14–15.

Exchange 76: Does your leader live here?

Soldier:	Does your leader live here?	meriyaachooH ezeeKh naw yemeenoro?
Civilian:	Yes.	aawo

Exchange 77: Can you take me to your tribal elder?

Soldier:	Can you take me to your tribal elder?	ye-aager shmaagaley letusdeng teecheelaalo?
Civilian:	Yes.	aawo

Exchange 78: Respected elder, we need your help.

Soldier:	Respected elder, we need your help.	ye-aager shmaagaley mik-ir enfeleegaalen
Civilian:	Yes.	aawo

Rural Life Assessment

1. The majority of Ethiopia's population practices subsistence agriculture.

True.

Of Ethiopia's population, 80% practices subsistence agriculture: raising livestock, herding, or tending crops.

2. Ethiopia is unable to produce enough food domestically to feed its population.

True.

The agricultural sector, which suffers from frequent droughts and poor cultivation practices, raises insufficient food for the country's population. Also, many farmers convert to *qat* cultivation for a better source of income, taking land out of food production.

3. Land redistribution under the *Derg* succeeded in solving Ethiopia's land claim issues.

False.

Although the *Derg* set out to equalize landownership between Muslims and Christians in 1975, the program was never fully realized before the land was redistributed again by the victorious rebels who form the current Ethiopian government.

4. *Rist* is an Italian-influenced Ethiopian dish.

False.

For Ethiopian Christians, rist was a pre-*Derg* (military junta) system of landownership based on inheritance. Rights were inviolate except by someone with a superior claim or the Emperor.

5. Nomads in Ethiopia are located predominately in the west.

False.

Ethiopia's nomads, the Somali, Tigray, and Afar, are located in the southeast and northeast.

Chapter 6: Family Life

Family Structure

In Ethiopia, the family is the basic unit of economic production and the institution at the heart of society. The role of the family extends beyond biological reproduction and cross-generational bonds. Families play a central societal role in ensuring that ancestral and religious traditions are passed on to the young.¹⁶⁴

Given the absence of state-sponsored social services, particularly in rural areas, only the family can provide the individual with security. Ethiopians have a high regard for the intelligence and insight that come with age. Showing respect toward elders is extremely important.¹⁶⁵ The responsibility to support and care for one’s aged parents is stressed throughout childhood, reinforced by religion, and practiced by everyone.



© Nancy Carels
Girl in Bahir Dar

Exchange 79: Does your family live here?

Soldier:	Does your family live here?	beytasowochuKh ezeeKh naw yemeenorut
Civilian:	Yes.	aawo

Migrants continue to fulfill their filial obligations despite the distances separating them from their villages.

Exchange 80: Did you grow up here?

Soldier:	Did you grow up here?	ezeeKh naw yaadekaw
Civilian:	Yes.	aawo

¹⁶⁴ Citizenship and Immigration Canada, “Ethiopia—Cultural Profiles Project,” No date, <http://www.cpc.ca/english/ethiopia/>

¹⁶⁵ Matt Phillips and Jean-Bernard Carillet, *Ethiopia & Eritrea* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2006), 43.

Marriage and Divorce

Due to a high infant mortality rate, having a large number of children was considered the best means to achieve both economic security and social prestige. This is still true in some regions. It is against this background that events such as marriages and family formation must be viewed within Ethiopian society.



© Internews Network
Woman and child

Exchange 81: Do you have any brothers?

Soldier:	Do you have any brothers?	wendeemoch alooH?
Civilian:	Yes.	aawo

The Ethiopian Civil Code recognizes three types of marriages: the civil marriage, the religious marriage, and the customary marriage. A civil marriage is conducted by an authorized public official. A religious marriage is undertaken according to the couple's religion—marrying someone outside of one's faith is practically unheard of. A customary marriage takes place according to the traditions of the community or tribe to which the couple belongs.¹⁶⁶

Exchange 82: Are you married?

Soldier:	Are you married?	aagveetahaal?
Civilian:	No.	aay

¹⁶⁶ "The Revised Family Code," *Federal Negarit Gazetta of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia*, 4 July 2000, <http://www.lexadin.nl/wlg/legis/nofr/oeur/arch/eth//RevisedFamilyCode2000.pdf>

Traditionally, the marriageable age for girls is determined by one of several sets of codified rules. The Ethiopian Civil Code sets the minimum age for marriage at 18 years.¹⁶⁷ The law has had little impact, however, because it is not necessary to produce a birth certificate. Births are registered mostly in urban areas, and many do not know their exact birth date.¹⁶⁸ Few rural Ethiopians have a birth certificate to prove that the minimum age requirement for a girl has been met before a couple can marry.



© Carsten ten Brink
Girl at Werota market

Exchange 83: Is this your wife?

Soldier:	Is this your wife?	yichee meest-hinat?
Civilian:	No.	aay

Within the traditional rural communities of the Amhara and Tigray, marriages are quite similar. Marriage between blood relatives up to the seventh generation on the father’s side is prohibited.

Arranging a marriage is completely determined by the two families. The parents may have decided a union was mutually beneficial when the children were quite young or maybe even before they were born.¹⁶⁹ Among the Amhara and Tigray, the negotiations are conducted between parents without the consent of the children, who might not see each other until the wedding day. Arranging marriages have changed tremendously in recent years; in rural areas, prospective mates are increasingly allowed to meet and veto proposed unions.¹⁷⁰



© Evgeniy Zotov
Groom in Gondar

Marriage among Christians is monogamous. In contrast, most marriages among the Oromo people are polygamous. Oromo men can take as many wives as their personal wealth permits.¹⁷¹ Custom forbids marital dissolution in traditional Oromo society, which means that a woman has only one chance of getting married, while a man can marry multiple times. In polygamous marriages, successive wives are regarded as

¹⁶⁷ “The Revised Family Code,” *Federal Negarit Gazetta of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia*, 4 July 2000, <http://www.lexadin.nl/wlg/legis/nofr/oeur/arch/eth//RevisedFamilyCode2000.pdf>

¹⁶⁸ Citizenship and Immigration Canada, “Ethiopia—Cultural Profiles Project,” No date, <http://www.cp-pc.ca/english/ethiopia/holidays.html>

¹⁶⁹ Abraha Abadi, “Marriages and Wedding Ceremonies in Ethiopia,” Ethiomedia, 2003, <http://www.ethiomedia.com/newpress/marriage.html>

¹⁷⁰ Abraha Abadi, “Marriages and Wedding Ceremonies in Ethiopia,” Ethiomedia, 2003, <http://www.ethiomedia.com/newpress/marriage.html>

¹⁷¹ Ibrahim A. Elemo, “Oromia—Reproductive Health, HIV/AIDS, and Gender Perspectives in East Africa: Understanding an Oromo Culture,” *Jimma Times*, 19 June 2009, www.jimmatimes.com/printFriendlyPDF/index.cfm?articleID=32399

servants of the first wife—unless the new wife happens to be more attractive. A newer wife may achieve an equal standing with the senior wife, but the first woman will never be considered her servant.

Exchange 84: Is this your entire family?

Soldier:	Is this your entire family?	enazeeKh huloo beytasebiKh naachaw?
Civilian:	No.	aay

Tribal marriages entail the exchange of carefully calibrated gifts, such as a specific amount of grain or number of cattle.¹⁷² Land brought to a marriage is retained as the individual property of those who have the right to divorce. Anything acquired during the marriage would be carefully divided in the event of divorce.

By law, either party has the right to request a divorce, although tribal and religious customs favor men.¹⁷³ Dissolution of a marriage is easier in cases where there were no large payments of bride wealth or dowry between the families, because all available income was spent on the marriage ceremony. In these cases, lineage alliance and the resulting mutual obligations of the two families are not major forces holding the couple together. A divorced woman is readily accepted back into her family. In these circumstances, a woman married at a young age to a man chosen by her parents may end the marriage if she is dissatisfied.

Tribal and religious customs and the wealth of the two families involved will determine the nature of the union as well as the prospects for dissolution.

The Typical Household

Exchange 85: How many people live in this house?

Soldier:	How many people live in this house?	ezeeKh beyt senti saw yinoraal?
Civilian:	Ten.	aasir

Exchange 86: Are these people part of your family?

Soldier:	Are these people part of your family?	enazeeKh sawoch beytasebochuKh naachaw?
Civilian:	No.	aay

¹⁷² Stefan Dercon and Pramila Krishnan, “In Sickness and in Health: Risk-Sharing within Households in Rural Ethiopia” (working paper, Centre for the Study of African Economies, Institute of Economics and Statistics, University of Oxford, April 1997), 32, <http://www.csae.ox.ac.uk/workingpapers/pdfs/9712text.pdf>

¹⁷³ Matt Phillips and Jean-Bernard Carillet, *Ethiopia & Eritrea* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2006), 43.

Women

Female genital mutilation (FGM) or circumcision (FGC) involves removing the majority of female genitalia, then sewing the mutilated organ together, leaving only a tiny opening. In Ethiopia, 80 percent of the female population has undergone FGM.¹⁷⁴ Cultural practice and social mores encourage girls to undergo this procedure. It is often associated with positive attributes such as gaining respect within the village and becoming a woman. The practice is intended to inhibit sexuality and to keep women docile. Among adults, it is widely believed that a woman who has not been circumcised will be difficult for a man to control; this belief renders her unattractive as a marital partner.

FGM entails an operation that is frequently carried out in unsanitary conditions, putting girls at immediate risk of infection. It is estimated that up to 15 percent of girls die postoperatively.¹⁷⁵ Years later, women who have undergone the procedure are at increased risk for sexually transmitted diseases and complications during childbirth.¹⁷⁶

The government has given its support to international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are involved in eradicating FGM. It has also established programs in the public schools with the same aim. Ethiopia's Ministry of Education has introduced curriculum to deter the practice of FGM, and it has been helped in its efforts by community and religious leaders. Many Muslim leaders have worked with clan elders, educating them that FGM is not supported in Islam.¹⁷⁷

The government has also stepped up efforts to encourage girls to attend school and to dispel stereotypes that boys can get better jobs than girls. But this will only happen when families recognize that there is an economic return in educating female children.

Ethiopian girls are vulnerable to violence, including abduction, particularly when venturing out of the village to fetch water or collect wood for fuel. Girls are abducted primarily for marriage, in some cases because the bride price would be too high. After the girl's violation, the family is often pressured to let her stay with her new husband rather than have her return home in disgrace.



© Chuck Holton
Woman and her children



© E.C.S.P.
Anti-FGM poster

¹⁷⁴ United Nations Press Release, "Ethiopia Commended for Political Commitment to Women's Anti-Discrimination Convention, despite Facing Poverty, Natural Disasters, Military Conflict," WOM/1431, 26 January 2004, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2004/wom1431.doc.htm>.

¹⁷⁵ Matt Phillips and Jean-Bernard Carillet, *Ethiopia & Eritrea* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2006), 51.

¹⁷⁶ Jason Mosley, "Gender and Daily Life in Ethiopia," *Contemporary Review* 285 (August 2004): 97.

¹⁷⁷ Africa Online News, "FGM on Return in Ethiopia's Afar Region," 9 April 2010, <http://www.afrol.com/articles/35896>

Naming Conventions

Ethiopian names are creative. *Mitiku* (substitute) and *Kassa* (compensation) are names given to children born after a sibling has died. After having bad luck, a family might name a child *Masresha* (distraction). If the family has several children, the parents might use names that mean “that’s the last” or “no more.” Christian names are more spiritual, such as *Haile* (power of) or *Habte* (gift of). They are usually added to a second name, so *Habte-Yesus* would mean “gift of Jesus.”¹⁷⁸



© Nancy Carels
Boy in Bahir Dar

Exchange 87: Are these your children?

Soldier:	Are these your children?	enizeeKh lejocheH naachaw?
Civilian:	Yes.	aawo

¹⁷⁸ F.L. Gordon, *Ethiopia, Eritrea & Djibouti* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2000).

Family Life Assessment

1. The family in Ethiopia is important in terms of security.

True.

Given the absence of state-sponsored social services, particularly in rural areas, only the family can provide the individual with security.

2. Ethiopians traditionally respect the elderly.

True.

Showing respect toward elders is extremely important. The responsibility to support and care for one's aged parents is stressed throughout childhood, reinforced by religion, and practiced by everyone.

3. The Ethiopian government recognizes only civil marriage.

False.

The Ethiopian Civil Code recognizes three types of marriages: the civil marriage, the religious marriage, and the customary marriage.

4. Marriage outside one's religion is quite uncommon.

True.

A religious marriage is undertaken according to the couple's religion—marrying someone outside of one's faith is practically unheard of.

5. The legal minimum age for marriage in Ethiopia is 18.

True.

The Ethiopian Civil Code sets the minimum age for marriage at 18 years.

Final Assessments

1. Approximately 20% of Ethiopia's arable land is used for agriculture
2. Unlike many of its African neighbors, Ethiopia was never occupied by Europeans.
3. Ethiopia has three official languages.
4. Emperor Haile Selassie I worked to modernize his country.
5. Historically, Muslims in Ethiopia were pressured to convert to Christianity.
6. Religious groups are tax exempt in Ethiopia.
7. Followers of Ethiopian Orthodoxy observe many days of fasting throughout the year.
8. Ethiopian Orthodox Christians observe more occasions dedicated to the Virgin Mary than to Jesus.
9. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church claims it holds the Ark of the Covenant.
10. Visitors to Ethiopian Orthodox churches should cover their heads.
11. In Ethiopia, only Muslims abstain from pork.
12. Alcohol is forbidden in Ethiopia.
13. Fresh vegetables are an important part of Ethiopian cuisine.
14. Superstitions, such as belief in the "evil eye," are common only among Muslim Ethiopians.
15. The Ethiopian government recognizes only religious holidays.
16. It is appropriate to snap your fingers to get a waiter's attention.
17. It is acceptable to haggle in city shops.
18. One should avoid purchasing food on the street.
19. Ethiopia is considered a relatively safe country.
20. Petty crime is common in major cities in Ethiopia.
21. Camels are a vital livestock in Ethiopia.
22. Illegal firearms present a concern for rural travelers.

23. Riverbeds are dangerous with regard to land mines.
24. Just as women help with farming, Ethiopian men also help with certain domestic
25. Rural families must typically keep watch over their crops to protect them from animals.
26. Arranged marriages are illegal in Ethiopia.
27. Polygamous marriages are the norm among all faiths in Ethiopia.
28. In divorce cases, men have the advantage.
29. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is common throughout Ethiopia.
30. The Ethiopian government, overwhelmed by conservative cultural resistance, has given up its fight to halt FGM.

Further Readings

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