A film in the MPI series  
GUARDIANS OF PRODUCTIVE LANDSCAPES  
(Editor: Ivo Strecker)  
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Selected Images, Dialogues and Commentary
White teff appeals to the eye. Our forefathers told us that red teff is superior. It can be used for soup and is the healthiest variety of teff. Stew is prepared using different spices, as also milk, yogurt and butter. One can’t have enough of it! Food made from red teff is better than meat.

This is a fertile field belonging to our village. Here is where we spent our childhood. During the devastating drought, we left this farm, but later we returned and resettled here.
*Teff* is harvested in groups. During harvest season, we help each other. Especially sons-in-law are expected to help. One has to do what one can.

This sickle is razor-sharp, one has to master the tool!
Maybe now it is time for beer.

Good beer!

*Is the harvesting difficult?*

Yes, it is difficult.

Barley and wheat are tall, so you can cut while standing. Crouching makes your knees hurt. The hands need to move fast and together as you cut the *teff.*
The most experienced men work on the left and the right side.

They are called *Amamo*.

Like generals in the battlefield, they decide on the width and the pace of the cutting.
The girl from Worabayu,
her legs are soft
and white her teeth,
May I lie on your lap!

The girl from Mokhoni,
her legs are soft
and white her teeth,
May I lie on your lap!

Melkam, come on, sing!
What a day! Oh... my companions
My Companions, let’s go to the sea
What if we encounter enemies?
If we do, we use a bomb to blow them up!

The men sing
three different kind of songs,
which are heroic, nostalgic and cheerful
The songs help lift the morale of the workers.

Let us sing gumaye!
Line up! Oh, my companions!
Ah, yes!
Oh, my brave companions!
Ah, yes!
Beautiful woman, may your husband never return, because he does not deserve you!
We let the teff dry for a few days, otherwise it will get mouldy.

We build the stack on a dry surface. In this way we prevent damage to the seed. Also, we keep the seeds upward.

We cover the top with the heads of grain downward.

*So you finish the top with teff stalks?*

Yes! This will protect the grain from rain.
Gombel, behave!

These oxen are like soldiers.

*Qelasay*, a lead ox, turns the rotation.

The *Kholalay*, keeps the oxen together.

They move from right to left following the belief in the power of the right.

Bless the yield!

Let’s give to the ox, they said, to the good ox with a big dewlap.

Dear ox, because of your labour, the straw is yours!

Let’s give straw to the ox!

Let’s give a blessing to the farmer and to the ox with big dewlap.

The strongest farmer, turns a snake into a stick, kills a lion for his dogs and a tiger for his cats!

The farmer has plenty land oxen, yet begs for sacks of grain

What a day!

Bless them now!

Trample down the seeds!

Trample!

This is for you!

So we bless the threshing floor.
These two are young oxen. They need to be tied together until they are disciplined.

Sweep there!

These stones stand for the trinity.

What`s it for?

For the final stage of winnowing. The other is for the first stage, to brush away the straw. These two brushes are different.
One must work barefoot on the threshing ground.

You better squat down! The wind blows towards you.

The upward spiral calls for abundance. The cross signifies an end of the threshing.
The heap is covered to protect the yield from evil spirits.

Put the forks on top!

The day ends with a meal in the field.
The farmers spread out the different varieties of teff for the buyers to see.

What are you selling today? We sell the grain to buy salt, coffee and other goods.

This is what I will sell today. It is called sergeneway. Which you people from the city prefer.

The red teff is richer and more tasty. White teff is dry and kills the appetite. Red teff is richer and most enjoyable to eat.

Farmers don’t choose, but we like the red best.

We supply the market with our best grain. The civil servants survive because of us, the farmers!
Wedding parties enter the market.

Accompanied by music, the groomsmen collect grain from the farmers.
How long do you still have to wait?

There are more people ahead of me.
I use fermented dough. I mix the flour with water. It takes three days to ferment.

*Is this fermented?*

Yes, it is ready for use.

In the past we ate healthy food, and there was no disease.

These days we are conscious of what we eat.

In the market I sell eggs and other goods.

*From where do you get the pan?*

It is from here.

We use oilseed to polish the pan.

It is good to start the day with fresh *enjera* and coffee.
May we have a blessed day!

May this house be blessed!

May your family be protected from harm, misfortune and sadness!

May God give you a graceful life!

May the Holy Saviour be your guardian!

Amen!
Burn the torch!

*Meskel* is the biggest religious festival, celebrated among Orthodox Christians of Ethiopia.

Let us sing for *Meskel*!

Queen Elena began the *Meskel* fire. Because of the Meskel fire she found the true cross.
The Meskel fire celebrates the end of the rains.
It heralds the beginning of a new season.

This is how God created the cycle of seasons for us.

Early morning, priest Mesele blesses the people and the Meskel fire.

Abreha, please hurry!

Meskel, bring us happiness, peace and good fortune.
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The welcoming farmers
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