

Artisans in Ethiopia



Hafiz Wasim Akram

Abstract This chapter deals with the status and chief occupations of artisans in Ethiopia, including the challenges faced by them. Following an introduction to the chapter, a succinct overview of the country, conditions of the artisans of Ethiopia, and some of their chief crafts in various fields such as pottery production, handloom textiles, basketry, and ground stone are presented in this chapter. In the end, problems and challenges facing Ethiopian artisans have been brought to light along with necessary recommendations to solve their issues for their betterment and the welfare of the country at large.

1 Introduction

The demands of the consumers are met by a good number of stakeholders, and artisans are one of them. The origin of the term “artisan” goes as far back as the sixteenth century from the Italian word “*artigiano*” or Latin word “*artitus*,” which means art in English. There are several definitions of artisans. According to Cambridge Dictionary, an artisan is one who does skilled work with their hands. Tweneboah-Koduah and Adusei (2016) call artisans persons with special skills to manually produce products from simple materials. They have the art of creating a unique functional or decorative piece of an item by employing traditional techniques. International Labour Organisation (2003) defines artisans in the following words:

persons who make products manually. They usually work individually, but can often be helped by family members, friends or apprentices, even limited numbers of workers, with whom they are constantly in close personal contact. This contact generates an intellectual sense of community and attachment to the craft. However, in order to include all business initiatives which contribute to the development of the sector, the use of the term “artisan” should cover those craft entrepreneurs who: (a) although not actively participating themselves in production, specialise in research, market negotiations or product design and

H. W. Akram (✉)

Department of Marketing & Entrepreneurship, CCBA, Dhofar University, Salalah, Oman
e-mail: hakram@du.edu.om

conception; (b) also make use of machine tools or even machinery, yet not affecting the artisanal nature of the work and the production process; (c) beyond the usual cottage or artisan unit, have associated in cooperatives or any other form of organisation (even informal); and (d) manage or form part of micro-, small- or medium-sized enterprises concerned with artisanal production.

Artisans are tiny producers of goods in monetary terms and live and work in cottages and hutments. With many of them being necessity entrepreneurs, artisanship is a means of survival for a large chunk of the population of a country, more particularly an underdeveloped one. As an art, it is a prop of their living and sustenance. Products produced by them include textile, wooden items, leather goods, pottery, metal, and basketry. The following definition of artisanal products was adopted by the UNESCO/ITC International Symposium on “Crafts and the international market: Trade and customs codification” (Manila, Philippines, October 1997):

Artisanal products are those produced by artisans, either completely by hand, or with the help of hand-tools or even mechanical means, as long as the direct manual contribution of the artisan remains the most substantial component of the finished product. These are produced without restriction in terms of quantity and using raw materials from sustainable resources. The special nature of artisanal products derives from their distinctive features, which can be: utilitarian, aesthetic, artistic, creative, culturally attached, decorative, functional, traditional, religiously and socially symbolic and significant.

It is very vivid from the above quotation that the scope of artisanal products is very vast and can include complementary categories as well. As per International Labour Organisation (2003), the complementary categories may include various additional materials (mineral, vegetable, animal, stone, glass, etc.) used in craft production belonging to a particular region or country.

The importance of artisans in nation-building has been felt since time immemorial. Their importance grows further in the case of developing and under-developed countries, wherein the livelihood of the common populace is primarily based on agriculture and craftsmanship. They work for their sustenance and contribute to a country’s GDP and its export, apart from bringing repute to the nation with their skills. Without a doubt, the quest for fast-paced industrialisation has done a disservice to the artisans the world over. Their existence is at stake, their condition is precarious, and they are being marginalised due to one reason or the other (Scrase 2003). The dwindling employment opportunities in the corporate sector, especially during the current inexorable pandemic Covid-19, make all stakeholders’ interest gain currency. Focus is tilting towards rejuvenating this industry again. Though for the last couple of years, the artisan industry has started getting literature positioning from researchers, the research still has been immature, especially related to artisans in a poor country like Ethiopia. It would not be unwarranted to say that this industry owing to its greater significance in nation-building calls for more and deeper attention of the researchers and policymakers so that it can be saved from further deterioration.

2 Ethiopia

Ethiopia, also called the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, is one of the countries that lie in the Horn of Africa (Meier et al. 2007) (see Fig. 1). The other countries, including Djibouti, Eritrea, Somalia and Somaliland, South Sudan, and



Fig. 1 Map of Horn of Africa. Source: <https://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/horne.pdf>

Sudan, are the neighbouring countries. With 112 million people, it is the 12th most populous country in the world (Undata 2019). The capital is Addis Ababa, the largest city in the country (Britannica 2019), having numerous international non-governmental organisations and the headquarter of the African Union. Among a mosaic of around 100 languages spoken here, Afar, Amharic, Oromo, Somali, and Tigrinya are the official languages of Ethiopia (Subhan 2020). Like multiple ethnic groups in other countries of Africa, which affect the political and social environment (Dana et al. 2018), it is a multi-ethnic nation (Adamu 2013), and some of the chief ethnic groups include Oromo, Amhara, Tigrayans, Sidama, Welayta, Gurage, Somali, Hadiya, and Afa. They have a distinctive effect on the political and social environment of Ethiopia (Vaughan 2003). Ethiopia has never been under a colonial legacy (Joireman 1997; Zelekha and Dana 2019). The country has a fascinating and rich cultural and linguistic diversity (UNESCO 2017). It is endowed with a cheap labour force, a pool of artisans, numerous heritage sites, one of the oldest cultures, religious diversity, and pluralism. The peaceful co-existence of many religions such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism further reinforces the multicultural label attached to this country. The presence of nine world heritage sites, including Aksum, Fasil Ghebbi, Harar Jugol, Konso, Lower Valley of the Awash, Lower Valley of the Omo, Lalibela, Simien National Park, and Tiya (UNESCO 2021), recognised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) gives a lifeline to the economy and is a prop for tourism and the people associated with it including artisans and entrepreneurs. Ethiopia's fascinating biodiversity adds to the country's importance from the point of view of tourism and tourism-related business. With a pursuit of becoming a "Fast Expanding Market" and obvious vistas of economic progression, it has successfully been one of the fastest non-oil-dependent growing economies in the world for the last many years (Shiferaw 2017). However, the current natural catastrophe in the form of Covid-19 seems to be proving a stumbling block. The concept of a Fast Expanding Market (FEM) has been used in the studies such as Tse et al. (2013) and Acheampong and Dana (2017). According to Acheampong and Dana (2017), FEMs have a growth rate of 15% for a minimum of 3 years.

However, it would be unwarranted to turn one's blind eyes to some bitter truths about Ethiopia. For instance, as far as poverty is concerned, it is one of the poorest countries in the world (World Bank 2015a), with a per capita income of less than 1000 US dollars (World Bank 2019a). Around 25% of the total population live below the poverty line, and as high as 36% of people live on just 1.9 US dollars per day (World Bank 2015b, c). Unemployment is skyrocketing, and maltreatment of the low-wage labourers and artisans is rife, with an abysmally low human development index of 0.0485 and a 173rd ranking out of 189 countries (HDR 2020). The country suffers from inadequate infrastructure and institutional capacity for the fast-paced development all around. Due to being a landlocked and resource-scarce country, Ethiopia could not be internationalised to the same extent as other resource-rich landlocked countries (Dana and Ratten 2017). Furthermore, Ethiopia has been facing the worst ethno-political tensions in decades (Yusuf 2019). The series of civil unrests in the Oromia region after the assassination of the renowned

musician Hachalu Hundessa in the previous year is just one instance (Ethiopia Insight 2021). The killing resulted in civil disorder in the capital and other places. The recent clash between the national army and the Tigray forces, which ran for many days, has also been unprecedented in the decades (Gebremedhin 2020; O'Grady 2020). To maintain peace and discipline, after the attack on a military base in Tigray by an unidentified mob that was calling for political reforms, the government launched a military attack on the rebellion, which is reported to have resulted in the loss of lives, property, exodus of people, and loss of jobs, among others (Jovanovic 2020). Tourism, FDI, and export are also affected badly if a country faces political disturbances and social unrest (Asmare 2016; Haile and Assefa 2006; Lochner and Dieckhoner 2012). Such developments derail the country's economic progression and leave the innumerable workforce, artisans, and entrepreneurs jobless and in acute distress and agony. The perception of the outside world towards Ethiopia is also deteriorating (Negatu and Hudson 2020), which will indubitably affect the artisans and entrepreneurs of the country. The long inexorable pandemic is adding a nail to the coffin. The fastest-growing country of Africa, like many developing countries, has been experiencing the unprecedented negative impact of Covid-19 (Wondimu and Girma 2020). The impact is socio-economic, with an increase in poverty, unemployment, slow growth, and exorbitant rise in prices of goods. The artisans were already falling prey to these negative shocks; the pandemic has broken their backbones. The efforts by the government backed by financial aids from countries such as European Union and international financial institutions such as World Bank are expected to decrease Ethiopia's agony and bring solace to it, but much has to be done to bring the economy on the path of much-coveted economic progression, which is looking bleak in no time.

3 Artisans in Ethiopia

Artisans, a solution to many economic problems, play a chief role in the socio-economic life of Ethiopia (Abbute 2001; Wayessa 2020). It is rightly perceived that they (artisans), to a large extent, provide a way for financial independence to many in one of the poorest countries of the world. They are involved in pottery making, woodcarving, tannery, basketry, weaving, and beekeeping, among others, which (artefact) they mostly sell in the local markets. Although beekeeping is seen as an agricultural activity, it is nowadays also seen here as a form of artisan entrepreneurship, which plays a significant role in a developing economy (Ramadani et al. 2019). The importance of artisans in Ethiopia increases further owing to the undeniable fact that agriculture in Ethiopia is already burdened as it alone provides employment to more than 80% of people (Broussard and Tekleselassie 2012), and there should be another generator of employment besides agriculture. Moreover, agriculture is plagued by a plethora of problems (Matous et al. 2013), and the association of workers towards the manufacturing industry may bode well for the economy. Thus, the burden on agriculture generally is and must be reduced by artisanship and other

forms of menial work that do not require craftsmanship. Where there is a conducive environment for agriculture, artisanship is taken up as a part-time job for earning extra bread for rainy days. For the rest of the places, artisanship is a chief source of income for many. Neither the industry is developed to provide requisite employment to people at par with the demand, nor there is needed education with them (Guarcello and Rosati 2007) compared to other developing countries such as India to get good jobs.

Thus, the last resort for a big chunk of the common people of Ethiopia is to practise artisanship, which has been handed down to them from their forefathers. The artisans, majority women, are predominantly involved in making iron-based, clay-based, leather-based, and wooden products. Apart from them, they are also engaged in clay-mining and weaving, among others. The literature is devoid of any specific date of the origin of artisanship in Ethiopia, and the researchers are divided in their opinions. However, the emergence of need-based partisanship seems to be the valid reason. They might have started making such products for themselves, which later became a symbol for their culture. Nowadays, many products such as kettle made from clay and basketry items are used as symbols of Ethiopian culture. Thus, crafts reflect cultural diversity, creativity, and the heritage of Ethiopia.

4 Key Occupations of Ethiopian Artisans

4.1 Pottery Production

Pottery production, a learned skill, is mainly done by Ethiopian women (Arthur 2014). This craft, not much valued and despised by the society, basically belongs to the low-rank section of the society, which faces extreme poverty (Asefa 2016). Pottery production has been handed down to the generations of low-class people, and children start learning how to produce different items of clay at the age when they attain teenage (Kaneko 2013). The pottery production process starts with the procurement of clay, followed by paste preparation, forming, and shaping. Clay procurement is a very tough task and done mostly by the children who are either adults or about to be adults. The children, usually teenage girls, bring the clay from the source, clean and throw out unwanted pebbles, grind it on the ground-stones, and bring water from the water source, which is a burdensome job due to the huge scarcity of water. Even sourcing of clay, including clay mining and bringing it to the place of production either on the back or on a donkey, is a herculean task and full of danger. Sometimes the clay miners had to lose their precious lives (Arthur 2006). The children also lay their hands in making a paste of the clay, which needs much kneading. As they are young and have needed muscular strength, making a paste of the clay is also done by the teenage children before handing the paste clay to their parents for further processing, which also requires arts. This way, children also attain learning of pottery production. Then, the potters decorate the piece, followed by drying and polishing. Keeping the piece in a fire to harden it is the final stage of



Fig. 2 Artisans selling pottery items in a local market. Photo © 2021 Akram, H. W

pottery production (Asefa 2016). The entire pottery production process starts from the clay kneading till the end finishes in one compound of the potters. The observation of the compound of the potters with firing pits, a large chunk of debris of ashes, fragments of toolkits, and pots is fascinating. It is quite unbelievable to imagine how smartly they do all the processes in one little compound, which does not even deserve to be called a cottage. This profession is not only a means of income for many, but the final product serves utilitarian purposes as well as symbolic values (Sirika 2008). The non-utilitarian function of pottery production may play a vital role in promoting the tourism industry.

There exists an appreciable amount of differences in the ceramic outputs, and these differences are due to differences in the quality of inputs, methods of production, or cultural variations. The main pottery production includes, among others, coffee makers, bowls, pitchers, and plates (see Figs. 2, 3, 4, and 5). The size of all of them, their production methods, and materials used vary from place to place due to one reason or the other.

It is without a doubt that the ceramic work of Ethiopia is bearing the brunt of technological advancement in Ethiopia itself, along with the import of substitute items from other countries such as China. The fast-paced mechanisation replacing indigenous arts is posing a grave threat to their existence, and they are feeling marginalised. The pottery items made by Ethiopian artisans are falling prey to lightweight, cheap, and less-fragile plastic or aluminium plates, bowls, jugs, and cups (Scrase 2003). Acculturation among the affluent class of Ethiopia influenced by western tastes and preferences adds to the woes of artisans involved in clay pottery production. It is high time the government or the ministry of culture did something to prevent this craft from vanishing and promoted it through various media for the welfare of artisans and the country. In addition to it, the ministry should showcase their arts at the national and international platforms in the forms of exhibition and buyer–seller meets. Due to a good number of factors, products produced by them have meagre access to the world market. They have the talents to produce artifacts



Fig. 3 (a) A seller is holding bunna maker (coffee maker) in a local market. It is used for making coffee, very famous in Ethiopia. (b) Pitcher: It is used for bringing and storing water. It is of different sizes and styles. (c) A man is showing one of the varieties of bunna maker (coffee maker) on my request. (d) A lady pottery artisan is curiously flaunting her crafted pitcher in a local market. Photos © 2021 Akram, H. W

based on the choice of the world market but need linkages and representations. The emergence of a few shops like “abyssinian craft” and “Savadi Maison” are good developments as they play as a link between artisans and customers.

4.2 Handloom Textiles

Handloom artisans of Ethiopia, especially women, are engaged in making beautiful garments such as shawls and other cultural attires (Haile 2016). According to Chernet and Ba (2019), the establishments of weavers account for around 74% of



Fig. 4 (a) Varieties of pitchers, different sizes and styles. (b) A girl is selling an injera maker. A type of utensil on which Ethiopians make cultural bread-like round-shaped substances. (c) and (d) are of varieties of injera makers. Photos © 2021 Akram, H. W

the total number of establishments of the textile industry in Ethiopia, and they provide employment to more than 42% of the total number of workers who are engaged in the textile industry as a whole. Ethiopia, naturally endowed with the finesse cotton (Gudeta and Egziabher 2019), gives these artisans a lifeline to grow and prosper. Ethiopian handloom is dependent on cotton (Zhang et al. 2011). These artisans are involved in tradition-based cotton growing, harvesting, and spinning. Their engagement in fabric making not only meets their household needs and demands for clothing, but it is also a source of income (Chernet and Ba 2019). The modus operandi of their whole process of garments making is very much fascinating and charming. Handweaving by these artisans has been a century old, and they produce both ordinary and unique fabrics for the customers of Ethiopia and abroad. Two well-known castes, Dorze and Konso, are famous for their beautiful crafts, and they chiefly live in a cluster in Amhara and Oromia regions (Temesgen et al. 2018). A good number of Dorze ethnic people also live and work in the capital, Addis Ababa, of Ethiopia.

According to Chernet and Ba (2019), the apparel outputs of these artisans are semi-finished as well as finished ones. The semi-finished garments are further sent to garment factories for the required processing. The finished garments include Netella



Fig. 5 (a) A multi-purpose bowl. (b) Cups in which Ethiopians take coffee. (c) and (d) are stoves that serve different purposes, such as cooking and making coffee. Photos © 2021 Akram, H. W

(scarf-like two-layered cloth worn by women), Kuta (scarf-like two-layered cloth worn by men), Gabi (scarf-like four-layered cloth worn by men and women, most of the time, the elderly wear it), and Kemis (see Fig. 6).

Ethiopian handloom artisans play a vital role in Ethiopia's religious, cultural, social, and economic well-being. They meet the religious needs by providing the people with religious clothing, enhancing tourism value with their cultural craftsmanship, growing the country's GDP, and above all, reducing the tension of the government of employment generation. Besides, according to Chernet and Ba (2019), the artisan weavers foster interlinking and mingling of not only regional cultures and languages but also those with the world. Thus, weavers bring about cultural diversities and connect Ethiopia with the outside world. There are many occasions such as weddings, national holidays, birthdays, festivals, church ceremonies, and last rites, where handmade clothes worn by people can be seen. They produce items of wear for particular occasions and communities that exhibit beauties of cultural diversity in Ethiopia. Their engagement in fabric making not only meets their household needs and demands for clothing, but it is also a source of income. Therefore, the socio-cultural value of weaving products is colossal in Ethiopia.



Fig. 6 Sellers selling handmade garments including Netella, Kuta, and Gabi in a local weekly market of Sawla, Gofa, SNNPR. Photos © 2021 Akram, H. W

Like pottery production, this industry is also facing a plethora of challenges (Tadesse 2015). Handloom artisans are prey to the fast-paced mechanisation of garment production, along with the threat from substitute garments from import and power loom. The dominance of western attire like jeans and t-shirt, changing tastes of consumers, and the availability of lightweight and less costly garments are forcing the customers to switch from the traditional ones, which are adding to the woes of weavers and other artisans related to this industry in Ethiopia. It is a matter of the fact that these artisans are cash strapped and at the mercy of loans from the government for the working capital (Zhang et al. 2011). Even loan sanction is subject to so much of paper works and bureaucracy, which deteriorates their condition (Gebeyehu 2002). The handloom artisans are also susceptible to political disturbance in a few areas such as Oromia, Amhara, Wolayeta, and Tigray. The latest national military intervention in Tigray (Paravicini and Endeshaw 2020) to dispel local forces and capture the region from the local leaders has forced many, including artisans, to resort to the exodus from the region to save their lives. Such

developments time and again are stunting their growth and their contribution to the nation. They are also prey to the inflationary situation and the exorbitant price rise of the inputs of production, which holds more good during the Covid pandemic (UN Ethiopia 2020). The unabated inflation (Abate 2020; World Bank 2019b) makes it rather unmanageable for them to keep the cost below or at least at par with power loom garments. There is a need to propagate the values of hand-woven garments and the importance of handloom artisans in nation-building. This can be done in the way the Government of India is doing to revive the dying Khadi industry, an industry in which handloom artisans are involved in producing hand-spun and hand-woven cloth using raw materials such as cotton and wool. The latest government push for the Khadi industry (Goel and Jain 2015) in India has brought about a change in the mindsets of the people, and Indians have started using Khadi clothes again. Then, it may prove as a life saviour for the handloom artisans in Ethiopia.

4.3 Basketry

Among rich artisan traditions lies the basketry of Ethiopia. The basketry artisans of Ethiopia produce very eye-catching baskets, mats, bags, fish traps, sieves, and hats, among others, for both the domestics and commercial purposes (Lemma 1998). The artisans, mainly females, need raw materials such as vegetable fibres, wool, leather, plastic, wood, metal, grasses, palm leaves, and bamboo, among others, to produce basketry products (Sterner 2014). In addition to them, depending on the needs, natural dyes, chemically dyed grasses, and awls are also used in the process of manufacture (Asante 2005). The basket makers make products that serve an important function in everyday life and ceremonial activities (Asante 2005). In general, they are used for storing things, sleeping, covering, sitting, fencing, sieving, and so on. The complex pattern and traditional shapes bring reverence to the basketry artisans who accomplish it after a lot of arduous work in giving the products aesthetic qualities and symbolic beauties (Tarsitani 2009; Tedla 2012). Basketry artisanship is a rural-centric job that provides a source of livelihood to scores of Ethiopians. Since this requires less muscle power, mostly females are seen doing the jobs. This skill, like pottery one, is handed down to the female children by their mothers who practise this craft throughout their lives and is known to all women in rural areas (Yeneabat 2007).

Teenage girls learn the basics of basketry skills under the aegis of their mothers and elder sisters. Nevertheless, the basketry artisanship is not confined to any particular location and is spread in the whole of Ethiopia; Harai basket weaving is very famous because of the fine quality products produced with flawless methods (Tarsitani 2009). The basket makers either sell the products to the customers who assemble in the local market or to the shopkeepers who, in turn, sell to the customers (Tedla 2012) (see Fig. 7). At times, they have been found to be selling these items of basketry to the basket brokers. The dissociation of people from cultural legacy, availability of machine-made substitute items, price rise in the inputs of production,



Fig. 7 (a) Mix of basketry items on sale in a local market. (b) A beautiful tray that serves multi-purpose. (c) and (d) are used for decoration. Photos © 2021 Akram, H. W

and lack of demand are doing a disservice to artisans who are engaged in basketry production (Kebede 2018). It is a matter of great regret and concern that this profession, despite being so simple and of great cultural and economic significance for Ethiopia, has not been appreciated. It is still confined to local markets and is not commercialised on a big scale to give it an avenue to its export.

4.4 Ground Stone

Apart from pottery production, many low-profile artisans, especially men, are engaged in ground stone production. The craft of manufacturing stones for grinding is complex and burdensome and needs knowledge, design decision, skills, and support and social interactions from fellow artisans (Nixon-Darcus and Meresa 2020). Since stone-works are very heavy and need enormous strength and vigour, they call for the engagement of strong male members (Arthur 2014) (see Fig. 8). Female artisans are also seen supporting the male members, but they lay their hands only in the ancillary works related to ground stone production. The artisans produce a variety of stones for grinding, which are used in different ways for the preparation of foods. The stones for grinding produced by the artisans involved are used in flour-mill, processing of cereal grains, milling dry sorghum, crushing fresh sorghum,



Fig. 8 (a–c) Artisans engaged in ground-stone production. (d) A woman can be seen as using ground stones. Source: Adapted from Arthur, J. W. (2014)

crushing fresh corn, crushing buna (coffee), and crushing spices (Robitaille 2016). These stones also play multi-purpose tools, and the relationship between stones and functions is not always definite. It is rather unwarranted to distinguish grinding stones and point out their very function unambiguously. Among many, grinding-slabs, flat-handstones, grinding boulders, and stone mortars are very ubiquitous products in Ethiopia. These are abundantly found in domestic purposes and are representatives of women’s daily lives of Ethiopia by performing an essential task of living and sustenance. Though they are seen as mundane objects, they serve as material items that accomplish numerous goals of the households.

5 Problems and Challenges Faced by Ethiopian Artisans: Discussion and Recommendations

The marginalisation of artisans the world over is being felt, and it would not be a fallacious statement that they are passing through a precarious condition full of ordeals (Scrase 2003). Ethiopian artisans are not an exception to this execrable

situation (Cascadden et al. 2020; Lyons and Freeman 2009). The artisans, before the onslaught of Covid-19, were already falling prey to mass production and mechanisation of production systems, availability of cheap factory products and substitute imported products, cash-strapped economic conditions, lack of working capital finance, and soaring prices of the inputs of production, among others, and the long back-breaking pandemic has dug grave for them.

Though the economic and social significance of handiwork is immense (Terry 1999) and the purchasers of handiwork have the feeling of getting connected to traditions, artisans are increasingly confronting struggle, resistance, antagonism, financial persecution, odium, malaise, and commodification of their handiwork in the face of the new wave of global changes mentioned above (Cascadden et al. 2020; Lyons and Freeman 2009; Zhang et al. 2011; Wasihun and Paul 2010). Nonetheless, the National Media and Arts Task Force under the Prime Minister Office of Ethiopia has been established to help out the concerned people with a culture (Dana and Salamzadeh 2021; UNESCO 2020); how much it would give a sigh of relief for the aggrieved artisans only the time will tell. Even the government is silent about how it will compensate the artisans for the loss of those earlier produced items, and now machine production has grabbed that space. The development of a healthy small business sector is a must for the economic welfare and well-being of a country that is passing through a population boom, high unemployment, and rapid urbanisation (Dana 1993). After the Covid pandemic, the government is mandated afresh to strengthen cultural industries, improve the market for cultural products, and empower the artisans and create a conducive environment for them to sell their outputs. At present, both shocks by the execrable pandemic and the civil unrest in many parts of Ethiopia (Belay and Ndiaye 2020; Lailou et al. 2020) are ruining the tourism industry. The continual skirmishes among ethnic groups on account of regional differences have been undermining and weakening its cultural pluralism and diversity. History has seen numerous conflicts in areas such as Oromia, Awassa, Sodo, and Tigray. All these developments send a negative message to the outside world, which debars tourism from prospering. It is very vivid that the livelihood of a large section of artisans is either directly or indirectly dependent on tourism (Militz et al. 2020; Scheyvens and Biddulph 2018; Teixeira and Ferreira 2019), and the government has to go the extra mile to ensure their livelihood.

In addition to it, ethnic enterprise rules the roost in Ethiopia. In an ethnic enterprise culture, members of some particular ethnic groups possess a higher rate of business formation and ownership than others do (Dana 1997). In the case of Ethiopia, the Gurage ethnic group dominates the businesses in Ethiopia (Mengistae 2001). According to Mengistae (2001), the Gurage owns more or less a third of the business of Ethiopia while it gives employment to only 5% of the workforce. Amhara is the second-largest ethnic group whose ownership in the business is around 40%, and the share of this group in the workforce is the same as that of Gurage. This is not a healthy sign for balanced development, and the workers, including artisans, are badly affected. Apart from it, what to talk of the appreciation which the artisans deserve, some of them such as pottery artisans of the Gamo region are considered ritually impure by a good number of people (Arthur 2014). Mains

(2007) even categorically writes that artisan professions in Ethiopia such as pottery, blacksmithing, carpentry, and weaving are highly stigmatised. Confirming the findings of Mains (2007), the artisans have been seen moving from pillar to post for selling their unique pieces in the local market. Such a negative response to their handwork and craft discourages not only them but also the new generations from pursuing their family profession. Not only this, artisans who are engaged in heavy work such as pottery are paid far below their input of labour. Unless and until society starts paying artisans of such products the price at least commensurate with their labour, we cannot imagine the welfare of those artisans, and they are bound to die sooner or later. Moreover, the unaccommodating and discouraging attitude of the common people towards the contribution of the artisans stunts their growth and need to be changed (Arthur 2014; Mains 2007; Sirika 2008).

It has also been observed that due to the unabated demand for modernisation and urbanisation, the indigenous craft and knowledge receive unfair treatment from the government (Sirika 2008). This has been meted out not only to Ethiopian artisans but those of other developing countries such as India as well. Due to this reason, as per Scrase (2003), many Indian artisans who were famous for their indigenous craft have joined casual wage laborers. The dying sari industry (an ethnic wear) of Banaras, India, is a live example of it, whose artisans (many) had to leave their craftsmanship. The Ethiopian indigenous utensil production is also experiencing the same fate as that of the Banarasi sari of India. The cultural ministry of Ethiopia should pay heed to it and ought to ensure the preservation of cultural identity by keeping indigenous art alive along with the modernisation and urbanisation. The literature indicates that products produced by Ethiopian craftsmen have ample opportunities to be sold in the global market (Sahle 2016), but the problem with it is the glaring fact that they (the artisans) have not moved with the time. They failed to understand the tastes and preferences of the global community, and the requisite modification needed in their products for seeking global attention could not be possible. It may be due to the reason that they lack the necessary funds and infrastructure for any innovation and modernisation of their modus operandi of production.

There is a need to link entrepreneurship with innovation along with sustaining the richness of culture, and this was made possible by the Hellenic Organization of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises and Handicraft (EOMMEX) in Greece (Dana 1999). Innovation and modernisation in the production of indigenous artifacts never imply any kind of deviation from the cultural identity, as is clear from the example of EOMMEX given by Dana (1999). Furthermore, lack of requisite research and development has resulted in a lack of international recognition, which in turn, has an adverse impact on the artisans of Ethiopia to a greater degree. A business-friendly environment needs to be created. Dana (2007) has rightly said that once policymakers understand the significance of the contribution of entrepreneurship and adopt entrepreneur-friendly policies, then developing countries may thrive and prosper. There is a call for the concerned ministry in Ethiopia to integrate the artisans into the world market for the benefit of them as well as the country. For deeper linkages between them and the world demands, the government and the concerned ministry must have more and more buyer-seller meets, international cultural events,

exhibitions, trainings, workshops, and incentives for selling to the global community. There should be a minimum support price mechanism for their products if they meet the set parameters of quality and specifications. All of the above-mentioned points will facilitate the empowerment of artisans, make them feel rich, link them with the world, and preserve a strong cultural heritage of Ethiopia.

References

- Abate TW (2020) Macro-economic determinants of recent inflation in Ethiopia. *J World Econ Res* 9 (2):136–142
- Abbate WS (2001) The socio-economic role and status of handicraftsmen among the Kambaata of southern Ethiopia. *Aethiopia* 4:96–120
- Acheampong G, Dana LP (2017) Liability of foreignness in fast-expanding markets: evidence from Ghana. *Thunderbird Int Bus Rev* 59(1):51–61
- Adamu AY (2013) Diversity in Ethiopia: a historical overview of political challenges. *Int J Community Divers* 12(1):17–27
- Arthur JW (2006) *Living with pottery: Ethnoarchaeology among the Gamo of Southwest Ethiopia*. Foundations of Archaeological Inquiry, University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City
- Arthur JW (2014) Culinary crafts and foods in southwestern Ethiopia: an ethnoarchaeological study of Gamogroundstones and pottery. *Afr Archaeol Rev* 31(2):131–168
- Asante B (2005) Women's craft guilds and the traditional basketry of Harar, Ethiopia. *Afr Study Monogr* 29:61–72
- Asefa T (2016) An ethnoarchaeological study of pottery production in Tigray: the case of Saharti-Samre and Hintalo-Wajirat districts (unpublished master's thesis). Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa
- Asmare BA (2016) Pitfalls of tourism development in Ethiopia: the case of Bahir Dar town and its surroundings. *Kor Soc Sci J* 43(1):15–28
- Belay T, Ndiaye M (2020) Ethiopia: conflict insights. <https://www.africanportal.org/publications/ethiopia-conflict-insights/>
- Broussard N, Tekleselassie TG (2012) Youth unemployment: Ethiopia country study. International Growth Centre. Working Paper, 12(0592):1–37
- Cascadden Z, Lyons D, Paris E (2020) On the surface: an ethnoarchaeological study of marginalised pottery production and the social context of pottery surface treatments in Tigray regional state, northern highland Ethiopia. *Azania Archaeol Res Afr* 55(1):69–96
- Chernet YG, Ba O (2019) Weaving and its socio-cultural values in Ethiopia: a review. *Asian J Agric Extension Econ Sociol* 37(4):1–11
- Dana LP (1993) The trade facilitation model: towards the development of an indigenous small business sector in the Republic of Kenya. *Entrep Innov Change* 2(4):335–343
- Dana LP (1997) The origins of self-employment in ethno-cultural communities: distinguishing between orthodox entrepreneurship and reactionary enterprise. *Can J Admin Sci* 14(1):52–68
- Dana LP (1999) Preserving culture through small business: government support for artisans and craftsmen in Greece. *J Small Bus Manag* 37(1):90–92
- Dana LP (2007) Promoting SMEs in Africa: some insights from an experiment in Ghana and Togo. *J Afr Bus* 8(2):151–174
- Dana LP, Ratten V (2017) International entrepreneurship in resource-rich landlocked African countries. *J Int Entrep* 15(4):416–435
- Dana LP, Salamzadeh A (2021) Why do artisans and arts entrepreneurs use social media platforms?: evidence from an emerging economy. *Nordic J Media Manag* 2(1)
- Dana LP, Ratten V, Honyenuga BQ (2018) Introduction to African entrepreneurship. In: *African entrepreneurship*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, pp 1–7

- Ethiopia Insight (2021). Ethiopia: understanding Oromia's mayhem after Hachalu's murder. The Africa report. <https://www.theafricareport.com/57957/ethiopia-understanding-omias-mayhem-after-hachalus-murder/>
- Gebeyehu A (2002) Loan repayment and its determinants in small-scale enterprises financing in Ethiopia: case of private borrowers around Zeway area (unpublished MSc Thesis), Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa
- Gebremedhin D (2020) Tigray crisis: Why there are fears of civil war in Ethiopia. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-54826875>
- Goel N, Jain K (2015) Revival of Khadi: an analysis of the state of Khadi in India with supply and demand side problems. *Innov J Bus Manag* 4(05):100–103
- Guarcello L, Rosati F (2007) Child labor and youth employment: Ethiopia country study. The World Bank, New York
- Gudeta B, Egziabher AG (2019) Cotton production potential areas, production trends, research status, gaps and future directions of cotton improvement in Ethiopia. *Greener J Agric Sci* 9(2):163–170
- Haile S (2016) Assessing the determining factors of competitiveness in Ethiopian traditional cloth manufacturing sector (Doctoral thesis). St. Mary's University, Addis Ababa
- Haile GA, Assefa H (2006) Determinants of foreign direct investment in Ethiopia: a time-series analysis. In 4th International Conference on the Ethiopian Economy
- HDR (2020). Latest Human Development Index ranking. United Nations Development Programme. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/latest-human-development-index-ranking>
- International Labour Organization (2003) Promoting the culture sector through job creation and small enterprise development in SADC countries: Crafts and Visual Arts. SEED Working Paper No. 51. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/%2D%2D-ed_emp/%2D%2D-emp_ent/%2D%2D-ifp_seed/documents/publication/wcms_117680.pdf
- Joireman SF (1997) Institutional change in the horn of Africa: the allocation of property rights and implications for development. Universal Publishers
- Jovanovic D (2020) Ethiopia declares victory in fight over Tigray region, but guerrilla warfare likely to continue. <https://abcnews.go.com/International/ethiopia-declares-victory-fight-tigray-region-guerrilla-warfare/story?id=74441202>
- Kaneko M (2013) Transmigration among Aari woman potters in southwestern Ethiopia and the accumulation of experience in pottery-making techniques. *Afr Stud Monogr* 46:81–96
- Kebede AA (2018) Opportunities and challenges to highland bamboo-based traditional handicraft production, marketing and utilization in Awi zone, northwestern Ethiopia. *Int J Hist Cult Stud* 4(4):57–67
- Laillou A, Baye K, Meseret Z, Darsene H, Rashid A, Chitekwe S (2020) Wasted children and wasted time: a challenge to meeting the nutrition sustainable development goals with a high economic impact to Ethiopia. *Nutrients* 12(12):3698
- Lemma A (1998) Raymond A. Silverman, ed. Ethiopia: traditions of creativity. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999. *Ufahamu J Afr Stud* 26(2–3):126–129
- Lochner S, Dieckhoner C (2012) Civil unrest in North Africa—risks for natural gas supply? *Energy Policy* 45:167–175
- Lyons D, Freeman A (2009) 'I'm not evil': materialising identities of marginalised potters in Tigray region, Ethiopia. *Azania Archaeol Res Afr* 44(1):75–93
- Mains D (2007) Neoliberal times: progress, boredom, and shame among young men in urban Ethiopia. *Am Ethnol* 34(4):659–673
- Matous P, Todo Y, Mojo D (2013) Roles of extension and ethno-religious networks in acceptance of resource-conserving agriculture among Ethiopian farmers. *Int J Agric Sustain* 11(4):301–316
- Meier P, Bond D, Bond J (2007) Environmental influences on pastoral conflict in the horn of Africa. *Polit Geogr* 26(6):716–735
- Mengistae, T. (2001). Indigenous ethnicity and entrepreneurial success in Africa: some evidence from Ethiopia (Vol 2534). World Bank. Development Research Group, Macroeconomics and Growth

- Militz TA, Kershler D, Southgate PC (2020) Informing artisanal pearl and pearl-shell handicraft production for the cruise tourism market through analysis of intended purchase behaviour. *Tour Mar Environ*
- Negatu G, Hudson G (2020) Experts react: understanding the conflict in Tigray. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/africasource/experts-react-understanding-the-conflict-in-tigray/>
- Nixon-Darcus L, Meresa Y (2020) Men at work: grinding stone production by the experts and others in northern Ethiopia. *J Lithic Stud* 7(3):1–24
- O’Grady S (2020) What is behind the conflict in Ethiopia? The Washington post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2020/11/17/ethiopia-tigray-conflict-what-is-happening/>
- Paravicini G, Endeshaw D (2020) Ethiopia sends army into Tigray region, heavy fighting reported. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-conflict/ethiopia-sends-army-into-tigray-region-heavy-fighting-reported-idUSKBN27K0ZS?il=0>
- Ramadani V, Hisrich RD, Dana LP, Palalic R, Panthi L (2019) Beekeeping as a family artisan entrepreneurship business. *Int J Entrep Behav Res* 25(4):717–730
- Robitaille J (2016) The ground stone industry of the Mursi of Maki, Ethiopia: Ethnoarchaeological research on milling and crushing equipment (technique and function). *J Lithic Stud* 3(3):429–456
- Sahle E (2016) Ethiopian traditional artisans appealing to the global market. <https://africabusiness.com/2016/02/10/ethiopian-traditional-artisans-appealing-to-the-global-market/>
- Scheyvens R, Biddulph R (2018) Inclusive tourism development. *Tour Geogr* 20(4):589–609
- Scrase TJ (2003) Precarious production: globalisation and artisan labour in the third world. *Third World Q* 24(3):449–461
- Shiferaw A (2017) Productive capacity and economic growth in Ethiopia. CDP background paper no. 34 ST/ESA/2017/CDP/34, Department of Economic & Social Affairs, United Nations
- Sirika B (2008) Socio-economic status of handicraft women among Macca Oromo of west Wallaga, Southwest Ethiopia. *Ethiopian J Educ Sci* 4(1):1–15
- Stern J (2014) Basketry in Africa. In: Selin H (ed) *Encyclopaedia of the history of science, technology, and medicine in non-Western cultures*. Springer, Dordrecht
- Subhan ARA (2020) One to five: Ethiopia gets four new federal working languages. *Africa News*. <https://www.africanews.com/2020/03/04/one-to-five-ethiopia-gets-four-new-federal-working-languages/>
- Tadesse B (2015) Socio Economic role of clustering and government constructed working premises on traditional handloom weavers (Doctoral dissertation). St. Mary’s University, Addis Ababa
- Tarsitani BA (2009) Revered vessels: custom and innovation in Harari basketry. *Afr Arts* 42(1):64–75
- Tedla TH (2012) Empowering women through home-based work and institutionalized threats in Ethiopia. <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.851.9139&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Teixeira SJ, Ferreira JJ (2019) Entrepreneurial artisan products as regional tourism competitiveness. *Int J Entrep Behav Res* 25(4):652–673
- Temesgen AG, Tursucular OF, Eren R, Ulcay Y (2018) The art of hand weaving textiles and crafting on socio-cultural values in Ethiopian. *Int J Adv Multidiscip Res* 5(12):59–67
- Terry ME (1999) The economic and social significance of the handicraft industry in Botswana (Doctoral dissertation). SOAS University of London, London
- The Editors of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (2019). Addis Ababa. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Addis-Ababa>
- Tse T, Esposito M, Soufani K (2013) Fast-expanding markets: where new growth can be found. *Eur Bus Rev* 2:11–14
- Tweneboah-Koduah I, Adusei C (2016) Entrepreneurship determinants of artisans/craftsmen in Kumasi Metropolis, Ghana. *Am J Ind Bus Manag* 6(02):163
- UN Ethiopia (2020) Socio-economic impact of Ethiopia Covid-19 in Ethiopia. <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/covid19>

- Undata (2019) World Population Prospects: the 2019 Revision. United Nations Population Division. https://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=PopDiv&f=variableID%3a12%3btimeID%3a83%2c84%3bvarID%3a2&c=2,4,6,7&s=_crEngNameOrderBy:asc,_timeEngNameOrderBy:desc,_varEngNameOrderBy:asc&v=1
- UNESCO (2017) Ethiopia 2017 report. <https://en.unesco.org/creativity/governance/periodic-reports/2017/ethiopia>
- UNESCO (2020) ResiliArt - Ethiopia: strengthening the resilience of artists and cultural professionals beyond Covid-19. <https://en.unesco.org/news/resiliart-ethiopia-strengthening-resilience-artists-and-cultural-professionals-beyond-covid-0>
- UNESCO (2021) Ethiopia, properties inscribed on the World Heritage List. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/et>
- Vaughan S (2003) Ethnicity and power in Ethiopia (PhD Thesis). The University of Edinburgh, UK
- Wasihun R, Paul I (2010) Growth determinants of women operated micro and small enterprises in Addis Ababa. *J Sustain Dev Afr* 12(6):233–246
- Wayessa B (2020) Whose development? The dilemma of rural artisan women in southwestern Ethiopia. *Anthropol Today* 36(4):20–23
- Wondimu W, Girma B (2020) Challenges and silver linings of COVID-19 in Ethiopia– short review. *J Multidiscip Healthc* 13:917
- World Bank (2015a) Ethiopia Poverty Assessment 2014. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/21323> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO
- World Bank (2015b) Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines (% of population) - Ethiopia. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.NAHC?locations=ET>
- World Bank (2015c). Poverty headcount ratio at \$1.90 a day (2011 PPP) (% of population) - Ethiopia. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.DDAY?locations=ET&name_desc=false
- World Bank (2019a) GDP per capita (current US\$) - Ethiopia. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=ET>
- World Bank (2019b) Inflation, consumer prices (annual %) - Ethiopia. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/FP.CPI.TOTL.ZG?locations=ET>
- Yeneabat M (2007) Pottery production an asset for women livelihood (Master Thesis). Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa
- Yusuf S (2019) What is driving Ethiopia's ethnic conflicts? *ISS East Afr Rep* 2019(28):1–16
- Zelekha Y, Dana LP (2019) Social capital versus cultural capital determinants of entrepreneurship: an empirical study of the African continent. *J Entrep* 28(2):250–269
- Zhang X, Moorman L, Ayele G (2011) Infrastructure and cluster development: a case study of handloom weavers in rural Ethiopia. *J Dev Stud* 47(12):1869–1886

Hafiz Wasim Akram is a faculty at the Department of Marketing & Entrepreneurship, College of Commerce and Business Administration, Dhofar University, Salalah, Oman. He holds his Bachelor of Business Management (BBM) from Magadh University, Bodh Gaya, and Master in international business (MIB) and PhD in Commerce and Business Studies from Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India. He has been a recipient of Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) and Senior Research Fellowship of the University Grants Commission, Government of India. His particular areas of research interest are entrepreneurship, logistics, international business, and international marketing.