

A Cultural Model of Nature in Ethiopia.

Ethnographic examples and key expressions provide important insights into South Wollo farmers' perception of where the rain comes from, who controls local rainfall patterns, and what ordinary people can do about erratic rains. The central theme of this chapter is that farmers' vernacular explanation of these issues draws on two complementary sources of knowledge.

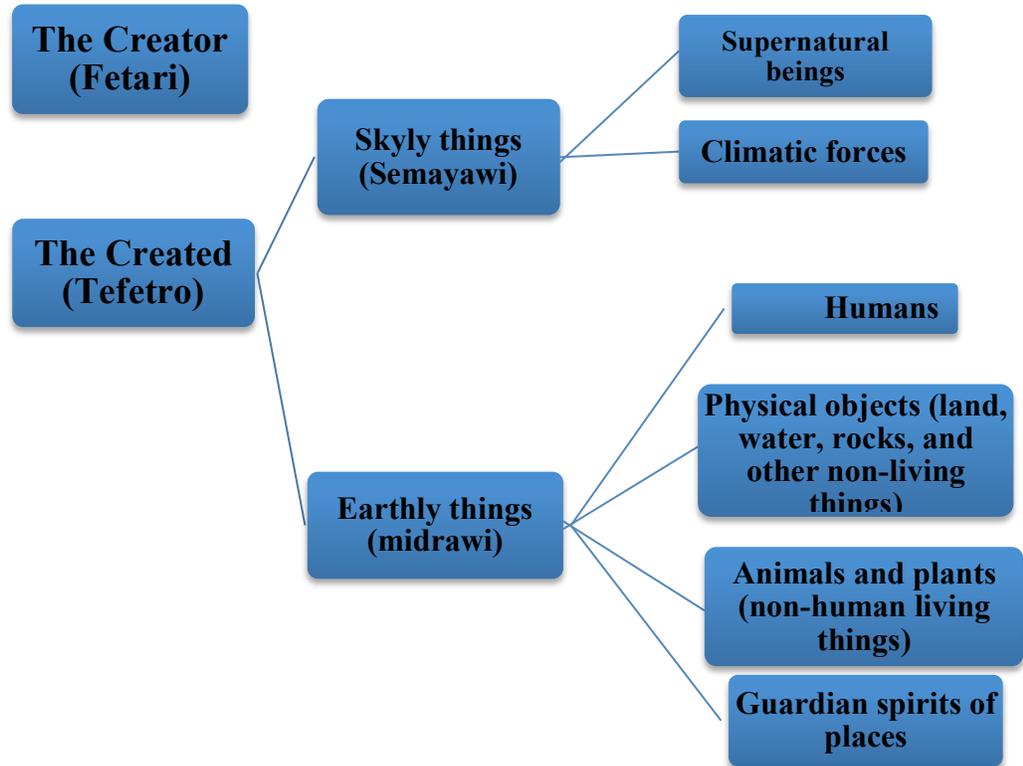
One source is intimate knowledge of empirically observable pattern in the onset, duration, intensity and cessation of rainfall in each wet season across different sections of the local landscape that vary in bio-physical features. Cumulative lived experience of this variation has helped farmers develop landscape-level pragmatic cropping decisions and land use patterns that enabled, to varying degree of effectiveness, improved adaptation to erratic rains.

The other source is farmers' perception of rainfall as one element of a larger "cosmic order," divinely created and ruled by an all-powerful and omnipresent God 'Allah' (e.g., Manzoor 2013; Lyon and Mughal in this Volume).

South Wollo farmers refer to this "god-centered" (Bennardo 2014) cosmic order, which is abundantly revealed in seasonal rain-making prayers and rituals, as *tefetro* 'creation' and define it both broadly and narrowly. Broadly, *tefetro* 'creation' encompasses everything in the realm that was created by the omnipresent Allah/God.

Farmers often speak of this broad realm as divided into two. One is the sky where supernatural beings and climatic forces live in. The other is earth consisting of humans, physical objects (such as landscapes, water, rocks and other immortal things), plants, animals, and invisible guardian spirits associated with particular places (see figure 2).

Narrowly defined, however, *tefetro* 'creation' refers to earth and the resources on it, most notably plants, animals and water on which humans rely for survival. 'Creation' in this sense of the term excludes humans and supernatural beings, but includes rainfall which, as an expression of Allah's kindness to humans, is the main source of water for cultivating crops and replenishing village wells and other water sources.



Perceived Components and Links in Amhara Farmers' Cultural Models of Nature and the Environment.