

## **War, Famine, and Female Migration in Ethiopia, 1960 - 1989\***

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### **Introduction**

Few other events disrupt the social order as much as do civil war and famine. Their catastrophic nature compromises social scientists' ability to measure and understand them as the investigator often must work with piecemeal archival, journalistic, or eyewitness accounts. Direct and indirect measures of mortality and fertility give some sense of the scale of the conflict and disruption but offer only an incomplete view of the pattern of social dislocation.<sup>1</sup> Combat and related social strife produce many secondary behavioral responses, which often result in long-term consequences.

In this article we draw on ex post demographic data (material collected for an unrelated purpose) in an effort to elucidate the social response to civil strife in Ethiopia, a country severely affected in recent decades by war, civil strife, and famine. We test our ability to make such indirect inferences, knowing that direct surveys and data will never be assembled. Our concentration is on demographic data and the demographic outcome (population redistribution) in order to identify the social processes linked to the observed demographic behavior. In our attempt to reveal underlying patterns in the face of a number of confounding factors, we employ a series of techniques that lead to discrete-time hazard models for retrospective data.

We find that these indirect efforts can reveal much about ordinary residents' behavioral responses to civil strife and the disruption in food security, and we can quantitatively link increases and decreases in urban migration to policies of political regimes. There is evidence that urban in-migration usually increases during periods of armed conflict, when people seek safety, but in Ethiopia it declined measurably during a period of an authoritarian crackdown called the "Red Terror." Moreover, although famine might be expected to generate a net permanent relocation to well-supplied urban areas, we find that in Ethiopia this is not the case. In fact, Ethiopia's capital city, Addis Ababa, became a less attractive destination over time, contrary to many theories of urban development. In sum, our efforts provide a way to understand some of the behavioral responses to cataclysmic events.