Avraham Adaga

Father’s name: Mulou Yitzchak

Mother’s name: Ganet Muza Mekonan

Year of birth: 1965

Place of birth: Charuta, province of Wegera

Main occupation in Ethiopia: Pupil

Region of residence in Ethiopia: Wegera

Language interview was conducted in: Amharic

Content of the interview:

Avraham describes his family tree, his village and the various names he was given. He notes his family’s close connection to Israel: his grandfather’s brother visited Israel and upon his return to Ethiopia was appointed as assistant to Emperor Haile Selassie. His uncle immigrated to Israel in 1956.

Avraham’s grandfather – Yitzchak Adaga, was a well-known public figure and was called upon to mediate, advise and to use traditional medicines to heal the residents of the region and its environs. Avraham provides examples of the various diseases and medicines. Additionally, his grandfather was a dentist, a fortune teller and helped people discover their fates, or overcome mental illness.

Avraham talks about his childhood, the games he used to play and his tasks at home such as shepherding and cattle herding and guarding the crop from monkeys. He describes local history and the celebrations of the Sigd festival. His father was a blacksmith and his mother a potter, as well as both being farmers who worked the land. During the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie Jews were forbidden to own lands, and his parents had to rent the lands they cultivated.

Eight years passed from the birth of his oldest brother until Avraham was born, and he describes the traditional fertility treatments his parents received. When Avraham was finally born his parents vowed he would grow up as a scholar, and his father began to teach him to read and write from infancy.

At the age of 6 he was sent to study at a school about an hour’s walk from his house. Avraham describes the school, the clothing, the discipline, the schedule, the manner of study, the syllabus, as well as the racism he experienced in school. As he already knew how to read and write, he rapidly advanced through the classes. Avraham discusses the competition between the top students at length, and the aspiration to always be the best.

When he finished elementary school at the age of 12 he began to study in a high school in the city of Dabat, a three-hour walk from his house. Avraham and a friend wanted to rent a room to live in during their studies, but struggled to find someone willing to rent to Jews. Avraham eventually found a room and only returned to his family home at weekends. During the week Avraham subsisted solely on bread or injera he took from his mother’s home. During vacations he returned to his parents’ home and helped his family with their agricultural work.

During his time in high school the rebellion took place and the Derg party deposed Emperor Halie Selassie. Avraham describes the changes in their lifestyle which took place during and following the revolution. He talks about a difficult period of battles between the different rebel camps and the regime, about executions and the “red terror” of the Derg party.

When Avraham reached 9th grade the mandatory education law of the Derg party was enacted, which applied to all citizens regardless of their age. Thus, in addition to his studies Avraham was appointed as the study director of the neighborhood. As part of his role he hosted residents from other provinces such as Addis Ababa and the Sidamo province, assigned them to classes and was responsible for the teaching itself. Thus, every morning Avraham taught groups of 20-30 people all older than him to read and write.

When he finished 11th grade Avraham set out for Israel via Sudan.

Transcript of the interview:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IY-wNihJJHbxmVeds9t5PcK7SR3TNEwM/view?usp=sharing>

Key words:

Avraham Adaga, nature, shepherding and cattle herding, school, studies, games, rent, landowners, infertility, customs and tradition, fertility treatments, racism, Jewish, Christian, Moslem, alternative medicine, traditional medicine, fortune teller, dentist, midwife, revolution, the red terror, executions, high school, the Sigd festival, Derg, Emperor Haile Selassie, ??, Charuta, Wegera, Sudan, Duwat, Gondar, Addis Ababa, Sidamo, Israel.

Interview, filmed, archive, memories of Ethiopia, Ethiopian Jewish heritage, Ethiopia, Beta Israel, Judaism, Jew, festivals, Jewish festivals in Ethiopia, tradition, north west Ethiopia, Lake Tana, settlement, Injera, Dabu, Sigd, village, agriculture, agriculture in Ethiopia, Bible, the Holy Land, Israel, family, family in Ethiopia, Ethiopian family, house, family structure, professions, religion, education, man, woman, Beta Israel, Africa, Tala, Amharic, Tigri, Tigrina, Tigrinya, Tagri, Kes, synagogue, ritual impurity, ritual purity, Jewish tradition, Ethiopian tradition, festivals in Ethiopia, menstruation house, Ethiopian village, handicrafts, Ethiopian handicrafts, Ethiopian Jewish culture, Ethiopian culture, culture, Jewish history, history of Ethiopian Jewry.