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## RESISTING IMPOSED WILDLIFE CONSERVATION: ARSSI OROMO AND THE SENKELLE SWAYNE'S HARTEBEEST SANCTUARY, ETHIOPIA

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**ABSTRACT** Dispute over land-use between the local people and conservation agencies is becoming a serious problem in Africa. Ethiopia is no exception after the socialist regime (1974-1991) established most of the conservation areas in the 1970s. This has placed the local people in opposition with the imposed policy of wildlife conservation after the revolution of 1991. This paper examines the contemporary resistance by the Arssi Oromo against the conservation policy for the Senkelle Swayne's Hartebeest Sanctuary, and analyzes the historical relationships between the Arssi Oromo and the policy enforcement by Ethiopian governments. This paper also probes the current attitudes of the local people to the conservation policy through the indigenous utilization and management of the land. The Arssi Oromo have resisted certain policies, and coped with the changing situations through different strategies to maintain their access to the land. This paper concludes that local claims must be recognized and considered in conservation policymaking processes.

**Key Words:** Arssi Oromo; Wildlife conservation; Land-use; Local attitudes; Swayne's hartebeest.

### INTRODUCTION

Dispute over land-use between the local people and wildlife conservation agencies is becoming a serious problem in developing countries. It has now reached crisis levels in some areas where the local people used to utilize land until they were declared conservation areas. The recently increase in disputes over land-use is caused by combined factors such as expansion of cropland due to rapid population growth, policy change for tenure, and mismanagement by the conservation agency. Another reason for failure in conventional conservation methods has its roots in the western concept of wildlife preservation, which emphasizes protecting the pristine ecosystems and innocent locals. Such a concept underpins the present African wildlife conservation policy of heavy handing of the state such as uprooting the local people.

On the other hand, a variety of factors suggest that the local people have developed the mechanisms for utilizing and sustaining natural resources (Sponsel *et al.*, 1996; Brokensha *et al.* 1983), even to the present (Nabhan *et al.*, 1982). However, such studies have been criticized that even if the people had successfully managed resources in some harmonious past, that past was long gone.

While the romantic images of the community persist, current ideas about the community's role in conservation have radically changing. This trend has been

accelerated since sustainable development became an internationally common slogan. The conservation agencies have been forced to reverse the top-down and state-centered conservation policies toward decentralization and more locally participatory approaches to achieve both goals of conservation and rural development. Measures have been discussed to achieve these goals when the community-based conservation (CBC) became popular in the 1980s (Hulme & Murphree, 1999; Western & Wright, 1994). The increasing prominences of indigenous and ethnic claims on the stewardship role of native populations to natural resource have assisted those who advocate a central role for the community (Armstrong & Bennett, 2002; Hitchcock, 1993). To date, several initial experiments merging conservation and development have been carried out based on the CBC concept. Although the economic incentives programs are conducted as the main approach for CBC (Child, 1996; Barnes, 1996), only those limited conservation area with abundant wildlife can sustain viable revenue. Brosius *et al.* (1998) also pointed out the risk in defining concepts such as “conflict” or “community” without regard to the local context and political implications. Recent literature discusses the disputes over land that borders conservation areas in relation to the state politics deeply rooted in the history of colonial occupation (e.g. Duffy, 2000; Neumann, 1998; Peluso, 1992).

I had the opportunity to become involved in management activities and ecological surveys of the Senkelle Swayne's Hartebeest Sanctuary as a member of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers from 1996 to 1998<sup>(1)</sup>. The experience of being a practitioner in the field of conservation helped me learn the important role of local community in wildlife conservation. I use the Senkelle Sanctuary as a case study to examine the contemporary resistance by the local people against imposed conservation policies by the government, focusing on the historical relations between the two and on the local attitudes about the conservation issue.

## STUDY AREA AND METHOD

Ethiopia experienced colonialism only for five years (1936-1941). Although international conservation agencies have supported its wildlife management financially and technically, it has been the Ethiopian government that mainly planned its conservation policy. Most of the conservation areas were set up in the socialist regime (1974-1991). It had provided no means for the local people to maintain access to the land and manage natural resources in the conservation areas. This has contributed to the destruction of conservation facilities, mostly at the hands of the local people when the socialist regime was toppled in 1991. Since then, the local people have competed with the conservation agency, especially with Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Organization (EWCO)<sup>(2)</sup>, over land and natural resources. There have been few case studies and conservation projects focusing on the community where people are living in the vicinity of the conservation areas.

The Senkelle Swayne's Hartebeest Sanctuary (36 km<sup>2</sup>) is one of the protected areas in Ethiopia<sup>(3)</sup>. It is located on the west side of the Great Rift Valley, 300 km south of Addis Ababa (Fig. 1). It was established in 1976 to protect the Swayne's hartebeest (*Alcelaphus buselaphus swaynei*). Vegetation types in the sanctuary are divided into three; savanna woodland, valley complex and grassland. There are other antelopes, such as the greater kudu (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros*), reedbuck (*Redunca redunca*), lesser kudu (*Tragelaphus imberbis*), and carnivores, such as the serval (*Felis serval*), spotted hyena (*Crocuta crocuta*) and common jackal (*Canis aureus*). One hundred sixty-seven species of birds have been recorded (Matravers & Netsereab, 1994).

The Swayne's hartebeests were distributed widely in Ethiopia and Somalia until the beginning of the nineteenth century. The population size has decreased and now endangered. Most of the Swayne's hartebeests inhabit the Senkelle sanctuary. The population once increased from 448 to 2379 during 1976-1988 (Matravers & Netsereab, 1994). However, only 123 individuals were recorded in 1998 (Nishizaki, 1999). In 1974, 90 individuals were transferred to Nechisar National Park and 120 individuals were transferred to Awash National Park to help ensure their survival (Lealem, 1974). Only 40 were confirmed to inhabit Nechisar National Park (Duckworth *et al.*, 1992).

There have been several ecological studies on Swayne's hartebeests (Bolton, 1972; Stephenoson, 1975; Hunting Technical Services Ltd., 1975). Matravers and Netsereab (1994) studied in detail the ecological relationship between Swayne's hartebeests and the vegetation. Although they proposed to create a buffer zone to integrate conservation and rural development, the idea has not been followed by any action. There have been few studies focusing on the relationship between the conservation agency and the local people. I conducted

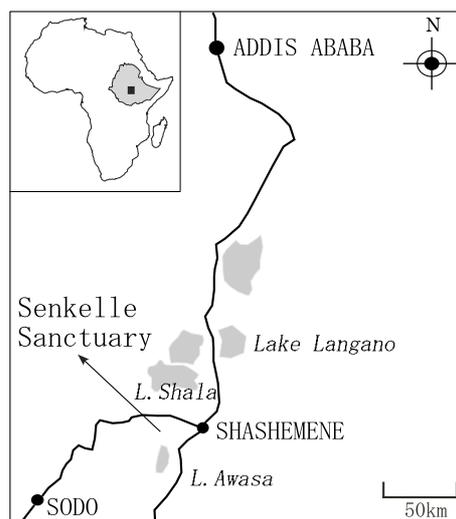


Fig. 1. Location of Senkelle Swayne's Hartebeest Sanctuary.

field surveys for three months in 1999 and two months in 2000. My observations and interviews focused mainly on how the local people coped with the state-centered conservation policy in the periods before and after the establishment of the sanctuary.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF LOCAL RESISTANCE

Wildlife conservation policy in Ethiopia has changed with the changes in regimes. I will describe the historical background of dispute over the land around Senkelle Sanctuary, mainly the three regimes from the 1940's to the present, the imperial regime of Haile Selasie (1940's-1974), the socialist regime (1974-1991) and the current regime of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF; 1991-).

### I. The Imperial Regime of Haile Selasie (1940's-1974)

Two ethnic groups, the Arssi Oromo and the Sidama cultivate the land and graze livestock in and around the present sanctuary. Drinking water has not been available. Furthermore, the two ethnic groups have fought over pastureland<sup>(4)</sup>. This made it difficult for both the ethnic groups to survive in the area. There is no record of when the Arssi Oromo arrived at the area and how their original relations with the Sidama were. According to the Arssi Oromo oral history, they started to settle in the area in the middle of last century. They mainly grazed livestock and hunted wildlife. They had the land under their control until the upland Amhara and Gurage started large-scale agriculture. After that, the Arssi Oromo were forced to move to the periphery of the area.

The Arssi Oromo people talk about legendary ancestors who owned an abundance of livestock. According to the interview with the elders about food in their childhood, they had mainly taken milk (*anan*), yogurt (*ititu*), butter (*dhadhaa*) and cheese (*shalala*), and exchanged dairy product for maize and barley. They also hunted for wild meat. This indicates that they relied on fodder and food in the present sanctuary in the past.

The Arssi Oromo do not call the Senkelle area by its official name, but call it *dida/accha* (*Oromiffa*) which means "the vast land"<sup>(5)</sup>. Moreover, they use the names of ancestors killed by the Sidama in the past for the mountain, forest zone and surrounding villages. The memory of *dida/acha* is associated with the memory of ancestors who fought for the land against other ethnic groups. The Arssi Oromo have a deep psychological attachment to the area.

### II. The Socialist Regime (1974-1991)

The Ethiopian socialist revolution of 1974 replaced the imperial regime with the regime known as "Derg". This was a period when state control penetrated many areas of the country. Especially the land reform of 1975, which declared

land a public property, greatly affected the rural life through programs such as villagization and resettlement. The most influential events for the Arssi Oromo around the sanctuary might be the establishment of the state farm in 1974, and that of the sanctuary in 1976. I examined the impact of each on the local people's livelihood.

When Emperor Haile Selassie was dethroned, ex-landlords deserted the area. The government enclosed the 90km<sup>2</sup> land as a state farm. Cash crops such as maize, sunflower and beans were planted and were sold directly to the market in Addis Ababa. Local people were seldom employed in the state farm except for some peasants who became guards to protect the crops against wild animal's attack. The farm worker's wage varied with the degree of crop damage<sup>(6)</sup>, which was the major reason the local people saw no tangible advantage working on the state farm. The modern agricultural inputs, such as chemical fertilizer, tractors and several cash crops were brought into the area by the state farm during the period.

When the sanctuary was established in 1976 to protect Swayne's hartebeests, EWCO regarded the area as a no man's land and ignored the existence of the local people. Since then, local activities, such as grazing, hunting and collecting useful plants in the sanctuary were strictly banned. If a man went into the sanctuary for grazing, his cattle were confiscated, or he was fined by the scouts who guarded the sanctuary. Such strong regulations resulted in a rapid population increase of the Swayne's hartebeests.

The local people reluctantly accepted the hunting prohibition by interpreting that wild animal in the sanctuary belonged to the warden, who was a manager of the sanctuary. However, they tried to keep their cattle from being confiscated through various methods. For example, the cattle were grazed at night in areas where the scouts were not on patrol. Men threw lit torches at the scouts if found grazing (Fekadu & Messana, 1984), while women secretly collected firewood.

### III. The Current Regime (1991-)

In May 1991, the EPRDF overthrew the socialist regime and declared a provisional government. In the meantime the officers, including the warden, deserted the sanctuary. The Arssi Oromo started to destroy the office, houses and vehicles in the sanctuary. Moreover, they plundered equipments and poached many Swayne's hartebeests in the few days immediately after the change in regime<sup>(7)</sup>. Two thousand Swayne's hartebeests that were in the sanctuary at the end of the socialist regime were drastically reduced to 626 (Mattravers & Netsereab, 1994). People explained the reason of the large-scale slaughter of hartebeests and the destruction of buildings as a punishment to the warden and scouts. They had observed the hunting prohibition by interpreting the Swayne's hartebeest as property of the warden in the socialist regime. Therefore, they resented the warden and scouts who to them controlled the sanctuary directly. Seizing the state of disorder in the government, the Arssi Oromo took their

feeling of discontent on the ownerless Swayne's hartebeests.

The state farm was closed temporarily because local people destroyed the office. The operation restarted in 70 km<sup>2</sup> of the original area in 1995. However, the remaining 20 km<sup>2</sup> adjoining the sanctuary remained closed. One of the reasons for this is considered to be the diminished role of the state farm in the new political system. The other reason might be considered due to the Arssi Oromo reclaiming the land.

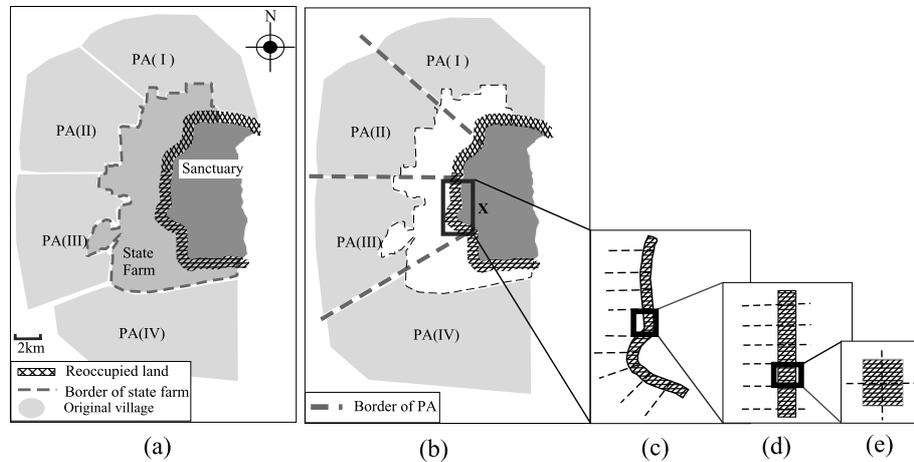
## LAND REOCCUPATION AGAINST IMPOSED CONSERVATION POLICY

### I. How Did the Arssi Oromo Reoccupy the Land?

The state farm and the sanctuary in the socialist regime restricted the local people's access to the land. After 1991, people started to show resistance against EWCO through a variety of actions such as reoccupation of the territory, livestock grazing and firewood collection in the sanctuary. The government regarded these activities as illegal. Here, I will examine in more detail the conflict summarized above.

The Arssi Oromo clans (*gosa*) used to maintain the distinctive territory until 1975 when the land reform was implemented<sup>(8)</sup>. After that, they were forced to join the Peasant Association (PA) which was the smallest administrative unit. The area of PA of around 16km<sup>2</sup> each was determined geographically. As a result, the members of one clan came to live in different PAs. The Arssi Oromo destroyed the state farm office in 1991 and started reclaiming the boundary zone with the state farm and the sanctuary from 1995, because the state had lost control over the local people's activities. The land where the Arssi Oromo started to reoccupy is shown in Fig. 2(a). When I surveyed the area in 1999, about 1400 huts surrounded the sanctuary tightly in a row on the border for 20km.

The Arssi Oromo reoccupied the land through the following two stages. First, four PAs (I-IV) bordering the sanctuary were allotted land (Fig. 2(b)). This was in keeping with the allocation of PA in the original village following the administrative rule. At the second stage, the representatives of all clans of the four PAs (I-IV) declared some members who desired and therefore be allotted the land. For example, the land which the member of PA(III) acquired, called X for an ancestor killed by the Sidama during the regime of Haile Selasie, was further divided among 10 clans (Fig. 2(c)). Then the land allocated to the each clan was divided among sub-clans (*balbbala*) (Fig. 2(d)). Finally, the land allocated to each sub-clan was divided among households (Fig. 2(e)). Several meetings were held at each stage. Land dispute was settled at the meeting. The land was basically distributed among the members of four eligible PAs. As an exceptional, some men belonging to some other PAs could obtain the land if they had relatives in the same clan.



**Fig. 2.** Land Allocation in the Reoccupied Land.

- a) Allocation of the original villages (PA), state farm, sanctuary and the reoccupied land by local people.
- b) Four PAs(I-IV) are entitled to occupy the land according to the geographical setting.
- c) PA(III) distributed the land to 10 clans according to the number of the members.
- d) A clan distributed the land to 5 sub-clans. The average land is 2.2ha area per sub-clan (max.3.7ha, min.0.4ha).
- e) A sub-clan distributed the land to 4 households. The average land is 0.37ha per household (max.0.4ha, min.3.6ha).

## II. How Do the Arssi Oromo Use the Reoccupied Land?

### 1. For Agricultural Expansion

Those who reoccupied the land built huts along the border of the sanctuary and expanded the farmland toward the original village. At the time of my fieldwork in 1999, there were 162 households in X. Of these households, 128 (79%) had land both in the original village and in X. The remaining 34 households (20%) had land only in X. Fig. 3 shows the typical land-use pattern of a household in X. A house (*mana*) and a livestock enclosure (*moonaa*) are located 30m away from the boundary of the sanctuary. On the western side of the house, there are a home garden (*dawoo*) and a field of crops (*maasa*).

Crops such as kale, potato, bean and maize are planted in the garden. In the fields, maize and some cash crops such as potato, bean, buckwheat and eucalyptus were planted. I compared the variety of crops planted in the fields of X with those in the fields in the original village (Table 1). Thirteen kinds of crops were planted in the original village and five in X. This is probably due to the productivity in agriculture in the newly acquired X. In one case, the profit per area of maize in X was 1.75 times higher than that of the original village (Table 2). There are some reasons for the higher productivity in the reoccupied land. Firstly, people sowed maize in X earlier than in the original village in order to sell them at the highest price in the market. Secondly, the cost is low because the area is small enough for one family to work on and with no extra labor cost. Moreover, the land is fertile and chemical fertilizer in

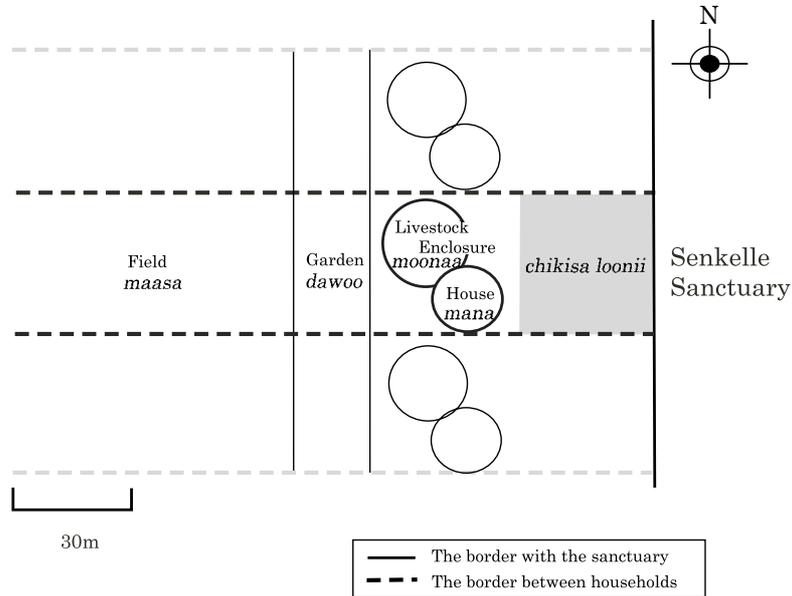


Fig. 3. Land-Use Pattern of the Reoccupied Land.

X was considered unnecessary. The local people could use the reoccupied land as a satellite camp and were able to concentrate their efforts on cash crop cultivation.

## 2. For Pastoral Purpose

There was no wide pastureland to graze livestock in this area except for the sanctuary. A special space, (*chiisa loonii*, “the place where livestock sleep”) was set up between a house and the border of the sanctuary (Fig. 3). The Arssi Oromo organized the reoccupied land to facilitate livestock grazing. The shepherd boys started their work by putting livestock in *chiisa loonii* in the early morning. Then, they went for grazing (*tkisee*). They changed grazing places depending on the season.

The importance of livestock seems to have changed in these twenty years. I examined the ingredients for meals consumed in a household for fourteen days from October to November in 1999 (Fig. 4). The major ingredient of the main dish was maize (81.3%). Ensete (*Ensete ventricosum*) and sweet potatoes were purchased from the market. Fifty percent of ingredients for the side dishes came from products from the garden. Dairy products accounted for a quarter of all foods. This suggests that the dependence on livestock for food decreased.

However, livestock still play an important role in several other domains. According to my interview, a total of four head of cattle, 400 birr to 600 birr in cash and two blankets had been paid as one bride wealth (*gabbara*) during the imperial period. Presently, six to eight head of cattle, 3,300 birr to 6,500 birr in cash, ten blankets and some other presents demanded by the father of the bride (e.g.

**Table 1.** Variety of Crops in the Fields of Original Village and Reoccupied Land.

Crops	For sale	Original village (n=18)		Reoccupied land (n=25)	
		Garden	Field	Garden	Field
Maize	○	18	18	25	25
Potatoes	○	18	18	4	22
Buckwheat	○		9		8
Kidney bean (red)	○	10	10	7	7
Eucalyptus	○	3	6		1
Kale		15			19
Pumpkin			6		
Kidney bean (white)		5	5	3	3
Millet			4		1
Sorghum		3			1
Ensete*		1			
Sugar cane		12			
Banana		4			
Pepper		16		2	
Sweet potatoes		1			
Coffee		1			

Field survey was conducted in 1999.

\**Ensete ventricosum*

**Table 2.** Productivity of Maize in the Fields of Original Village and Reoccupied Land.

	Original village	Reoccupied land
Harvest time	middle of October	middle of September
Market price at harvest time (birr*/100kg)	75	115
Yield (t/household)	4	1.9
For consumption (t/household)	3.7	0
For sale (t/household)	1.3	1.9
Gross profit (birr)	3000	2185
Cost of transportation (birr)	65	95
Labor	Employment	<i>Dadoo</i> **
Cost of labor (birr)	173	0
Cost of chemical fertilizer(birr)	122	0
Net profit (birr)	2,640	2,090
Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	18,840	4,266
Income/m <sup>2</sup>	0.28 (A)	0.49 (B)
(B)/(A) (birr/m <sup>2</sup> )		1.75

Data was collected from one household in 1999.

\*1US\$=2birr (November, 2000)

\*\**Dadoo* is a labor exchange system.

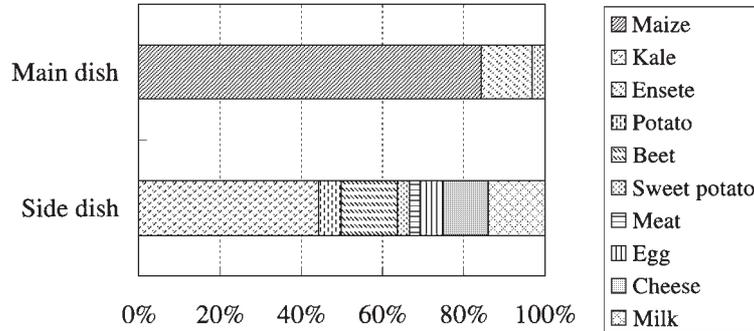


Fig. 4. Ingredients for the Main-dish and Side-dish in a Household. Field survey was conducted for a total number of 14 days from Oct. to Nov. in 1999.

a bicycle and a watch) constitute a bride wealth. A bride brings to her in-laws daily commodities as a gift (*gegayo*), such as twenty to sixty cows, three to four pots of butter, a half kilogram of barley and a set of household utensils on the wedding day. The bride and bridegroom spread butter on their whole bodies in the wedding ceremony. A large quantity of meat is consumed on the day of the wedding and also the funeral. An adulterous man must compensate to the woman's husband with a cow, in accordance with the elder's suggestion.

### III. Why Do the Arssi Oromo Reoccupy the Land?

Shortage of land is likely a major reason for reoccupation of the land by the local people. The number of households around the sanctuary has doubled in the eight years of 1986-1994 (Central Statistical Authority, 1996). Some newly formed households could not inherit land in the original village. It drove out to the former state farm for subsistence. The shortage of land and also agricultural expansion directly drove some households to occupy the land. However, those are not the only reasons. Here I describe the grazing and farming strategies of the Arssi Oromo.

The areas for grazing rotate by the season (Fig. 5). In the dry season (March-May), the shepherd boys take the livestock for seasonal grazing (*godaana*) to Lake *Shala* some 60 km north of the sanctuary. There are abundant water

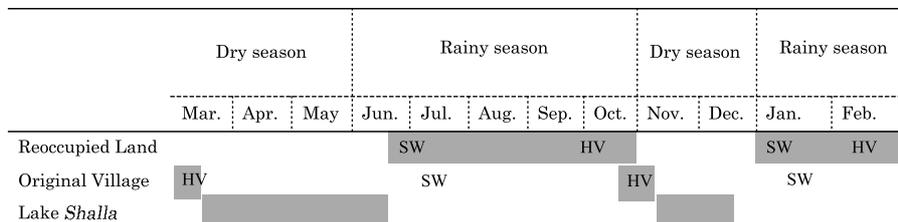


Fig. 5. Location of Livestock-grazing and the Agricultural Calendar. Time and place of livestock grazing is indicated in gray. Sw: Sowing of maize, Hv: Harvesting of maize.

and rock salt. In the beginning of the rainy season in June, the Arssi Oromo start sowing maize in the reoccupied land, and then in the fields of the original village. During this time the shepherd boys move back from Lake *Shala* to the reoccupied land and graze livestock in the sanctuary during the rainy season. The maize grown in the fields of the reoccupied land is harvested in the beginning of the dry season in November. Then, livestock are grazed in the harvested fields. Just before the harvest in the original village, people return from the reoccupied land with livestock and all household utensils. Those who have no house in the original village carry their belongings into the houses of relatives and assist them in the harvest. Then, they graze the livestock in the harvested fields. Then, shepherd boys take the livestock to Lake *Shala* again. The Arssi Oromo have continued such a grazing pattern for a long time, even after the sanctuary was set up. And, after the people reoccupied the land, they could freely follow such a cycle of grazing and agriculture, and strengthen both activities.

People sow and harvest maize earlier in the reoccupied land than in their original land. This is due to their strategy not only to sell maize at the highest price but also to facilitate agriculture and livestock grazing. This shows people's deliberate choice in expanding the two activities.

While the regional officers, district officers and the representatives of each PA discussed the prospective official allocation of the land, the government officers generally viewed the local people as mere squatters on the land. Therefore, the local people are using several strategies to avoid the accusation. One of their coping strategies is well illustrated in the two ways houses are made. They build *salwata*-type huts in the reoccupied land, which is easily constructed; on the other hand, *garo*-type huts, bigger and needing more construction materials than the *salwata*-type<sup>(9)</sup>, are the majority in the original village (Fig. 6). Storage

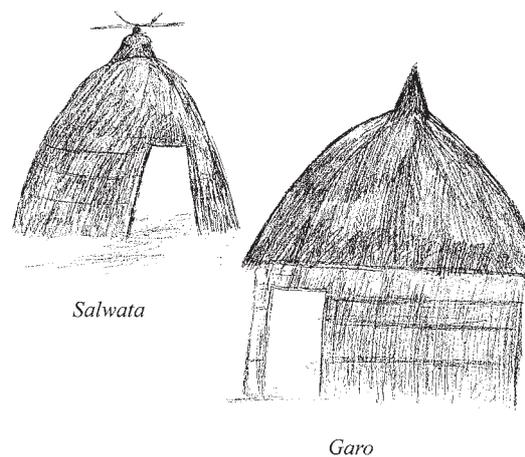


Fig. 6. Form of Huts.

facilities for crops are built only in the original village. Moreover, the local people fill water tanks with water drawn from the reservoir in the original village, instead of digging a reservoir in the reoccupied land.

Such is the thoughtful strategy of the local people. They coordinate land-use in the reoccupied land, allowing for the seasonal grazing pattern and the expansion of farmland. Furthermore, they seem to be taking some strategies for the political flux. Ultimately, all strategies are aimed at retrieving people's ancestral land from the government.

#### PEOPLE'S ATTITUDES ABOUT IMPOSED CONSERVATION POLICY

The Arssi Oromo have tried to resist the imposed conservation policies using various tactics. Wild animals such as primates, antelopes and birds cause damage to their crops, and carnivores attack their livestock all year around. People are anxious about being punished by the sanctuary staff when they are found killing or injuring the wild animals. All that they can do is to make one family member stand all night in the fields. He/She shouts and throws stones to drive away wild animals. When crops are damaged in spite of their effort, they protest against the warden. They claim that the warden should compensate for the damage because wild animals belong to him. This follows the logic that when domestic animals damage the crops, they blame the owner of the livestock. Therefore it is reasonable for them to ask the warden for compensation. There are other episodes which reveal local people's attitudes about imposed conservation policy.

##### Episode 1: Negotiation with the sanctuary staff at the meeting

The warden organized a wildlife committee in 1996 on issues such as livestock grazing and land enclosure by the Arssi Oromo. The members of the committee were the warden, the scouts, the elders, a manager of the district, an agricultural officer and policemen. The committee meeting were held irregularly in the sanctuary or surrounding villages. This was the first attempt by the sanctuary staff to hold a hearing. At the meeting held in 1998 in the sanctuary, the warden requested the elders to persuade illegal settlers to evacuate and stop cattle herding. One of the elders responded as follows.

"First of all, give us water. I remember the government made a promise to dig a well. We do not like to talk with you until we have the well in the village."

When EWCO started to reconstruct the facilities of the sanctuary in 1994, there was a verbal promise to dig a well for the Arssi Oromo. Therefore the elders insisted that EWCO must keep the promise. However, a shortage of water was not the most serious problem in the village. In the rainy season, the local people collect rainwater from a reservoir, which is called *haro*, and in the dry season, they fetch water from the well located 10 km from village. They can access water so long as the reservoir is maintained properly<sup>(10)</sup>. They

worry more about the serious shortage of farmland and pastureland in the near future. Nevertheless, they specifically negotiated with EWCO on the water issue, because they knew the government could not construct the well<sup>(11)</sup>. This is the Arrsi Oromo's strategy to delay negotiation with the sanctuary staff and to utilize the sanctuary as pasture land longer.

#### Episode 2: Dilemma of the scouts

The scouts who are employed from surrounding villages also have farmland and livestock. They are in dual positions as guards of the sanctuary and as members of the community. This often put them in trouble. The case below shows their dilemma.

In January 1998, one of the scouts found a man belonging to the community cutting grass in the sanctuary. The scout warned him not to do so. After two days, another scout found the same man trying to carry off the grass with a truck. The man explained that he was in urgent need of grass to construct a house for his new bride. The scout took him to the office of the sanctuary and reported to the senior scouts. Then, the scouts called the elders and a chairman from the surrounding villages and discussed the matter. After some hours of deliberation, they resolved the issue themselves. One of the scouts explained to me as follows: "We have double status; one as a scout, the other as a member of the community. We are always having difficulties. We do not think the matter too serious if the man carried away the grass not with a truck but with donkeys. We want to resolve the issue by ourselves without informing the warden because this is a first offense for the man. We will take him to the warden if he repeats it." In the end, the man was allowed to take away the grass.

The scouts, who were educated on the importance of protecting wild animals, should immediately report any case to the warden and handle the cases according to the government rules. However, they released an offender secretly on their own judgement. They discussed the issue both with the elders who were the representative of local authority and the chairman of village who had the minimum authority of the government, because they were in a dilemma.

#### Episode 3: A shepherd boy in the sanctuary

The Arrsi Oromo is trying to continue cattle herding in the sanctuary, and they are watchful of the activities of the Sidama. Their greatest interests are the Sidama's activities and the condition of the fresh grass. The Arrsi Oromo burn grass twice a year in the beginning of the dry season. This has not changed even since the sanctuary was established. The park staff did not accuse them because they regarded it good for the wildlife (Fekadu & Messana, 1984). However, the sanctuary staff started to take issue of the burning of grass when the number of livestock in the sanctuary increased. The Arrsi Oromo ignore a variety of enforcements such as patrol by the scouts, which restarted after the new office was constructed in 1997.

In 1997, when an inspection team came from the headquarters, one of the

members asked a shepherd boy in the sanctuary whether he knew that the cattle herding in the sanctuary was illegal. He answered that he knew they are prohibited from cutting down trees but he had no idea about cattle herding. The warden ordered the local people to stop grazing in the sanctuary repeatedly. Livestock grazing in the sanctuary has actually been fined. Nevertheless, the boy evaded the question. This episode shows the people's strong claim that the sanctuary still belongs to the people.

## DISCUSSION

Conservation agencies have often criticized the local people for their illegal activities after imposing their policies. We need to reconsider the top-down conservation method from the local people's points of view. I found that the Arssi Oromo have a deep psychological attachment to the area. After an artificial boundary was drawn to establish state farm and sanctuary, the land was alienated from the people and completely managed under the socialist government. After the change in regimes in 1991, the Arssi Oromo regained management of the natural resources which is recognized as crucial to their survival. Especially, they started to manage the reservoir and allocate land following the indigenous rules such as clan division. Moreover, they now maintain the traditional grazing pattern of livestock while incorporating cash crops in their agricultural activity. When the Arssi Oromo negotiated with EWCO, they selectively used the most impossible of demands to achieve their goal of using the land to lessen the pressures to protect the wild animals.

EWCO have criticized that the local people do not understand the importance of protecting wild animals. However I found that the people's priority is completely different from the conservation agency. The Arssi Oromo give the highest priority to the access to the land. They are not interested in hunting wild animals any more. On the other hand, the protection of the Swayne's hartebeest is still the highest priority for the conservation agency. Nevertheless the conservation agency does not consider the essential needs and claims of the Arssi Oromo namely, the access to the land. It has planned to fence off the sanctuary and try to educate the Arssi Oromo in accordance with wildlife protection. These measures aim at strengthening the regulations in the conventional conservation method and enlightening people. Mattravers and Netsereab (1994) proposed the zoning method as an alternative, but it is difficult to execute the zoning plan because the area is small without enough tourist revenue to encourage such "benefit"-sharing. Moreover, many problems have been noted with regard to buffer zones (e.g. Neumann, 1997; Brandon & Wells, 1992). Furthermore, the recent studies suggest that programs attempting to integrate conservation with development serve to extend state power into remote and formerly neglected areas (Hill, 1996; Hitchcock, 1995).

In 1995, the central government started to devolve functions and responsibilities to the regions. The decentralization effort of the conservation activities

is still in the initial stages. Most difficulty in incorporating the Arssi Oromo into the conservation activities in the sanctuary is due to different priorities in resource utilization. It is vital that conservationists understand the structures and customs of the local people in all social, cultural and historical aspects. The local claims and rights to access the land must be recognized and considered in advance in any conservation policymaking processes.

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#### NOTES

- (1) Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers program under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs assists and encourages the activities of people who wish to cooperate in the economic and social development of the developing countries.
- (2) All federal matters concerning wildlife in Ethiopia come under the mandate of EWCO. It is the government agency responsible for establishing protected areas.
- (3) There are two categories of protected areas in Ethiopia. One is the National Park with a purpose of conserving the whole ecological diversity; the other is the Sanctuary which protects the specific wildlife species. All activities of human beings, such as livestock grazing and tree cutting, are prohibited in both protected areas (Hillman, 1993).
- (4) The Arssi Oromo are one of the biggest branches of the Oromo ethnic group who speak Cushitic language (*Oromiffa*). The Oromo make up about 40% of the total population in Ethiopia. They were pastoralist living around the border of Ethiopia and Kenya. They expanded their territory in the sixteenth century and came to be engaged in agriculture (Baxter, Hultin & Triulzi, 1996). The Sidama also graze livestock in the sanctuary. However, there is not much negative influence on the sanctuary. Therefore I mentioned them only in relation with the Arssi Oromo in this paper.
- (5) The senkelle locally means the oribi (*Ourebia ourebia*), one of the small antelopes commonly seen in the sanctuary.
- (6) The amount of annual damage by the wild animals in the state farm was estimated as 60,000birr (Fekadu & Messana, 1984).
- (7) At that time, similar phenomena took place in the other conservation areas and various public buildings such as school. The local people destroyed and looted the constructions.
- (8) In this paper, I used *gosa* and *balbala* as clan and sub-clan, respectively, following Knutsson (1963).
- (9) The diameter of the *garo*-type hut (6.5m, average of 5 households) is longer than that of the *salwata*-type hut (5.4m, average of 5 households).
- (10) Each clan manages the reservoir. Every clan appoints a head and a vice-person to manage *haro*. They pile branches of Acacia to enclose *haro* completely, and the obvious

entry point is locked. People can draw water every three days. A woman can fetch water from *haro* only with two containers (50 liters) at a time. People who break the rule are punished. Also, each household has to engage in the regular maintenance of raking mud from the bottom of the reservoir.

- (11) Underground water is estimated to be running more than 400m deep. The government cannot presently fund such a project.

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