

The Chabu hunter-gatherers of the highland forests of Southwestern Ethiopia

Samuel Jilo Dira & Barry S Hewlett

Samuel Jilo Dira, Department of Anthropology, University of West Florida
sdira@uwf.edu

Barry S Hewlett, Department of Anthropology, Washington State University,
Vancouver
hewlett@vancouver.wsu.edu

Abstract: A paucity of ethnographic data exists on the Chabu hunter-gatherers of Southwestern Ethiopia. Multiple linguistic studies have been conducted because some believe their language is a linguistic isolate, but they are relatively 'new' to the ethnographic record. Based on six months' ethnographic fieldwork and reviews of existing literature, the paper provides an ethnographic introduction of the Chabu ecology, subsistence, settlement, demography, social organisation and contemporary issues threatening their lives and livelihoods. The paper aims to encourage new field research with the Chabu, increase the international awareness of the Chabu, and motivate some to assist with their threatened situation.

Keywords: Chabu, Ethiopia, hunter-gatherers

1. Introduction

This article aims to provide an ethnographic introduction to the Chabu forest foragers of Southwestern Ethiopia. Multiple linguistic studies have been conducted on the Chabu because several researchers indicate their language is a linguistic isolate (Schnoebelen 2009; Kibebe 2015) but little is known about the people and their culture. Stauder (1972) does not mention the Chabu in his classic study on the neighbouring Majangir nor in our recent personal communication with him. Our team has published a few narrowly focused papers on cultural resilience (Dira 2016) and social learning among the Chabu (Dira & Hewlett 2016; BL Hewlett 2016), and González-Ruibal et al (2013) have published reports on their material culture, but a basic introduction to the culture does not exist.

It is somewhat unusual to publish a descriptive ethnographic overview of a forager group, but we think it is important to introduce the Chabu culture to the international academic community for several reasons:

- 1 The Chabu are unknown to most of the international academic community, including hunter-gatherer ethnographers
- 2 they are omitted in classic hunter-gatherer surveys (eg Lee & Daly 2004; Kelly 2013)
- 3 they are not recognised by the national and regional Ethiopian administration as an ethnic group
- 4 their lives and livelihoods are currently threatened.

In the last two years, no other single hunter-gatherer group in the world has experienced as many killings by outsiders trying to obtain their land. We hope that this overview encourages others to conduct research with the Chabu and that increased awareness by the international community may assist the Chabu as they struggle for the survival of their people and their culture.

The following ethnographic overview is based upon:

- 1 five fieldtrips and six months of fieldwork by the first author
- 2 three field trips and two months of fieldwork by the second author
- 3 studies by other members of our research team
- 4 a review of existing publications by linguists and archaeologists, and reports by missionaries and non-governmental organisations.

2. Nomenclature and language

For about 40 years the Chabu were called ‘Shabo’ or ‘Sabu’ by linguists (Schnoebelen 2009), but the most recent and extensive linguistic fieldwork to date (over six months) by Kibebe (2015) indicates that Chabu (or Tsabu) is what the people call themselves. The Majang (Majang is singular and Majangir is plural, but we use the singular throughout this article) call them ‘Mikeyir’ (or renditions such Mikair, Mekeyir, Mekeyer) and the Shekkacho (an abbreviated form, Shekka, is also used and we use this name throughout the article) call them ‘Shakko’. Government administrators in the zones occupied by Majang and Shekka use these respective terms. We asked Chabu elders, middle-aged adults and adolescents how they refer to themselves and how they felt about the names their neighbours use to refer to them. All of the informants indicated that they call themselves Chabu and are not happy about the different monikers

that others use because they are derogatory, generally referring to their reliance on forest resources, eating ‘bad’ things, and not being hard workers.

The Chabu call their language *Chawi kaw*, which means ‘the mouth of the Chabu forest’ (Kibebe 2015). Many linguistic publications exist on the Chabu in large part due to the heated debate on whether or not their language is a linguistic isolate or a variant of the Nilo-Saharan phylum. Bender (1977, 1983); Fleming (1991); Anbessa & Unseth (1989); Anbessa (1991, 1995); and Unseth (1984) indicate that the language is Nilo-Saharan variant. The authors disagree as to whether Chabu is a member of the Surmic branch or a proposed Komuz branch of Nilo-Saharan. Chabu share an average of 12% of keywords from seven Surmic languages (including Majang) and the same average percentage from seven Komuz languages so it is not surprising that differences in opinion focus on these two Nilo-Saharan branches. By contrast, analyses by Ehret (1995), Schnoebelen (2009) and Kibebe (2015) argue that Chabu is a language isolate.

As for the closest neighbours of the Chabu, the Majang are Nilo-Saharan speakers (Surmic branch) while the Shekka are Afro-Asiatic speakers (Omotic branch). In terms of cognates, the Chabu share the greatest percentage of keywords (22%) with Majang (Bender 1977).

Chabu of all ages in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPR) area can speak Chabu fluently, but the number of Chabu first-language speakers in the Gambella Regional State varies; all elders speak Chabu but some parents do not speak it fluently and prefer to communicate in Majang or Shekkacho (Kibebe 2015). Many Chabu are at least bilingual and often speak the language of their Majang or Shekkacho neighbours as their second language, and sometimes have learned to speak Amharic or Oromo.

3. Location and ecology

Previous publications state that the Chabu occupy the highland forest areas in the SNNPR and the Gambella Regional State, but these researchers did not have access to GIS and GPS technology to locate Chabu settlements. Our GPS data indicate that some settlements are also present in the Oromia Regional State (see Figure 1 for the general Chabu area). The Chabu indicate they were the first settlers in the area, including areas currently occupied by their Majang and Shekka farming neighbours, the coffee plantation between Yeri and Kabo towns, and Gubati village, all in Gambella state. A few Chabu families live in Gubati village surrounded by multi-ethnic farming neighbours. In the SNNPR, their territory used to extend from beyond Gemadro Coffee Plantation to

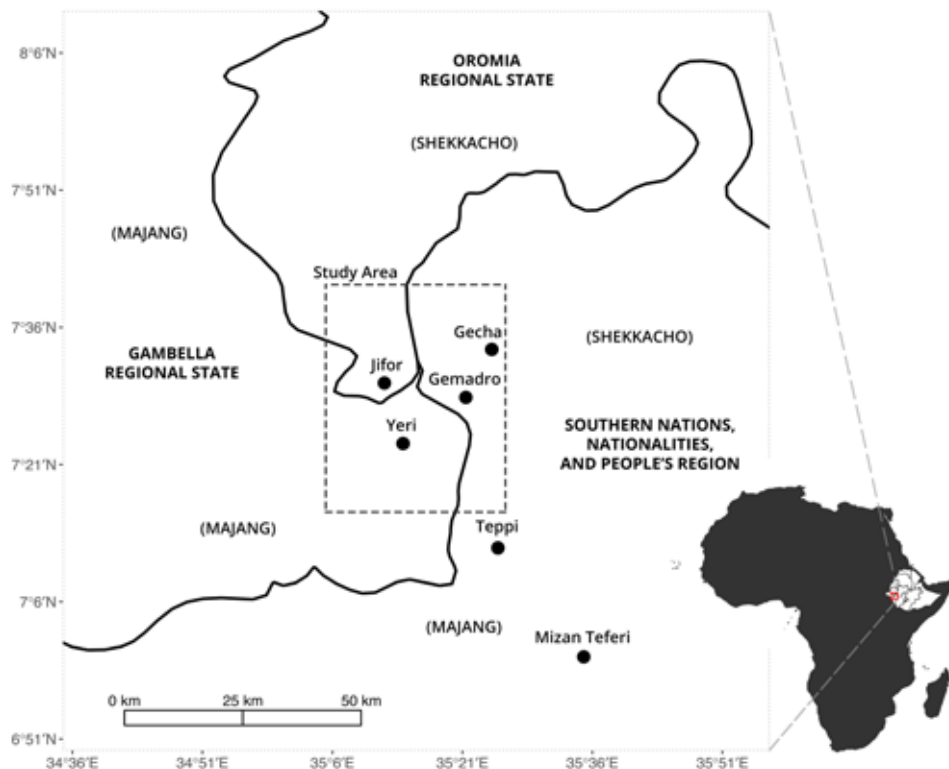


Figure 1 Location of Chabu and neighbouring ethnic groups

Source: Map by Richard EW Berl

Serbetti village, the area currently inhabited by the neighbouring Shekka farmers. Most of the areas claimed by informants as their ancestral land in both regions are occupied by either the coffee plantations or settled farmers of the Majang, Shekka, Kafa, Oromo, Amhara and other ethnic groups who came to the area searching for farmland.

The Chabu live in the southwestern highland forests of Ethiopia and most of their environment consists of Afromontane and transitional rainforest. The Chabu territory contains plains, mountains and savannahs, but most of the area is covered by a dense forest of tall trees and solid ground plants. In the SNNPR region, the Chabu area includes part of the Shekka Forest Biosphere Reserve (UNESCO). The elevation ranges between 1000 and 2500 metres (3000–8000 feet) and the average annual temperature is about 18–25 degrees C (60–80 degrees F). The habitat of the Chabu is the wettest part of Ethiopia and receives rainfall for several months each year. There are two seasons, a dry season and a rainy season, with rain falling primarily between March and

October. Average annual rainfall is about 1500–2000 mm (60–80 in). Characteristic species of the Afromontane rainforest include a mixture of broadleaved tree species: *Pouteria adolfi-friederici*, *Syzygium guineense*, *Polyscias fulva*, *Olea welwitschii*, *Diospyros abyssinica*, *Manilkara butugi* and *Cordia africana*. Smaller trees below the canopy include: *Allophylus abyssinicus*, *Chionanthus mildbraedii*, *Clausena anisata*, *Coffea arabica* and *Deinbollia kilimandischarica* (UNESCO; Tadesse & Masresha 2012).

Two major rivers, Godore and Bagi, cut across the Chabu territory and several smaller rivers throughout the forest are tributaries of these two rivers. These rivers are important to the Chabu for fishing. Godore River is the largest river and it is the boundary between SNNPR and Gambella state in most parts of the Chabu territory.

The area is rich in both plant and animal species. Studies in the Gemadro forest area adjacent to the large Gemadro Coffee Plantation have recorded about 180 species of plants and the Sheka Forest reserve is reported to have over 300 species of plants, 50 mammal species, 200 bird species and 20 amphibian species (Tadesse & Masresha 2012).

4. Why call the Chabu hunter-gatherers?

We refer to the Chabu as hunter-gatherers for several reasons. First, linguists that have worked with the Chabu since the early 1970s have referred to them as hunter-gatherers. Second, the Chabu say they were primarily hunter-gatherers up until 20–30 years ago. It makes sense that linguists studying them 40 years ago called them hunter-gatherers because they were, in fact, primarily hunter-gatherers at that time according to their own account. They began to establish small settlements of 20–40 people and adopted limited horticulture in the 1990s. Informants indicated that they started to settle and farm because violence against them increased substantially; Shekka and others attacked them to try and forcibly recruit them into military service for the previous Ethiopian government. The Chabu also say, and their Majang and Shekka neighbours generally agree, that the Chabu are the original peoples of the forest: The Chabu say they have always lived in the forest and their neighbours note the Chabu lived in the forest long before they arrived. Third, our ethnographic work and observations by Kibebe (2015) indicate that men go spear or trap hunting or tend to their beehives most every day. Chabu do not currently have guns with which to hunt. Women also gather in the forest but spend a considerable amount of time farming. Fourth, our ethnographic work indicates the Chabu

share several relatively distinct features with other hunter-gatherers: extensive sharing (including food and allomaternal nursing), a lack of formal leadership positions, relative gender equality (eg lack of deference towards males, a female role in conflict resolution), and high valuation and respect for the autonomy of individuals. Finally, Chabu origin stories indicate a long history of hunting and gathering.

Chabu people share a few different origin stories. The following narrative illustrates their belief that they have a history of hunting and gathering in the forest. The 'whites' refers to immigrants from the Ethiopian highlands.

God (*juk*) populated the earth with people and said come tomorrow at sunrise. First, the whites showed up and god gave them all the goods and material things. Second came other peoples and god gave them cattle and crops. The Chabu were the third and last because it was raining that day and the forest was wet and damp in the morning so they stayed by the fire and waited until the forest dried from the sun. They came at mid-day and god said you have all the wild animals, a dog and a chicken. What you get from the forest you can hunt and eat. The dog can help you hunt and the chicken you can trade to get some salt.

Another origin story from elders indicates that the Chabu, the Majang and the Kafa were brothers and the three grew up adapting to their environment differently: the Kafa adopted farming, the Majang became farmers and occasional hunters, and the Chabu stayed in the forests practicing hunting and gathering for a long period of time. This story contrasts with origin stories collected by Kibebe (2015) which indicate that Chabu history is not linked to Majang history and that the Chabu were created in the forest and have lived there for centuries or more. All origin stories emphasise the hunting and gathering heritage of the Chabu.

In order to understand the deep history of the Chabu, one of our team members, Richard EW Berl of Colorado State University, collected saliva samples to conduct analyses of the genetics of the Chabu and their Majang and Shekka neighbours. Preliminary analysis of genome-wide genetic data by Henn et al (in prep) at University of California, Davis, suggests that the Chabu are genetically distinct from the Shekka and other Ethiopian agricultural and agropastoral populations. They have low genetic diversity, indicating a recent population bottleneck or historical isolation. Their Majang neighbours share a distant ancestry with the Chabu; however, there is little evidence of recent migration between the two groups, or between the Chabu and the Shekka.

5. Regional contexts of the Chabu hunter-gatherers

Several extant hunter-gather groups exist in SW Ethiopia. The best known groups in the country are the Ongata (linguistic isolate; population of about 100); multiple groups of Waata, living with/near Borana and other groups (Afro-Asiatic, Eastern Cushitic, population of several thousand); Kwegu (Nilo-Saharan, Surmic; population of about 1000); and Manjo (Afro-Asiatic, Omotic, population of about 10,000) (Lewis & Woodburn 2007; Yoshida 2008). As far as we are aware, the Chabu are the least acculturated/assimilated and most active foragers in the country. As described below, this does not mean that they do not utilise other subsistence activities, such as horticulture, or that they are geographically isolated from other groups. Levine (1974) identifies seven additional hunting caste groups in Ethiopia, but no/limited data exists on them.

Like the Chabu, Kwegu and some Waata informants claim that they were the original inhabitants of the area. The Ongota say they came from different areas but no other groups lived in the area before they arrived. Some groups have had a long history of strong patron-client relations with farming or pastoral groups; the Kwegu with Mursi and other agropastoralists and Manjo with Kaffa and Shekka farming kingdoms.

The hypothetical origins of hunter-gather groups in Ethiopia and East Africa have been debated for some time. Three general hypotheses exist (Stiles 1982):

- a foragers are remnants of Upper Paleolithic hunter-gatherers and over time developed relationships with immigrant pastoralists and farmers
- b foraging is a recent adaptation or specialisation that emerges in a group due to economic opportunities, eg nobody hunting game animals in area, or impoverishment due to warfare and raiding
- c foragers move into an area with their patron pastoral or farming group.

Existing studies that evaluate the hypotheses are based primarily on linguistic analysis (Ehret 1982), only a few have used archaeological or ethnoarchaeological data (González-Ruibal et al 2014), and only recently have genetic studies been utilised (Pagani et al 2012). Stiles (1981, 1982) provides evidence, primarily linguistic, for the first and third hypotheses, Turton (1975) and Levine (1974) provide ethnographic support for the second hypothesis, and Pagani et al (2012) use genetic evidence that is supportive of the first hypothesis.

Interactions between the hypotheses are likely and substantially more genetic, archaeological and ethnographic data are needed. In Ethiopia, caste systems are common by comparison to other regions of sub-Saharan Africa (Levine 1974) and it may help to explain why strong patron-client relationships

exist with groups, such as the Manjo and Kwegu, whereas they are infrequent to the south in Kenya and Tanzania. Kwegu, Waata and Chabu elders' claims about being indigenous to their areas provide support for the first hypothesis.

Despite the divergent views regarding their origins, available literature indicates that contemporary hunter-gatherers of Ethiopia and East Africa have experienced tremendous change as a result of population movements and ecological shifts. In particular, the eastward expansion of Southern Cushitic speakers and the movement of East Cushitic speakers toward to the south altered the linguistic and ethnic compositions of hunter-gatherers in the region (Stiles 1982; González-Ruibal et al 2014; Walsh 1990; Cronk 1989). As a result, several indigenous forager groups have abandoned their language and major cultural features in order to assimilate into the culture of the dominant groups.

In terms of the Chabu area, González-Ruibal et al (2014) used archaeological, ethnoarchaeological, and linguistic evidence to hypothesise that the region was occupied by foragers and that particular contemporary peoples in the area are remnants of these early groups. Their archaeological research from the Ajilak area in Gambella provided evidence that hunter-gatherers existed at the beginning of the first and second millennium AD (González-Ruibal et al 2014). They use linguistic and ethnoarchaeological evidence to suggest that the Chabu and Koman (Komo, Uduk) and Surmic (Majang) speakers are remnants of these older populations. According to the authors, the farming Koman and Surmic speakers do not have cattle and maintain a symbolic relationship with hunting and forest life. For instance, James (1988) provides extensive details about the importance of symbolic links to hunting among the Koman-speaking Uduk. When pastoral Nilotic and other peoples moved into the area in the 1600s, Koman and Surmic peoples adapted to these and other changes in the area and slowly gave up hunting and gathering. According to this position, the Chabu are associated with Majang, Komo and Uduk peoples. While some similarities exist, it is important to point out that the Koman and Surmic peoples today are farmers, rarely hunt, have permanent settlements and live in the low altitude flatlands. While possible, it reminded us of our field studies in central Africa (Hewlett 2014); the Bantu-speaking farmers, especially the males, have a strong symbolic identification with hunting in the forest, but it does not mean they were the original inhabitants; we know that they were immigrants into the forests of the hunter-gatherer populations.

6. Demography

A complete census of the Chabu population does not exist. They are not recognised as an ethnic group by the Ethiopian government and are therefore either counted as Majang or not counted at all in the national census. Many linguists estimate their population to be between 500 and 1000 individuals (Anbessa 2010; Schnoebelen 2009) and a study for missionaries by Alemayehu (2010) estimates their population to be 1500. Kibebe (2015) conducted a census of several Chabu settlements in 2011 and found 890 individuals. We conducted a limited census in 2012 and 2013 in 11 small forest settlements and found 417 individuals. We have identified at least 20 settlements but many Chabu do not live in settled communities; they live in relatively isolated extended family units in the forest. We estimate that the Chabu population to be between 1700 and 2500 individuals, but a more extensive census is needed.

Based upon our limited demographic data of 100 households from a complete census of 11 settlements, 28% of the population is under the age of 15, the juvenile sex ratio is 1.21 and the adult sex ratio is 1.34. In-depth reproductive histories with 20 post-reproductive females (ie no menstruations and aged over 47) found that a woman has an average of 4.1 ($SD = 2.22$) live births in her lifetime (Total Fertility Rate or TFR), infertility is rare (<5%), a woman has 1.8 spouses in her lifetime (due to death or divorce with spouse), and that 40% of children born to a woman die before reaching age 15 (juvenile mortality rate). The demographic profile is similar to other hunter-gatherer groups (Hewlett 1991). Kibebe (2015) also found a male-biased sex ratio (overall sex ratio of 1.11) and stated that their fertility rates were relatively low by comparison to other parts of Ethiopia but he does not provide Chabu TFR or mortality rates.

Chabu fertility rates may be lower than the rates in other parts of Ethiopia for a few reasons. Chabu wean their children at two to three years of age and practice a post-partum sex taboo wherein couples sleep in separate houses and avoid sexual intercourse from the time the wife knows she is pregnant until the infant is walking very well (about 16–18 months of age). Dira observed a couple with a one-and-a-half year-old child sleeping in separate houses. They had their first child in May 2013, and did not start sleeping in the same house again until August 2014. Kibebe (2015) found the same beliefs and his informants indicated that Chabu have few children because of their high mobility and that women want a small number of children because they provide most of the care.

7. Subsistence

The highland forest is vital to Chabu life. Despite the divergent origin stories, all elders shared the belief that the forest they occupy today, called *chawi*, is their ancestral land and essential to their subsistence, identity and spiritual life. Informants stated they preferred to reside in forest settlements rather than in larger settlements with farming neighbours because the forest was giving and provided them the resources necessary for survival. Their views were consistent with Bird-David's (1990) representation of hunter-gatherers living in a 'giving environment'.

The Chabu of Southwestern Ethiopia were full-time hunter-gatherers until the late 1990s. At this time, raiding and exploitation from outside groups increased and government officials encouraged others to settle. As some Chabu decreased their mobility and moved into somewhat larger settlements, they started to farm. Today they are better characterised as forager-farmers because men continue to hunt most days of the week and women regularly gather several forest products, but they also farm several crops such as maize and taro.

7.1 Hunting

Chabu men use spears and traps to hunt. Men spear hunt several times a week, often with their dogs, and do not use guns. They spear hunt most frequently in the dry season (*chicha*) or time with intermediate rainfall (*ladi*), and less frequently in the rainy season (*bangé*). Trapping with snares (*kambo*) occurs throughout the year, but is especially important in the rainy season; when it is difficult to track animals, and when they take time to clear the fields.

Chabu use both individual and cooperative hunting techniques and identify five basic types:

- *Golla*. Individual hunting with spears during which the hunter is training his dog to capture game animals. The abilities of the dog are kept secret until it has learned to capture game
- *Chakan*. Spear hunting in small groups without dogs during the rainy season. Hunters sneak up on game animals while they are sleeping
- *Lughe*. Spear hunting during the dry season. This type of hunting involves hiding near rivers and streams and waiting until the animals come to drink. Dogs are not used in this type of hunting
- *Dirba*. Cooperative (three–six individuals, but can be up to ten) spear hunting with dogs. This type of hunting requires endurance as individuals



Figure 2 Chabu man with spear, dog, and fire starting kit on waist

may have to run long distances after the game. Men indicated it is a difficult and risky (animal can harm the hunters or dogs) but reliable form of hunting, in that they are usually successful

- *Kambo*. Hunting with snares of string and wood. Hunters take their spears with them while snare hunting. It occurs throughout the year, is considered safest technique, and is used to capture small to medium-sized game. Hunters often have just a few traps, but they can have up to about 30. They check them every day and they are often located near water or on the animals' trails.

The Chabu hunt a broad range of animals: bush pig (*geda*), giant hog (*eduga*), African buffalo (*miyat*), small antelope (duiker, oribi, dikdik) (*menga*), large antelope (*gongoji*), porcupine (*deki*). They say they used to hunt elephant (*godo*) and but not monkeys, eg colobus monkeys (*gidishi*). The Chabu indicated they never hunted monkeys because the creator said they should not be eaten. Consequently, monkeys are common in the forest and often threaten Chabu fields. The bush pig was often mentioned as the preferred game animal. Buffalo was considered the most difficult and dangerous to hunt. They related that they must follow it for a long time after it is speared and that many men have been killed by buffalo. Like other hunter-gatherer groups, the Chabu say that they stop hunting when they have enough game, and if they capture a large animal they do not go hunting again until they have finished eating all of it. Some game animals today are sold/traded to Shekka or other farmers.

When men go hunting they often take their friction-based fire-making kit (*kipu*) with them (Figure 2). They light fires on hunting trips and sometimes build a fire to smoke animals before they return to the camp because women find the blood disgusting (Garfield, personal communication).

7.2 Gathering

The Chabu gather a wide variety of wild forest plants, fruits, nuts, mushrooms, tree bark and yams/roots. Women conduct most of the gathering, but men also participate, either independently or with women. Gathering provides more reliable resources than does hunting. Dira went gathering with women and adolescent girls learning to forage. Locating and identifying edible plants in the forest was easy for the Chabu women due to their accumulated knowledge, but sometimes it took women several hours to reach the location of edible plants. Women collected a vast range of wild edible foods, but also identified a number of medical plants in the forest.

Women gather with other women, their daughters, alone, or sometimes with their husbands, depending on the type of wild food or medicine they plan to collect and the distance they need to go in the forest. For example, to collect *gobo*, fruit from the top of trees, women go either with their husbands or with other adult males.

The frequency of gathering and the type of plants collected varies depending on the season. Most wild food plants are widely available during the dry season and less so during the rainy season. Not much is collected during the rainy season; informants mentioned that only one type of plant, *molon* (wild cabbage), is available during the rainy season whereas five to six types of root and fruit plants are collected during the dry and semi-dry seasons. During the dry season, a woman may gather in the forest three to five times a week.

7.3 Small-scale farming

Today, small-scale farming is practiced to complement a Chabu's foraging activities. Their relatively small farms are located near their semi-permanent settlements. Informants indicated farming is an increasingly important part of their subsistence because forest lands available for hunting and gathering are decreasing due to expansion of coffee plantations and settlers moving into their area. Farm products include banana, taro, cassava, maize and papaya. Men and women perform different tasks associated with farming. Men clear the forest and plant coffee while women plant, weed, protect the fields from monkeys and other animals, harvest, and prepare/process the crops for consumption.

Chabu are new to farming, have relatively small fields, and often harvest crops before they are fully mature. They have planted *enset* (false banana), which is a very popular food item in the highland areas in southern Ethiopia, but have not learned how to process it. Currently, they only use the very large leaves to wrap food and other items and do not use the roots or hearts as food items, as is common elsewhere.

7.4 Beekeeping and fishing

Along with hunting, Chabu males are known for and view beekeeping as part of their cultural identity. They produce and sell honey (*sinna*) in the market. The Chabu produce honey almost every season, though the amount produced varies from season to season and by individual. Honey is a vital source of income, particularly for newly married adults needing to pay a bride price. In addition

to domesticated dogs, most Chabu households raise some chickens, which are also an important source of income. Almost every household has both dogs and chickens. Dogs, besides helping with hunting, are important for protecting maize fields from monkeys.

Beehives (*dana*) are placed in particular trees and certain species of trees are taboo for hives. A man often has about 10–40 hives and children learn about beekeeping by making small hives and climbing trees.

Fishing is an infrequent part of the Chabu subsistence portfolio. Men fish with lines primarily to sell their catch. Fishing during the dry season is easier than during the rainy season, when the flow of water from rains make catching fish difficult. Throughout the year, however, the Chabu obtain various amounts of fish depending on the amount of rain.

8. Sharing

Extensive sharing (*owo*) is a pervasive feature of Chabu life. When men return with game, they share it with all neighbours (first level of sharing) after which neighbours cook and share the food with all their neighbours (second level of sharing). When game animals are butchered they are cut up, placed in small packages wrapped in leaves, and given to all households in camp. If females are cooking something such as coffee (*qaaro*) or taro (*chakwé*), they call all of their neighbours to come and share. Dira's (2016) study of cultural resilience among the Chabu found that sharing and cooperation with others were the most important strategies for surviving times of food insecurity.

If children do not share with others, parents said they will physically slap or hit them. Chabu indicate that if people do not share, their neighbours will hate them. An adult male said that if he captured a bush pig he would 'give most of it away and keep a small amount for myself'. Another informant said: 'My mother advised me when I was a small child to share equally and give whatever you have'. Another mother advised her child 'You will live alone if you do not share, nobody will come to you'. Sharing is central to Chabu life and they have social sanctions to enforce and maintain it.

8.1 Trade and exchange

Unlike hunters and other occupational minorities in Southwestern Ethiopia and tropical forest hunter-gatherers in the Congo Basin and other parts of the world (Sato 2014), the Chabu do not have patron-client trading relationships

with farming neighbours, such as those described between Kwegu foragers and Mursi agropastoralists (Turton 2002) or Manjo foragers and Kaffa-Shekka farmers (Freeman & Pankhurst 2003). Stauder (1972) does not describe this type of relationship with Majang and while the Shekka had this type of relationship with Manjo, we do not have any evidence of this with the Chabu. Like other neighbouring hunter-gatherers (González-Ruibal et al 2014), the Chabu regularly exchange and trade with Majang and Shekka neighbours at markets, but no social-ritual relationships exist like they do among the Kwegu, Manjo or Congo Basin foragers.

Chabu men and women go to markets, often several hours away, to buy or sell various items. They are most likely to sell game meat, chickens or their eggs, honey and pottery. The item most frequently sold in the market by the Chabu is honey. Women produce pottery and sell it in the market every few weeks (BL Hewlett 2016). A woman may take five to ten pieces of pottery and sell each of them for 20–30 Ethiopian Birr (about US\$1.20 per piece). The money they receive for forest products and pottery is used to purchase clothes, salt, soap, tobacco, cooking oils, hair oil, alcohol and metal points for axes, spears and machetes. Frequency of market participation varies by age. Younger adults may go to the market every week while older adults may participate once every two weeks.

Up until a few years ago, Chabu attended markets primarily in Yeri, a smaller market, and Gamadro, a larger market that the Chabu said was more organised and had lights. Due to recent violence in Yeri, the market no longer exists. For most Chabu, the markets are several hours walk from their settlements and they often have to stay overnight.

9. Settlement

Changes in Chabu settlement patterns are similar to their subsistence patterns in that they are in a transition from mobile hunter-gatherer settlements to farming in semi-permanent settlements. We have identified more than 20 Chabu settlements including Dushi, Bagi, Jifor, Deme, Dembeli, Debre Zeit, Mani, Goal, Dhandhar, Shuni, Semen, Jede, Gogoki, Jenne, Fejeji, Kumi, Dushine and Addis Berhan, Bero, Afalo, Menge, Kundi, Yeri, Gubati and Dushi (a different settlement with the same name). Settlements today can be categorised into three general types:

- a Chabu neighbourhoods in larger settlements (villages) with government presence and multiple ethnic groups

- b medium sized semi-permanent settlements
- c small extended family settlements.

Relatively few Chabu live in the relatively large villages (>200 residents), such as Yeri, Gubati and Dushi (in Gambella), with local government and other infrastructure services such as dirt roads with public transport, police, elementary schools and health clinics. Chabu in these settlements are the most acculturated (little hunting and gathering) and are the most likely to intermarry with other ethnic groups. Several other ethnic groups live in these villages and the Chabu are a minority population. Due to recent ethnic violence in Yeri (see below), many Chabu have left the village and have moved to Jifor or other semi-permanent forest settlements. Elders in Gubati also indicated that it used to have many more Chabu than today (presently only 11 Chabu live there), and that it used to be considered as the border between the Chabu and Majang territories. Many of the Chabu moved away when settlers moved in and took over the area.

Most Chabu today live in semi-permanent forest settlements where 90% or more of the residents are Chabu. Most of our fieldwork was conducted in this type of settlement. Dira conducted a census of five of these settlements and the mean population size was 61.0 ($SD = 31.2$) individuals; variation was substantial as the number of residents ranged from 24 to 105 individuals. These settlements are semi-permanent in that individuals, families, or even the entire settlement population moves away for limited periods of time to visit family and friends, attend funerals or hunt and gather. Some segments of the settlement move to temporary camps, usually within about 10 km, to forage. Residential mobility is limited but logistic mobility is high.

The number of individuals in these settlements varies seasonally, increasing in size during the dry season when food is plentiful and every member of the settlement comes together to share food. During the rainy season (*bangi*), the group tends to be smaller because some members, particularly males, go to other places, either in the forest or elsewhere, to look for day labour or to hunt. Moving from one settlement to another is unrestricted and common as individuals move to settlements where resources are more abundant.

According to the Chabu, the last type of settlement was the most common in the past. These consist of extended family hunting-gathering groups. We observed several such settlements while on trails between semi-sedimentary settlements and family members interviewed during the census and reproductive histories reported that some family members were living alone in these forest settlements. Dira conducted a census in five of these settlements and found that they averaged 16.0 residents ($SD 8.5$) with a range between

7 to 28 individuals. These smaller family settlements are similar to those found among the Hill Pandaram (Morris 1982) or Inuit (Freeman 1967) hunter-gatherers.

Individuals are free to change settlements or camps at any time. There is no restriction on building a house in a particular settlement, but individuals tend to move between residences where relatives reside. The Chabu recognise heritable hunting-gathering territories in the forest. Large trees, rivers, mountains and valleys are used as boundary markers between forest territories. An individual can hunt, gather or hang beehives in someone else's forest tract but only with the permission from the owner. Failure to do so could be a cause of conflict between individuals or even within Chabu.

According to informants, all Chabu used to live in these family settlements in the recent past, but moved into semi-permanent settlements with more people to help each other during accidents, and for protection against settlers who were attacking and killing people. The attackers were primarily Shekka and they captured Chabu to sell them as slaves and/or send to the war front in order to fight rebel groups. The government has also encouraged them to settle for several years (see below for more details).

The typical household consists of a Chabu family that includes parents and children less than ten years of age. Grandparents and adolescents usually live in separate houses. Male adolescents (*ateni*) and female adolescents (*koto*) are expected to have their own houses as early as nine or ten years old. Fathers or older brothers construct houses for younger family members. Male and female adolescents live separately, but adolescents of the same sex may share a room/house. While *ateni* learn to construct their own houses, brothers or fathers construct a house for *koto*. The houses are only for sleeping and the parents' house is for dining and socialising.

The Chabu have a cultural ideology of post-marital patrilocality but it is not always practiced. Residence patterns from two settlements indicate a patrilocal tendency in some sections of the settlements, but a mixed pattern in other parts suggest a more flexible and multilocal residence pattern is practiced. An interesting result of Dira and Hewlett (2016) was the finding that 11 of 28 (39%) of adolescent males interviewed were living matrilocally. It was particularly common for adolescent boys to be living with their mother's brother.

We observed three general types of houses (*doku*): round; small, rectangular (mostly for youth); and dome-shaped lean-to. The Chabu indicated that small, rectangular houses were the most common type of house used in the past.

10. Social organisation, marriage and kinship

Patrilineal clans exist but their role in Chabu social-political life is limited. Most Chabu cannot specify their precise genealogical relationships. Clans (called *komoy*) are not the basis of cooperative work or political organisation. Kibebe (2015) identified 13 clans and Alemmayehu (2010) identified 14. During our first field visit in 2012, we were told that there were 12 clans. In the following visit, the Chabu identified two additional names, making the total number of clans 14. By the 2014 field season, a total of 18 clans were recorded, and we expect that more names will be identified in the future as more settlements are visited. The names of the 18 clans identified thus far include: Chagib, Melebi, Gugambi, Dumabi, Gogubi, Eyabi, Gundubi, Kalgib, Goyobi, Buchubi, Wayebi, Gidhebi, Chokabi, Sibub, Mayubi, Tsogabi, Bajebi and Gamabi (said to be an extinct clan).

Each *komoy* is associated with knowledge about and the power to control a mythical animal, creature, or material that Chabu call *seya* (clan identifier) (Kibebe 2015), such as dogs, bees, fire or spears. For instance, Chagib is associated with dogs; Sibub is associated with leopards; Gugambi has power over monkeys; Dumabi is associated with bees (eg can command bees to enter into beehives, or has the power of destroying someone's beehives by calling bees out of their hives), and Gogubi is associated with spears (eg can heal spear wounds).

Depth of knowledge about clan history is very limited; most adults (98% of 50 informants) could not trace their history further back than their grandfathers. Only one individual was able to recall seven generations. Consequently, stories about the origin and history of clans is limited. According to a few informants, the creator, *yeri*, placed different *komoy*, epical fathers, in different parts of the Chabu forest, and each *komoy* was the owner and customary leader of the forest and the land in which it was born. This is evident from the forest locations associated with clan names. For example, Gugambi is both the name of a place in the forest and the name of one of the Chabu clans. Most individuals could name five to six clans including her/his own, but no individual could list more than eight. Informants could not identify an ancestor common to all Chabu; each *komoy* was created independently.

The Chabu do not have formal leaders or named status positions, but individuals that have healing abilities, those who are good hunters, have many beehives, are good midwives, or always share extensively with others are valued and respected for their personal qualities among the Chabu. However, this does not confer any power over others or compel deference from them. Temporary informal leaders may emerge in cooperative hunting with dogs or during tooth extraction



Figure 3 Elderly woman that plays role in conflict resolutions

events. Some elders are highly respected for their knowledge or other abilities but they have limited influence over others. Women are said to play a major role in conflict resolution (see Figure 3) (Garfield, personal communication).

While particular areas of the forest are associated with specific clans, seldom are settlements associated with specific clans. Many clans are usually represented in settlements and individuals from different clans regularly cooperate with each other in a variety of tasks, such as hunting, gathering and sharing food and childcare.

Components of Chabu marriage include clan exogamy, bride wealth, polygyny, frequent divorce and limited inter-ethnic marriage. A man usually initiates interest in marriage to a particular woman, but the marriage depends on the desires of the woman and both parents need to agree. According to Kibebe (2015), marriages often take place by abduction. An older adolescent boy takes the girl to a house deep in forest while negotiations with parents take place. Families do not intervene in mate selection, but participate in negotiations for bride wealth payments. Generally, bride wealth consists of metal axe and spear points for the bride's male relatives and jewellery (bracelets and necklaces) for the bride's female relatives. Bride wealth may be paid over time after the marriage or after the couple has had their first child. Bride wealth payments are changing and today it often consists of cash payments made over time. Informants indicated the amount can vary, some suggesting it can be as high as 5000 to 10,000 Ethiopian Birr (about US\$250– US\$500). Polygyny exists, but

the first wife has to agree. Our demographic studies indicate that the polygyny rate is low at 4% (2/47 married couples) in Yeri and Jifor.

Divorce is common. A survey of 67 adults found that about half (47%) had divorced more than once and 22% had been divorced twice. Half of the 20 post-reproductive women interviewed had more than one husband in their lives and some women had three or four husbands during their reproductive life (some women may divorce and remarry again as they are still living). Dira and Hewlett (2016) also found that 57% of 28 male adolescents in the study reported that their parents' marriages ended in divorce. Only 32% of the adolescents were living with both biological parents and many were living with a step-parent.

Divorce can be initiated by either spouse. It is not an issue if a former marriage partner resides in the same neighbourhood in the settlement and shares food. Dira observed a divorced man having breakfast at the house of his ex-wife and her new husband. The woman was not concerned about telling Dira about her marriage history, and pointed to her ex-husband and said, 'He was my first husband'. When Dira asked both of them why they had divorced, they both laughed and said, 'Because we wanted it so'. They did not appear to feel any animosity toward each other.

For most Chabu, marriages with other ethnic groups are infrequent, but intermarriage rates are increasing in the larger multi-ethnic villages. Our demographic data indicates that the inter-ethnic marriage rate in 10 semi-permanent and family forest settlements is 6% (5 of 79 couples), but in the large village settlement of Yeri it is 77% (16 of 21 couples).

The Chabu say that in the past (up until the late 2000s), Majang men sometimes married Chabu women, but that the reverse pattern (ie Chabu men marrying Majang women) was rare. Majang men have historically had more resources than Chabu men because of the accumulation of resources and wealth from their farms. Reproductive history data are consistent with these statements. Also, no evidence from our census or life history data indicate marriage relationships with Shekka before 2008.

Changes in marriage patterns since 2008 have been dramatic. The vast majority (86%) of new inter-ethnic marriages are Chabu men marrying non-Chabu women (Shekka, Amhara, Majang). Some Chabu men now have resources and wealth because they have leased their land to coffee growers. Some men have divorced their Chabu wives while others are young men marrying for the first time. Informants indicate that the younger generation is increasingly interested in marrying outside of the group because they are interested in obtaining greater access to health care, education and wage labour associated with living in the larger villages or towns.

In terms of kinship terminologies, our limited data indicate that Chabu distinguish lineal versus collateral relatives. Mother (*indi*) and father (*babe*) are distinguished from father's brother (*kokki*) and father's sister (*nene* for older, *ayya* for younger), and mother's brother (*dende*) and mother's sister (*nene*). Grandmothers (*kake*) and grandfathers (*affa*) on both mothers and father's side are distinguished from great aunts and uncles and brothers and sisters (*ma*) are distinguished from cousins. Much more research is needed on Chabu kinship terminologies and organisation.

Chabu distinguish between consanguineal relatives, *kame*, and those related by a friendship, *fira*. In most settlements, however, it was difficult to differentiate *fira* from *kame* interactions as people in a settlement interacted with both equally. Children do not call relatives by their personal names but by their kinship position (eg 'mother') to show respect (*chamé*) but parents call their children by their personal names.

11. Contemporary issues

Chabu lives and livelihoods are threatened by several issues but here we focus on three primary ones: killing Chabu to obtain access to their land, lack of recognition by the Ethiopian government, and the presence of missionaries.

11.1 Land and violence

Chabu culture and lands have been threatened for decades or more, but conflicts in the last several years have contributed to violence and several Chabu murders. Here we provide a brief overview of the recent violence and segments of political-economic history that contributed to it.

In September 2014, at least 24 Chabu were killed within three weeks. Ethiopia has one of the highest population densities in Africa and settlers come from other parts of the country seeking to claim the fertile, forest highland of the Chabu. This particular outbreak of violence began when a Chabu man agreed to sell his land to Amhara settlers who said they wanted to build a church on the property. The settlers started to build a fence on the land, but refused to compensate the owner, saying the church was for the public and therefore they should not have to pay anything. Angry at this betrayal, the Chabu man started to pull the wooden fence posts out of the ground. The settlers attacked, cutting the Chabu man several times with a machete and then killing a young boy that was with him. The mother of the boy came to care for her dying son, but as she

was holding him the settlers killed her as well. The husband of the woman took revenge and killed two settlers. At the end of the day, 10 people had been killed.

A few weeks later, on the Ethiopian New Year, the settlers organised and took revenge on the Chabu, killing many more people. At least 24 Chabu were murdered and Yeri was abandoned by most Chabu, who moved to Jifor or Meti. The only Chabu government representative was captured and put in prison. The Chabu continued to be hunted down in the forest and killed by the settlers. Government forces were sent to the area but had little impact on decreasing the violence. An email report from the field described it this way:

They are not seen as human beings but as the animals they hunt. They are being hunted where ever they are found. They cannot move to Yeri, if they show up, they will be hunted as animals that came out of a forest at the wrong time. A man and six others were killed day before yesterday for coming to Yeri to look for their sister who did not flee with them the previous time. The Chabu told me that the assigned government force is doing nothing to stop the killing rather they are facilitating the killing by forbidding the Chabu to flee from the areas where they suffer. They imprison those who come to Meti.

Kibebe (2015) reported that in 2014 the Chabu of Dushi, a semi-permanent Chabu settlement, the Shekka moved into the area in great numbers to settle the area to the extent that it could make the Chabu leave. When Kibebe made his second field visit to this area in 2012, no Shekka lived there, but while in the village during that year, a few Shekka kebele government officials came to demarcate the land for the Shekka so that they could come and settle. Shekka started to move into the area in 2013. Violence in the Chabu area continued into 2015 and seven people were killed in Yeri, but it is not clear if any of those killed were Chabu. More than 20 Chabu were arrested and are still in prison in Addis Ababa and other Chabu are 'wanted' by the authorities.

It is essential to have a basic understanding of the history of the area to understand this recent violence and killings. The Ethiopian government policies and multinational agribusiness corporations have also contributed substantially to the violence over this land. Government policies encourage the establishment of large-scale coffee plantations that lead directly to deforestation and to the displacement of Chabu from their forest lands.

11.1.1 Gambella region

In the Gambella state, the Ethiopian government established a coffee plantation in 1988 that extended from the town of Kabo, the previous Chabu-Majang border, to Yeri. When the plantation started, the Chabu were not consulted.

Officials gave them a few months to move their camps out of the area designated for the plantation. The clearing of forest ground with bulldozers and tractors together with logging activities began while the Chabu were still in their forest camps. Chabu men tried to fight with the forest clearing crews but plantation officials repressed the conflict and forced the people to sign papers, which they did not understand.

When the plantation began, some Chabu men, along with many newcomers, were employed as logging assistants and guards on the plantation. However, the Chabu did not stay long for two reasons. First, they had a difficult time with the long hours, physical demands, low pay and strict control by supervisors. The system was dramatically different from their egalitarian, sharing and flexible foraging subsistence system. Second, the Chabu did not like the new food provided at the plantation and most people got sick with diarrhoea. As a result, all but two Chabu who were employed as guards left the plantation and moved back to forest family settlements. While many Chabu went deeper into the forest to get away from development, others established new settlements next to the plantation. One of these settlements grew into the town of Yeri.

Violence and killings against the Chabu were not unusual during this early period. Informants in Gambella state remembered a deadly conflict that occurred in 1998 between the Chabu and plantation workers. The conflict began in the evening of a market day when Chabu men were on their way back, walking through the plantation. The Chabu preferred to use a short-cut trail instead of the road for the market travellers. When the plantation guards asked the Chabu men not to go through the coffee plantation, the Chabu men refused to comply and both parties entered into a conflict. Some people were physically injured that evening, but the conflict extended into the morning of the next day when the Chabu men returned and started attacking plantation workers. Plantation workers outnumbered the Chabu and they took their own machetes and killed four and seriously injured 20 Chabu. Sporadic conflicts continued for years.

In 2010, some young Chabu men started selling their forest land to farmers outside of the area (mostly Amhara and Oromo from the north). These sales contributed to a massive immigration of settlers to the area. Following the influx of farming settlers into the forests, many Chabu increased their own farms. The population of Chabu in the Gambella region increased dramatically. The Yeri settlement became a large village or rural town, and became the administrative and market centre of Chabu territory for the rapidly increasing population of new settlers and for the Chabu themselves. At the same time, the Gambella regional government established a huge protected forest area around

Bureyi Lake, which significantly diminished the Chabu access to their forest resources.

In 2011, Gambella regional government implemented a resettlement program and relocated a considerable number of Chabu people from several family forest settlements to Yeri. Within six to eight months, more than 80% of the Chabu settlers had moved back to the forest; only a few younger adults and female-headed households stayed in Yeri. The Chabu who returned to the forest said they were starving in the resettlement project because they could not hunt, gather or hang beehives. They also felt unsafe because of violent disputes regarding the borders of government-allotted lands with new settlers.

Within four years (between 2010 and 2014), the Chabu lost almost all their forest land to coffee farms, settlers, and protected areas in the Gambella region. Loss of land led to deforestation and a rapid decline in Chabu social, economic and spiritual life. Yeri, which was the central Chabu hub in the Gambella region, is the location where the recent violent conflicts described above have taken place and, as mentioned, the Chabu have recently abandoned this village.

11.1.2 SNNPR region

In the SNNPR, Chabu have gradually lost their land and settlements to coffee plantations and Shekka farmers moving into their territory. The Chabu in this region feel discriminated against and remember the establishment of the Gemadro Coffee Plantation and the Getu Farm, the two privately-owned coffee plantations that have caused massive displacement from their forest camps.

Gemadro Coffee Plantation was established in 1997 and Getu Farm was established in 2002. The Gemadro plantation is reported to be the first privately owned and largest (2300 hectares) coffee plantation in Ethiopia. The site of the Gemadro plantation is near the Chabu-Shekka territorial border, but most of it lies within Chabu territory. When the government granted the land to the Gemadro plantation, a series of consultations took place with Shekka elders but none occurred with the Chabu. Some of the Shekka received compensation for the forest. Chabu men were allowed to work as day labourers. The Chabu workers did not remain for long because conditions were horrible, pay was low, and they realised that the money they earned was less than the income they would make from the sale of honey, game meat and fish. After the company cleared the forest the Chabu were living in, they cleared a forest area across the Gemadro River so that the Chabu could establish a new settlement but, before the Chabu were able to move in, the government granted the cleared site to a second investor, who established the Getu Farm.

As the Getu Farm was established and expanded, the Chabu were forced to settle deeper in the forest, at the settlements of Dushi and Bane. Today, only a few Chabu remain in Dushi and Bane and the majority have moved to a new settlement across the Bagi River. In 2011, the Shekka administration divided and distributed the Chabu's Dushi and Bane settlements to the Shekka farmers and the Chabu were again forced to move further into the forest. Today, Chabu in the SNNPR fear future displacement because they may lose their settlements to foreign investors or to Shekka farmers. In addition to the killings described above, Dira heard reports of violent conflicts between the Chabu and Shekka at the Gemadro market that resulted in the deaths of three Chabu men.

Given this history and the ongoing discrimination against the Chabu people, it is ironic that the Gemadro Coffee Plantation reportedly meets Rainforest Alliance (REA) and UTZ Certified standards that emphasise fair wages and services (medical, education) for employees and that Starbucks is a major buyer of this coffee. As a direct result, the Chabu have been forcibly removed from their lands and now live in marginal conditions.

The primary issue at stake is land. The southern highland forests are fertile and population densities in other parts of Ethiopia have increased dramatically due to population growth. The government encourages international development and migration to these areas and migrants as well as local people see the forests as opportunities to enhance their wealth and prosperity. The Chabu are an unknown and marginal ethnic group that currently has no or very little legal or political power. Consequently, they are frequently exploited, and in some instances killed, as others try to maximise their power and wealth.

11.2 Lack of recognition by the Ethiopian government

The Chabu presently are not recognised as a legitimate ethnic group by the Ethiopian government. This is a particularly important point because the country is organised as an ethnic democratic system. Many of the states and most of the zones and districts in Ethiopia are based upon ethnic affiliation. Most of the political positions as well as government jobs in health and education in these zones and districts are held by individuals from the local ethnic group. If your ethnic group is not recognised you have very limited opportunities for political representation and government employment opportunities, which in turn translates to a lack of access to defense of land, health, education and other resources. Our team and others such as Kibebe (2015) have tried to promote this recognition, but it has not happened and they need considerably more help.

As mentioned above, the Chabu are more closely affiliated socially and politically with the Majang than they are with Shekka and other ethnic groups, and consequently government officials in the Majangir Zone of Gambella and the Gambella State have been more supportive of Chabu efforts to gain recognition. Majang officials, especially in the town of Meti, have been very supportive of our research efforts. This is not the case in the Shekka Zone, which is in the SNNPR State. Shekka officials have told Chabu that our researchers do not have authorisation to work with them. We have provided Chabu with papers and explained to them that we do have all the authorisations. The Shekka feel particularly threatened by the potential of recognition for the Chabu because it may mean a loss of access to land and political power in the area. Some of our contacts have said that Shekka Zone officials have been ordered by SNNPR State officials in Hawassa to start the process of recognition of the Chabu, but we have yet to see any changes.

11.3 Missionaries

The only missionary group currently working with the Chabu is the Ethiopian Evangelical Church, Illubabor Bethel Synod. Church members visited a few Chabu settlements in 2001 and by 2005 some Chabu were starting to convert. On the other hand, the missionaries have started to provide health and education services that are not being provided by the Ethiopian government. The missionaries have established informal basic education centres in four settlements, two in each state: Yeri and Gogoki in Gambella, and Jifor and Dushi in SNNPR. While instruction in Gambella State was in the Majang language, it was in Amharic in SNNPR centres. The missionaries also established health clinics at Yeri and Jifor (the clinic at Jifor did not begin operation until the summer of 2014). The missionaries' project also provided sheep and goats to some Chabu families, aiming at introducing them to animal production. The Chabu often said they like these services and seemed to appreciate that the missionaries are interested in them.

Although the missionaries bring some wanted services, they also have had some adverse consequences on Chabu ways of life. The negative impact (from the vantage point of anthropology and the value of cultural diversity) is that the missionaries are trying to eradicate several elements of Chabu culture, especially their religious beliefs and practices. Chabu in these areas talk less frequently about indigenous religious or healing systems because they feel they are 'primitive' or are associated with the Christian Satan. In addition to religious practices, the church also wants the Chabu to cease other practices they feel are

'primitive' or unhealthy, such as allomaternal nursing, polygyny, drinking local alcoholic beverages, some dances, and want men to get circumcised. González-Ruibal et al (2014) indicate that they did not find one 'authentic' convert to Christianity during their interviews in Yeri.

12. Conclusion

This article serves as a basic introduction to Chabu subsistence, settlement patterns, demography and social organisation. The Chabu are important because they are 'new' to the global academic community as well as to most people in Ethiopia. They are important to hunter-gatherer academics because few data exist on

- a highland tropical forest hunter-gatherers
- b any active hunter-gatherer groups in Ethiopia
- c the ethnography of hunter-gatherer language isolates.

Data from a number of linguistic studies, preliminary genetic studies, and the cultural studies in this paper indicate that the Chabu are a separate group distinct from their neighbours. We hope that this overview encourages more research with the Chabu, increases international awareness and motivates those in power to assist with their threatened situation.

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