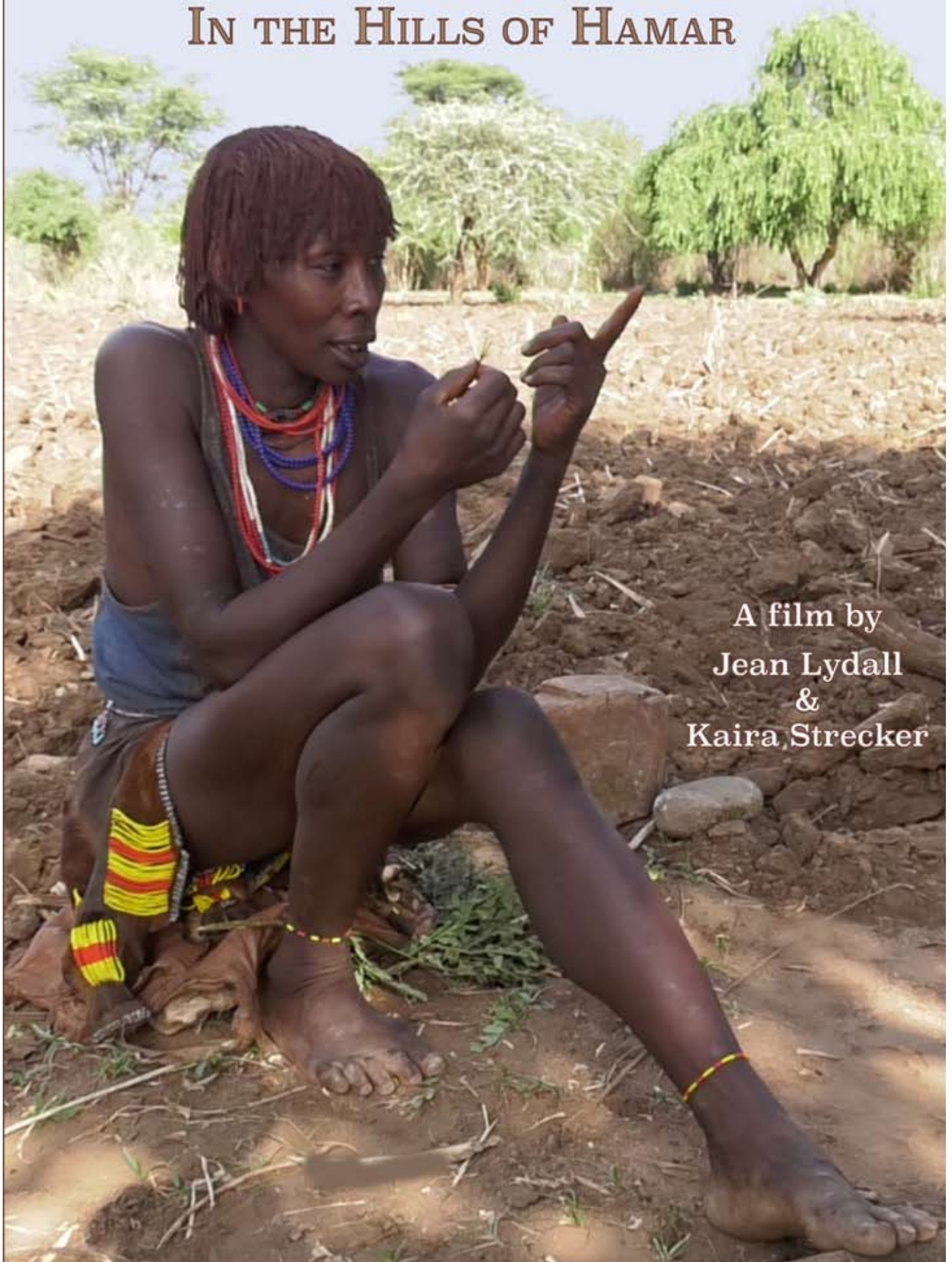


FAMILY SUBSISTENCE IN THE HILLS OF HAMAR

A film by
Jean Lydall
&
Kaira Strecker





WE ARE GUESTS OF SHAWA

A film in the MPI series
GUARDIANS OF PRODUCTIVE LANDSCAPES
(Editor: Ivo Strecker)

*

Selected Images, and Dialogues



Before, there was only bush here.

When I made my first field,
there was thick bush everywhere.

When we were down south,
only wild animals lived here.

Hyenas howled,
buffalos were here, and lions too.

In the evening we heard howls.

There were no herds here,
people lived down south.

Then the bush was burnt off,
and trees chopped down.

As it got cleared, we moved up here.



Garombe, Shawa's partner

THE FAMILY HOME

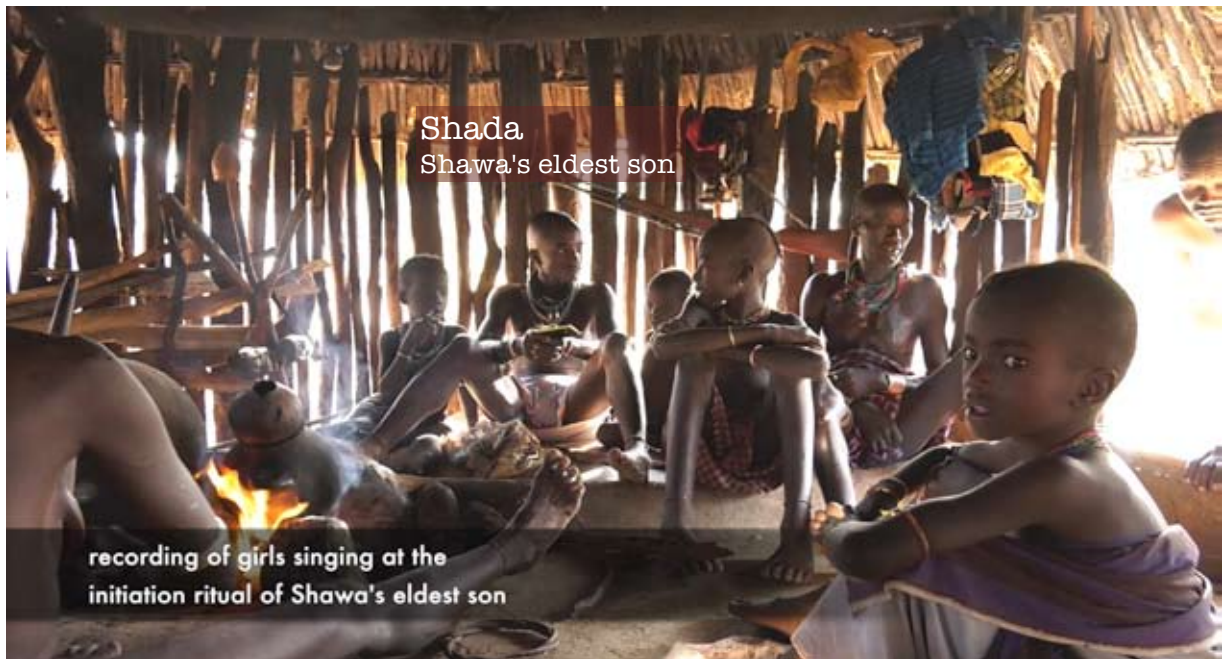




My husband died
 when I was a bride,
 and after mourning him...
 my husband's 1st wife and I
 cultivated a field together.
 But she was no good for me.
 She opposed me everyday.
 I had no husband, did I?
 I stayed with my co-wife
 a long time,
 and then I ran
 to my father's home.
 I gave birth to Shada, and
 took him with me.
 Next, I moved here.
 "Where should I live?"
 Up in the mountains
 sorghum doesn't ripen well,
 there are no plow-oxen,
 and weeding is done by hand
 with digging sticks.
 But sorghum doesn't grow fast
 and ripen, nor does maize.
 "I can't manage this,
 I'll go to Simbale
 where the land is good."

Here I gave birth to Baali,
 and Baali grew up.
 The next child died...
 she is no more.
 Then Garombe and I
 found each other,
 and Bunno was born.
 I gave birth to her over there
 in the house next to the field.
 He and I, were we newly weds,
 or what? I don't know.
 We got together,
 and he built a house.
 He gave me Bunno,
 then Bunno grew up,
 and I got pregnant with Siino.
 Then we moved over here.
 I brewed beer for a work party,
 we cut wood and built this house.
 Then Bakala was born here,
 and since then I've only lived
 in this house.
 For a long time it has stayed
 in good shape, and I gave birth
 to Aike here. Now it's old.
 Being here with the children
 growing up, I am happy!







Dore
Shawa's step daughter

Aike
Shawa's youngest son



Siino
Shawa's 2nd daughter



Wancho
Shawa's step son

Get up!
Come back!
There's hair on you.

That other skirt is bad,
I know you made it,
but people won't like it,
it's no good as a front skirt.



that other skirt is bad



Bakala
Shawa's 3rd son

What's your work today?

Today my work
is to prepare yeast
for brewing beer

Doing what?

I'll winnow sorghum
and soak it in water,

I'll leave it one day,
then put it in a plastic sack,
closing it tight.

After 3 days it turns into yeast.

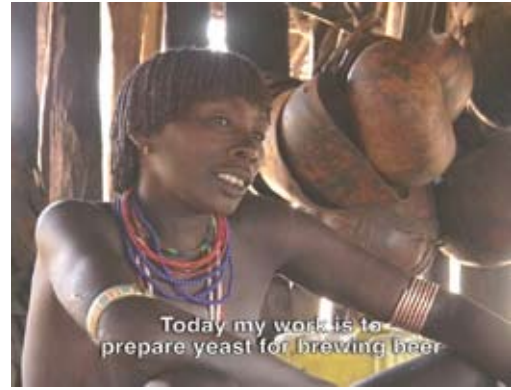
Then I can use it to make beer
for my sons when it rains
and they start to plow.

May my sons drink beer and
proudly plow the field for me.

To plow hungry is bad,
if there's no beer, it's bad.

Eating and drinking,
they'll plow with oxen.

That's why I'm working.



TAKING GRAIN TO THE MILL





5 DAYS LATER
PREPARING SOUR DOUGH



All gone!
What ate it?
Mouse or squirrel?

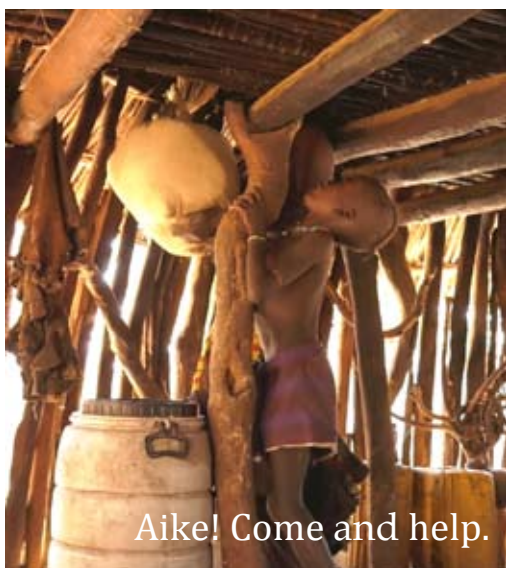


Let's improve it.
This flour is too rough,
I'll mix in fine flour.

Water!



You came to taste?
We're making sour dough,
there's nothing to eat.
The dumpling things?
We cook those later,
once the dough is sour.



Aike! Come and help.



Tie it tight!

8 DAYS LATER
COOKING SOUR DUMPLINGS



Put the coals underneath,
and blow until it's a big fire.
You know how to do it.
What you kids doing?



All in?
Yes, all.



Siino, come help me



Two people would be better.
Now the water boils off.



NEXT DAY
MIXING CRUSHED DUMPLINGS
WITH GROUND YEAST



We ground the yeast at the mill,
Siino carried it.
We put it in today
and wait two days.
On the third day
it will be getting ready.
Tasting good.
First it's tasty, rather bitter.
When really bitter,
it's ready.



DOWN TO THE FIELD AND RIVERBED



Bunno knows everything?
Yes, she knows everything.

When still little
she was quick and bright.
Now sometimes she's grumpy.
When little she was great at grinding.
I'd tell her not to grind, but she insisted:
"Your chest hurts and you cough",
so she kept grinding.
Now, if there's a dance,
she may refuse to grind,
and go wash clothes instead.
If I shout she doesn't listen,
if her brother shouts, or her father,
she won't listen.
If you don't shout,
a child won't work fast,
she'll just joke with boys,
getting nothing done.



Then you tell her,
"Grind quickly so you can
go home with the boys.
When they take the cattle home,
you bring the kids and calves back."
Boys don't fetch firewood,
only girls do that.
Girls plow with oxen,
grind flour, fetch water, make coffee.
Boys only plow.
After plowing and drinking coffee,
they bring the cattle home.
Women then cook food,
and go home.



Have a look for me...
further up on the top.
Not there - where it's broken.
Bonna give me fat
from your neck ring.



In the dry season the cattle have little to eat,
we cut branches of leaves to feed them.
When it rains they find grass alone,
we just keep them out of the fields.
Goats have to be herded,
baboons may bite them,
also foxes may bite them.
Bullocks graze with the main herd,
but plow-oxen are tethered
in fenced pastures.
When the sorghum ripens,
the oxen are tethered in the shade
next to the field house
and fed on sorghum stalks.

MASTERING THE ART OF OX-PLOWING



Where to find plow-oxen?
There were no trained oxen here,
so I had to find some.
I had a calf from my brother,
and a bullock from my brother-in-law.
Then I put the two animals together,
and trained them to plow,
getting a man to yoke them.
I had learnt plowing from my uncle,
so I trained them myself.
Trying again and again, never giving up,
day, after day, after day,
until finally the oxen learnt.



Then I plowed a field, and a little sorghum ripened.
When one of my oxen died, I joined Garombe, who had plow-oxen.
Then I plowed a field over there, and he built me a house next to the field.
Next we moved here and made a field.
We kept plowing with his oxen, always plowing together.
I would plow, then go grind flour, meanwhile he would plow. When he tired,
I'd relieve him. Shada was little then, also Baali. I was pregnant with Bunno.
We worked like this until all the sorghum was sown, plowing equally.
Then I cooked for him, drank coffee, and put Baali to sleep.
Early next morning, I ground flour. Taking the flour, I went to plow with him.
We always plowed together. Meanwhile Shada grew up, and began learning to plow.
He mastered the art of plowing in the field down there.
For a long time I plowed this field with Shada's help. Now Baali has grown up,
I have given them the oxen, "Plow with your father. I'll make coffee and grind flour."



In our fathers' time the bush was good,
growing very dense.
If you chopped it down and burnt it off,
it would be good for one year.
That's the freshly burnt field which ripens well.
We used to dig with hoes, piling the brushwood.
Then when the rains came we would cut
long poles and sharpen them.



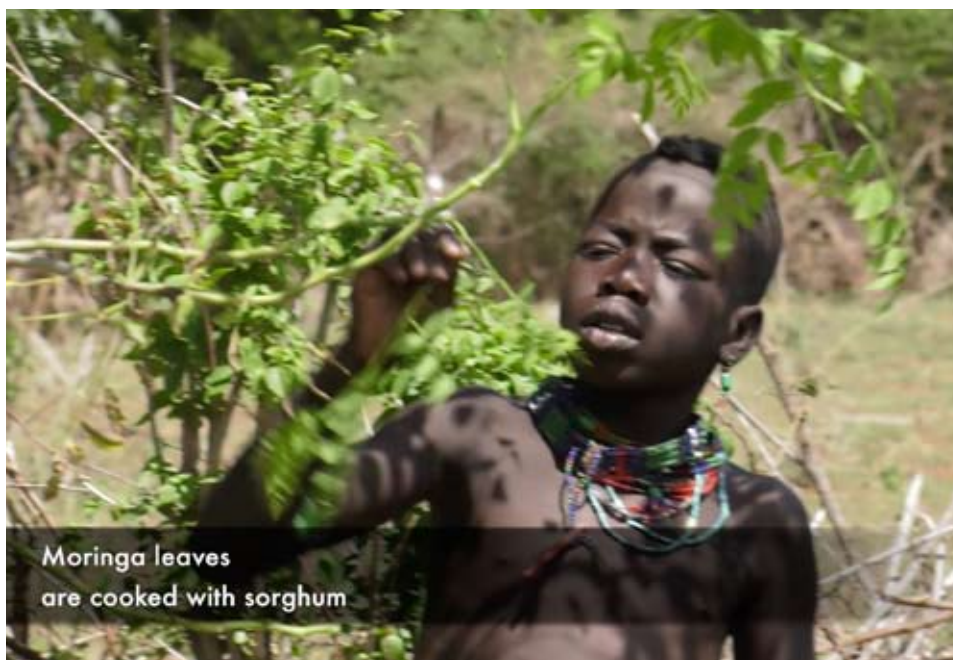
A child brings sorghum, and holes are dug.
This is sorghum, planting thus.
That was olden days – now no more.
Now it's "Grab the oxen!"
"Bring seed!"
"Now plow!"



On the bank we only sow maize, no sorghum.
 On the upper field both maize and sorghum are sown.
Why is that?
 On the bank sorghum grows fast and needs more space.
 Also, on the bank sorghum grows so tall it breaks.
 And, unseen, the birds can eat the sorghum.
 Also, monkeys will steal the sorghum.
 We can't see what happens here.
 There's one kind of maize, but many kinds of sorghum.
 One sorghum is *ukumba*, another *murso*,
 another *gaabo*, another is *argo*.
 There are many kinds.



The small bullock you are filming never plowed before,
it was only tethered before.
Shada is trying him because he's tamed.
He plows slowly.
Look, he knows how to do it.
Now they are turning the soil
to bury the weeds and soften the earth.
Then when it rains, we'll make large plow wings.
When the rain pauses for a couple of days,
and the soil dries a bit, the plow will enter well.
Then we'll plow furrows where water collects,
and sorghum grows big and fat,
the leaves rustle, and all will be well.





I must heat water for the beer.



Siino, make a whisk
for the beer.



Come drink beer!



go graze

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE



The land here should lie fallow.
After one or two years grass will grow again.
It will get rich again, growing grass and shrubs.
After slash and burning, we'll plant it again.
I've fenced off bushland over there, around the base of the hill.
The land here is getting barren.
I've enclosed it for the plow-oxen.
In the dry season, there are trees for fodder,
special trees like *arra*. I'll cut them to feed the oxen.
Also, when Shada gets a wife, there's nowhere to make a field,
so we'll keep some land for him saying,
"Make your wife a field!"



GAROMBE REPAIRS THE ENCLOSURE FENCE



BAALI CHECKS HIS BEEHIVE



Do you get honey at night?

Yes, at night.

You put fire on the ground and light a torch.

You have a honey gourd, leather rope and torch.

Someone below sends things up as you climb,
letting out rope you reach the top, hang up the pot.

Taking the torch, you blow smoke at the hive.

Bees buzz as you open the lid a bit.

Then you pull off the lid, knock knock the torch,

bees fly out, you puff out the torch
and thrust it in the hive, smoke billows,
they fly away, flying out the back
while you cut out honey.

When I harvest honey,

if there's plenty, I'll store it in the loft.


I'll use some to make honey beer for the elders.

When they drink, they bless me.

Only then I'll sell honey.

EVENING TIME





Many thanks to
Shawa and Garombe

Shada and Baali

Bunno and Siino

Bakala and Aike

Dore and Wancho

Haila Aike

Awoke Aike

Arne Ruis

Günther Schlee

Max Planck Institute
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