Abraham & Sarah
Creators of
a productive
landscape

A film
by
Ivo
Strecker
HAGOS MASHISHO and DESTA GIDEY
live in Tigray, Northern Ethiopia,
*en route* to the monastery of Gundagundo.
Because of their great hospitality
people have named them
ABRAHAM and SARAH.

A film in the MPI series
GUARDIANS OF PRODUCTIVE LANDSCAPES
(Editor: Ivo Strecker)
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Selected Images, Dialogues and Commentary
Since our marriage we have worked together.
Both the man and the woman do as best as they can.
We buy the sickles from local traders.
The left hand takes the wheat and the right one cuts it.
After we cut it we collect it.
Then we bind it and carry it to the threshing place.

As you can see,
this is my wheat field.
I prepared it,
and I am glad
that you have
come to see it.
I am fine!
I am fine!
I am fine!
This is your maize field!
Yes it is.

It was difficult to plough.

Well… we use this for ourselves.

Look at the yield yourselves.

We got this land from the Government, but we pay taxes for it.

For what do you use the straw?
For cows and other animals as feed.

So, is this year better?
Yes, this is a better harvest.

But look at the yield… Last year we didn’t even harvest at all; not even enough for the animals.

We will thresh this.
All crops have their sowing time: maize in April and wheat in June.

As it brings food,
as it brings a great season, Shemal you better work hard!

May you live as long as a rock!

Elemo, you better work hard, so that we have a good harvest!

Listen when I say ho-ho..ho..ho!

Ho-ho-ho... it's great!
    Aee...! it brings bread to the mouth, and beer to go with it.

My sons help thresh the barley: Welday, Yemane and Hayelom.

My Kuhila, you are the light of my house!

Elemo, you better work hard all day, so that we have a nice harvest!

Everything needs teaching. Like our children at school, the donkeys and oxen must be trained. Once they have learned, they work well.

I sing for my animals, to bless their work:
    A blessing to the threshing field, and faith to the country!
    Trample down! Bring it down! Ah... put it down!
    Stamp down the seeds, seeds on your eyes, your legs, your back and tails!
Tell us about the fork.

I cut it from a tree and then bend it over the fire.

This is a place for the right wind.

The seeds are heavier than the chaff, so the fork and the wind separate them easily.

Here we separate small stones and soil from the seeds, and there are also other unwanted pieces to get rid of. Like the fork and brush the basket is used for separation.

Tell us about the brush.

We make it from the Serdi grass. We fasten it around two sticks, binding each bunch one by one.

So you use it for final cleaning?

Yes, we do.

Hurry up!

Bring a piece of wood to make a cross.

Keep the goats away! Please, keep away the cattle, send them down!
First we make a cross, and use it to bless the grain.
The plants are for abundance.

In the name of the Father,
the Son and the Holy Ghost.
Amen.

Our Father, who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy name.
Give us our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses.
Deliver us from evil.

Oh Virgin Mary, peace be unto Thee.
Blessed is the fruit of Thy womb.
Amen.

St. Mary, give me, give me! Bless it!
Give me plenty, bless it St. Mary!
Consider my labour! Bless this! Give me!
Consider my labour! Give me!
Make it full!
Here the terrace has broken away.
The heavy rain pulled it down,
and washed away the grain below.
I thought the wall was strong enough.
The other part of the wall was also washed away.

**When did the wall collapse?**
Early in the morning.
The water seeped through the ground
and took the wall away.

**Were you worried when the wall collapsed?**
Since it happened early in the morning,
we thought it was the wind, which had shaken
the trees down there the days before.

We were in the house
when we heard a strong, angry sound.
We thought it was the wind again,
but then we realized that the terrace had gone.

It will take much work to rebuild the terrace.
We are not sure if it can be done with what we have.
If we can not do it alone, I will ask the government for help.

We will try our best.
We have come to see how you repair the terrace. How is it going?
I asked the community and prepared food for them.
Now we are working as you can see.
Because I can't do it alone, and the terrace is very big.
I am on my way to check whether Desta and Roman have made lunch.

Abraham and Sarah,
of noble ancestors,
you feed the hungry…
You are always generous.
May you live an everlasting life.
I sing to celebrate Hagos.
I celebrate Sarah as well.
Well-mannered Hagos Mashisho!
Son of noble people,
I thank you forever.

Clap!
Dance!
Oh, dear girl,
come and play with me.
The girl from Saharti,
if you stay in
the house all day,
you may go crazy.
Younger girl,
come and play with me,
come and talk to me.
If not, I may go crazy.

Let me say a few words.
We didn't expect the terrace to fall,
and then the government could not help.
So I want to thank you for your assistance.
You are loyal to your friends.
May God repay you for what you have done.
Earlier the sun challenged them, 
but now the clouds rising from the sea 
have cooled the air and brought them relief.

This stone fits well!

Son of Amdom, 
jump and 
throw it down!

Now we go up 
to bring 
more stones.

Abraha come up!

They dig out the stones up there and bring them down here. 
Come all of you!

One, two, three!

It went down well!
The monkey is doing his task, waiting to eat my seeds.

Solomon, bring more seeds!
I work on the terrace side by side with ploughing. Most of it I do myself, but sometimes my children help. The big stones need to be moved, they are not good for the seeds.

Your hands are very strong!
Yes, I always rush to work. Even I don't care whether I hurt myself. Look how rough my hands are. They are like this because I am addicted to work. I am always in a rush. The harder I work, the stronger I become.
If I don't work, I get weak.

So you handle the stones one by one!
Yes, I place them on the edge.
We finished sowing below and now will plough the field above.

Move them to the center!
Demolish that corner!
Leave some earth above the wall, it will protect the field from erosion.
Do not plough below this line!
Demolish that corner!
Level the field!
Lift the plough when you hit a rock!

We thank you for your visit,

How long did it take you to rebuild the terrace?
It took about four months.
This season, we hope for a good harvest.
We will build small terraces below as a support to the main terrace.

What will you plant here now?
I will sow wheat.
We will use manure as fertilizer.
Then we leave it for some time, until it is ready for use.
We thank you for your visit, and I hope you will join us for the harvest.
Our father would have cursed us if we had not helped rebuild the terrace.
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