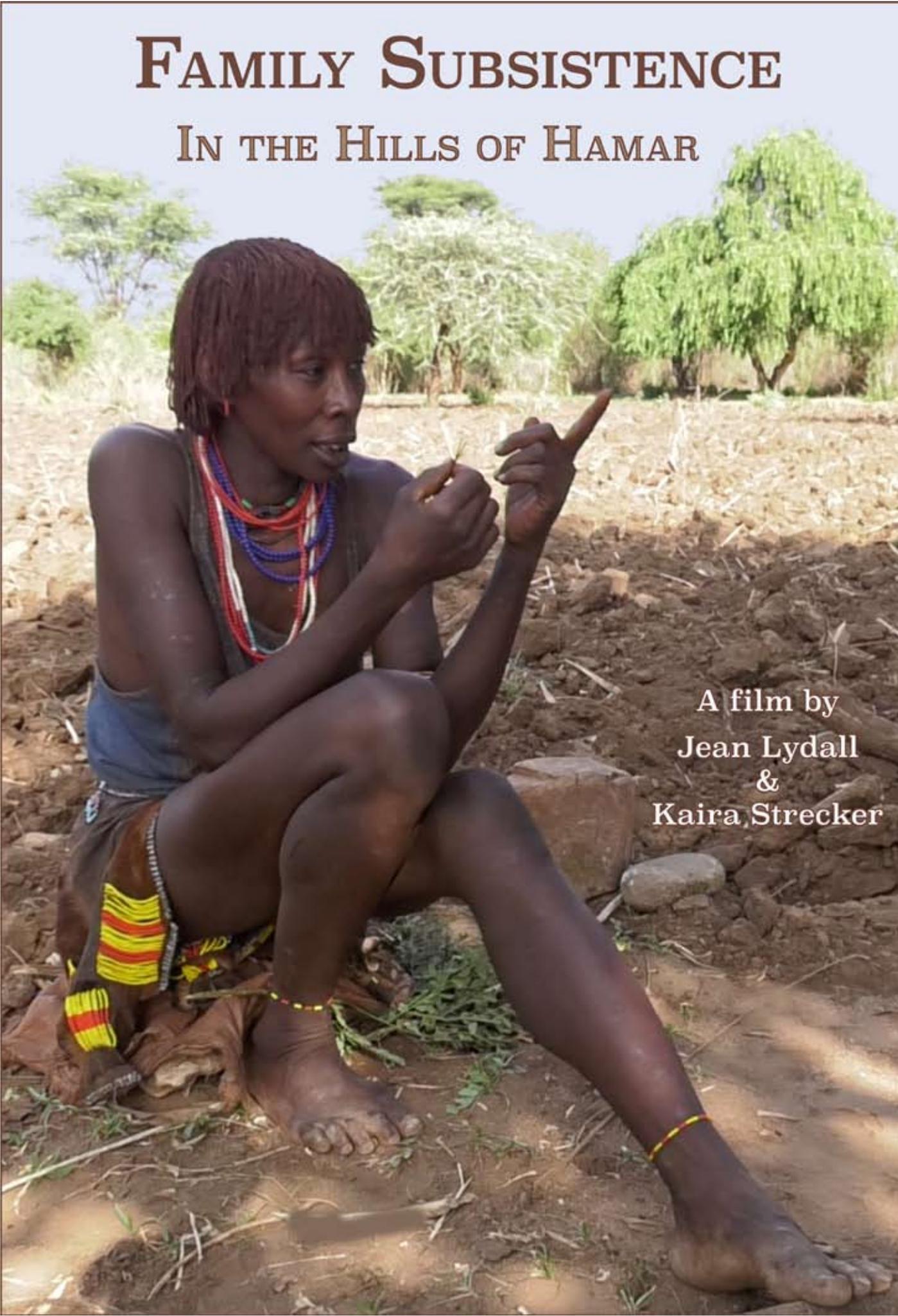


# FAMILY SUBSISTENCE

## IN THE HILLS OF HAMAR

A woman with reddish-brown hair, wearing multiple necklaces of red, blue, and white beads, and a yellow and red striped skirt, is sitting on the ground in a field. She is holding a small object in her hands and pointing towards the right. The background shows a dry, open landscape with scattered trees and a clear sky.

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.

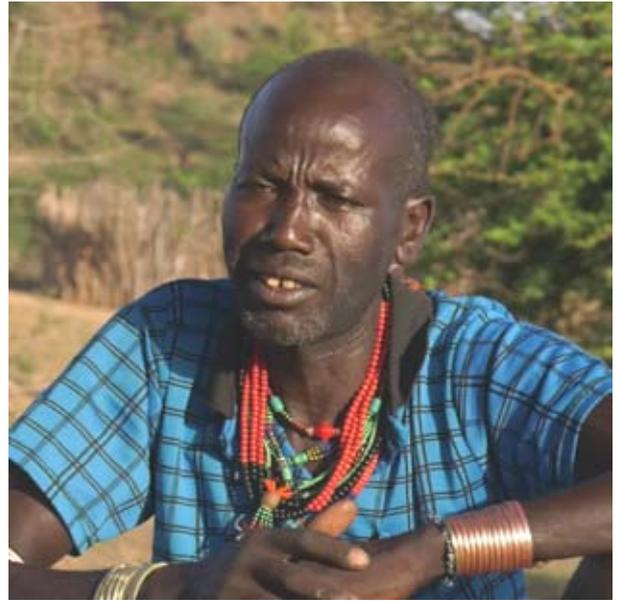
Hyenas howled,  
buffalos were here, and lions too.

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!





Shada  
Shawa's eldest son

recording of girls singing at the  
initiation ritual of Shawa's eldest son



Baali  
Shawa's 2nd son



Bunno  
Shawa's eldest daughter



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.

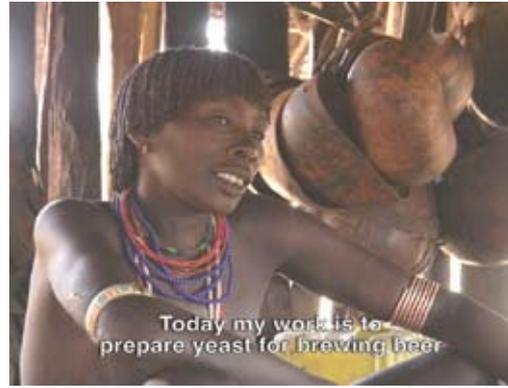
Then I can use it to make beer  
for my sons when it rains  
and they start to plow.

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?

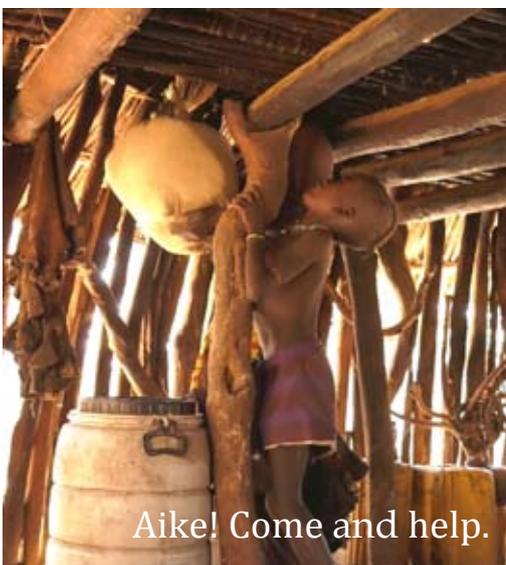


Let's improve it.  
This flour is too rough,  
I'll mix in fine flour.

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.



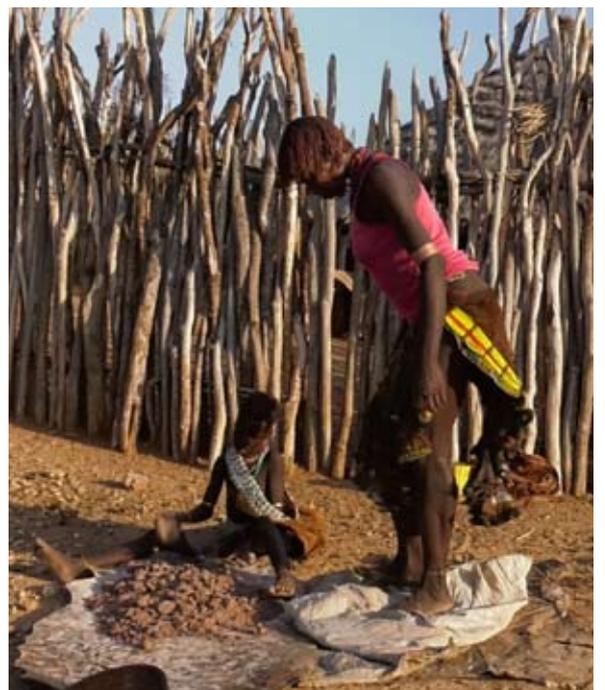
8 DAYS LATER  
COOKING SOUR DUMPLINGS



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



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.

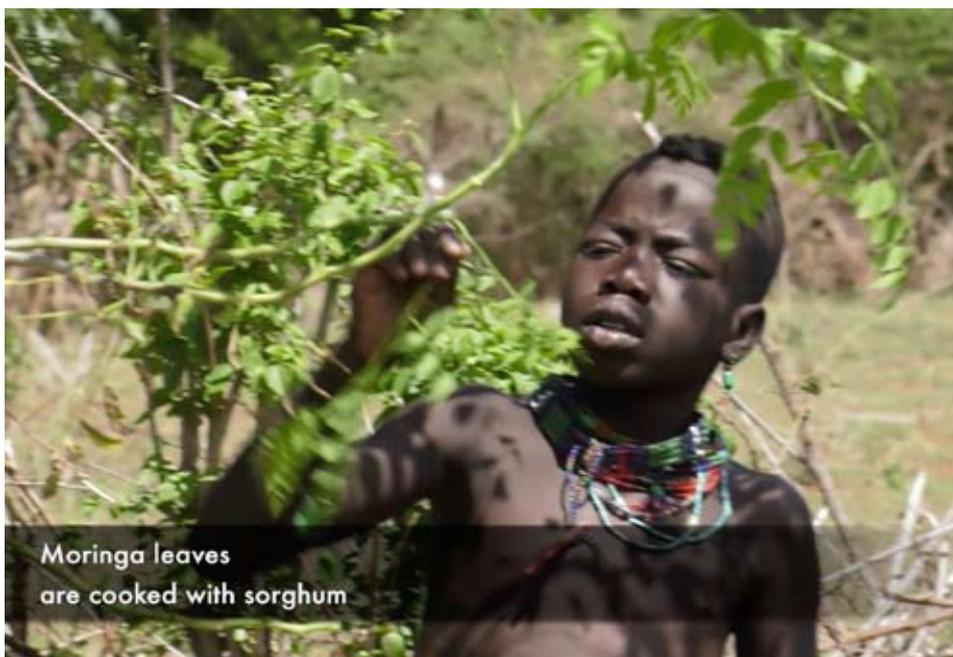
One sorghum is *ukumba*, another *murso*,

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.



Moringa leaves  
are cooked with sorghum



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!"



I've fenced off bushland over there.

## 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

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