Political and Socio-Economic History of

Asossa Wäräda, 1941-1991

A Thesis Presented to the School of Graduate Studies of Addis Ababa University in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirement of the Degree Master of Art in History

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Addis Ababa University
School of Graduate Studies
History Department

Political and Socio-Economic History of Asossa Wäräda,
1941-1991

Advisor:  Professor Tesema Ta’a (PHD)

By Adinew Abtew

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Acknowledgement

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor Professor Tesema Ta’a for his unreserved guidance, supervision and constructive criticism. In spite of his workload, he sacrificed much of his time in correcting the draft of this thesis. He also let me use his secondary sources and other recently published materials which are very important to this study.

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Key to Transliteration systems

In writing Ethiopian names, the following translation system has adapted to write this thesis.

I. The seven Ethiopian alphabet sounds are represented in the following way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowels</th>
<th>Symbols</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1\textsuperscript{st} order (ge’ez)</td>
<td>ä</td>
<td>Kābādā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} order (Ka’eb)</td>
<td>u</td>
<td>Tulu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3\textsuperscript{rd} order (sales)</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>Gizān</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4\textsuperscript{th} order (rabe)</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>Fana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5\textsuperscript{th} order (hames)</td>
<td>é</td>
<td>Bēggi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6\textsuperscript{th} order (Sades)</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>Temeheret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7\textsuperscript{th} order (sabe)</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>Jōtē</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. In the six order (Sades), it must be note that “e” will not be suffixed to the letter only if the letter is vocalized. The symbol “e” also not required if the six order (sades) is the last letter of the word.

Example ? Bebet

? Geter

III. Consonants which have palatalized sound represented in the following way:

\begin{align*}
\mathring{r} &= \breve{Č}ā \\
&= šā \\
\mathring{γ} &= nā \\
\breve{ē} &= zā
\end{align*}
VI. Consonants which have Glottalized sounds are represented as follows:

\[ \text{ṭ} = \text{tā} \]

\[ \text{ṣ} = \text{qā} \]

\[ \text{ṭ} = \text{čā} \]

\[ \text{ṭ} / \text{ṭ} = \text{Ŝā} \]

\[ \text{ṭ} = \text{Pā} \]

V. Germination sounds always be written in the following way:

\[ \text{أنشطة} = \text{Bাওাঃাঃ} \]

\[ \text{أنشطة} = \text{Abbাঃাঃ} \]
### Abbreviation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>Addis Ababa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAU</td>
<td>Addis Ababa University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Bachelor of Art</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSA</td>
<td>Central Statistics Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFDR</td>
<td>Ethiopian Federal Democratic Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPDR</td>
<td>Ethiopian People Democratic Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EWP</td>
<td>Ethiopian Working Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIS</td>
<td>Haile Selassie I University</td>
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<tr>
<td>IES</td>
<td>Institute of Ethiopian Studies</td>
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<td>IES, WMMRC</td>
<td>Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Wäldä Mäsqäl Memorial Research Center</td>
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<td>MA</td>
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<td>Ms</td>
<td>Manuscripts</td>
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<td>NALA</td>
<td>National Archive and Library Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHD</td>
<td>Philosophy of Degree</td>
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<td>PSIR</td>
<td>Political Science and International Relation</td>
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Glossary

Ato  A civil title given to ordinary people, equivalent to Mr.

Akababi Asetâdadâr  Regional Administration

Aweraja  Administrative sub-province.

Balabat  Hereditary owner of rest land

Mâšehét  Bulletin

Čheqaśum  Village chief empowered to collect tax during the imperial regime.

Dâga  Cold climate zone

Dâjjazmać  A military title below Ras

Daña  Judge

Fitawerari  Commander of the Vanguard, a military title below Dâjjazmać

Gaśa  Unit of land measurement equivalent to 40 hectares

Gazęta  News paper

Gemja Bēt  Treasury

Gerazmać  Commander of the left, a politico-military title, non hereditary right to collect tribute from landowners.

Karros  Political title equivalent to Čeqaśum
**Kèlla**  Illegal trade controlling place

**Lej**  Child, Honorific title generally reserved for sons of royal family and of the upper nobility

**Meketel wäräda**  Administrative unit below *wäräda*

**Pallé**  Small and sharp iron with wood handle used for digging

**Qābällë**  Lowest administrative unit

**Qāńazmać**  Commander of the right, a political military title above *Grazmać*

**Qolla**  Hot climatic Zone

**Ras**

**Šāria**  Islamic Law

**Sheikh**  A religious title given to Muslims

**Šehefät Bêt**  Bureau, Office

**Ṭāqelay-Gezat**  province

**Temehert Bétoć**  Schools

**Wäqqët**  unit of measurement equivalent to about 31grames

**Wäräda**  Administrative unit below *aweraja*

**Zāmać**  Campaigner
Preface

This thesis attempts to reconstruct the history of Asossa wåräda between the 1941 Ethiopian liberation to the 1991 collapse of the military government. The first chapter outlines the geographic settings, the coming to the area of the Bärta, ethnic interactions, foreign aggressions, incorporation of the area into the Ethiopian Empire and socio-economic as well as political developments of the area during the Italian invasion.

The second chapter deals with how Asossa wåräda was organized under the Wällägga Ṭágelay -Gezat (provincial administrative unit) and how indirect and self administrative system was followed by the imperial regime. The political and administrative systems of the military government and the subsequent political contests in the area are assessed. The role of politically dissatisfied groups including the indigenous people of the wåräda in struggling against the Därg rule is also discussed.

The third chapter deals with the socio-economic and environmental developments in the wåräda during the imperial and the military governments. The resettlement processes in the wåräda and their consequences are outlined. The socio-economic services provided to the people of the wåräda and infrastructural developments are also studied.

In conducting this study, oral sources and other available written literature are utilized. Archival materials that could have supported this historical study had been damaged by the political instability of the 1989-1991. This study, therefore, is based mainly on oral sources collected from the study area in December 2010 and March
2011. Attempts have been made to supplement these oral testimonies with written sources in an effort to write this thesis.

Aiming at overcoming the weakness entailed in using oral sources, necessary efforts have been made in selecting appropriate informants, evaluating their information cautiously, and in cross-checking the collected data with available archival and secondary sources. This work is deals with the rural history of the area. The works of other historians are limited either to the pre-1941 period or to the urbanization process of the town of Asossa. Although this work is far from being complete, it is hoped that it can initiate and give a clue to other historians who have the interest to study the history of the wäräda further.
Abstract

The focus of this thesis is reconstructing the administrative and socio-economic history of Asossa wärāda from 1941-1991. The study covers the period from the restoration of Emperor Haile Selassie I to power in 1941 till the downfall of the military government in 1991, in which the people of Asossa wärāda, similar to other rural populations of Bēla-Šangul, experienced significant political and socio-economic developments.

The thesis deals with the role of strategic location and natural resources of the wärāda in attracting foreign powers. Local traditions, cultural setup and the conflict of the local chiefs to get control over political power and properties are studied. Tremendous efforts, on the other hand, have been made to assess the decline and complete termination of local self-administrative system during the imperial and the military regimes respectively.

In fact, the indigenous Bärta rulers were appointed to rule over their people at different political units during the imperial period. However, the central government did not allow the people to select their immediate governors except in some cases. The study, moreover, deals with the complete rejection of the self-government and administration in the area and its subsequent political contests in the wärāda.

Moreover, the thesis deals with the massive social interaction between the indigenous people and the highland peasantry after the 1974 Ethiopian revolution and the socio-cultural, economic and environmental changes that followed it. Comparisons are also made on to what extent the socialist ideology was practiced on the indigenous and the newly arrived highland villagers.
Chapter One

1. General Background of Asossa Wäräda

1.1. Geographic Background

Asossa ወርዳ in which Asossa town, the capital of Béniśangul Gumuz Regional State is found is situated in the Ethio - Sudanese border. The regional state is located on a low-lying plain, some 5,000 feet above sea level. It has undulating character and it is dotted with several small hills. It covers extensive lowland areas, which are terminated in the west by a steep escarpment.¹

Asossa ወሩዳ is located at an altitude of 1,500m with the land elevation falling away from Asossa town in all directions.² Asossa town is located at a distance of 687-kilometers west of Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia.³ The territorial coverage of the current Asossa ወሩዳ, however, is not similar with that of the pre-1991 Asossa ወሩዳ. The pre-1991 Asossa ወሩዳ which was organized immediately after the 1941 Ethiopian liberation consisted of the present day Kurmuk, Khomośa, Bambäsi and Asossa ወሩዳs.⁴ It was located in Asossa awraja under Wällägga provincial administration.⁵ Asossa awraja was bounded in the west and Northwest by the Sudan and in the north and northeast by the Blue Nile. It was separated by common boundaries with Qélläm Awraja in the south and southeast and with Gimbi awraja in the east.⁶
Out of the total area of the *awraja*, 15,200 square kilometers, the pre-1991 Asossa *wäräda* covered 3,056 square kilometers.\(^7\) It was bounded in the west and northwest by the Sudan, in the east and northeast by Béla-Šangul *wäräda* and in the south by Béggi *Wărâda*.\(^8\) Even though there are a few peaks and ranges that dot the lowlands and stretch out in parts of the plateaus towards Béggi, Asossa constitutes low laying plains.\(^9\)

The *wäräda*’s altitude ranges from 900 meters above sea level starting from the Sudanese frontier to above 1,500 meters above the sea level around the region of Asossa town. It falls under *qolla* climatic classification. The size of population, soil fertility and abundance of surface water decreases as one moves towards the northern parts of the *wäräda*. Although generally the *awraja* and the *wäräda* specifically endowed with numerous seasonal streams and big rivers such as Dabus, Šärkolé and Tumat, except the first of these water sources all of them dry out during the dry season.\(^10\)

Most of the *qolla* portion of the Asossa *awraja* is known for its abundant gold. The existing shortage of surface water to pan gold is, however, a major problem for the inhabitants. In fact, the western and southern parts of Asossa *wäräda* are relatively rich in ground and surface water resource. The high annual average rainfall of the area, which is 1285mm, is the source of permanent supplies of water. Big rivers like *Hoha* and *Hafta* and different streams, many of which never dry throughout the year are in these parts of the Wărâda.\(^11\) On the other hand, towards the low-laying Ethio-Sudanese borderlands, the temperature becomes extremely high in March, April and May. Similarly,
towards the north and east, the vast plains of the region gently drop from the hilly western part and the scarcity of water increases.\textsuperscript{12}

The annual average temperature of Asossa region is 25\textdegree{} centigrade. The highest annual temperature is about 30\textdegree{}c and even higher in some places in the northern and eastern parts of the region. The lowest annual average temperature of the area is 12\textdegree{} centigrade. The rainy season starts around the middle of May and ends in October or sometimes in November. The highest amount of rainfall is recorded between July and September.\textsuperscript{13}

Bénišangul National Regional State in general and Asossa \textit{wäräda} in particular is rich in natural resources. These natural resources include gold, metals, potash and forest products.\textsuperscript{14} In relation to minerals, the area was renowned for its gold resource for a long period. Before the region was incorporated into the Ethiopian Empire towards the end of the nineteenth century, its gold resource had been exploited by different foreign powers like the Funji of Sénar, the Turco-Egyptians, the Mahdists and the Christian highland kingdom of Ethiopia.\textsuperscript{15} Even after the region became part of the Ethiopian Empire, gold served as a gift by the local governors to the ruling families to create smooth diplomatic relation. In 1899/1900, gold from Asossa region constituted a considerable part of the total gold export through Addis Ababa.\textsuperscript{16} (see also appendix I). The central government of Ethiopia also collected gold from the region in the form of tribute throughout the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{17} As soon as the region became part of the Ethiopia Empire, the representatives of
the central government collected hundreds of wäqet of gold annually. In 1903, for instance, Däjjazmač Gäbrä Egziabhér was able to collect about six hundred wäqet of gold from the region.18

The wäräda is largely covered with various types of plants. Among other plant species, the area is renowned for its bamboo (Oxytenanthera Abyssinica) forests. Since the day-to-day life activities of the people in the area are related to it, this plant species has been exploited throughout the history of the region. Almost all indoor and outdoor materials including houses of the Bärta people are made of bamboo. Chairs, beds, fences, water towers and bridges are constructed from bamboo.19 The indigenous community of the area also use the offshoot of bamboo as sources of food particularly during shortage of food.20 Scholars have asserted that the Southern wärädas of the region in the post 1991 Asossa and Bambäsi wärädas are characterized by forest free land due to high population density and mechanized agricultural activities.21

In relation the current economic activities of the wäräda, the life of the people is mainly based on farming. Cultivating crops is largely practiced by the Amhara settlers who came into the wäräda during the 1980s government sponsored resettlement schemes. The natives of the wäräda, the Bärta people are known for their trade, mining, hunting, pottery and subsistence farming mainly using Palle (small and sharp iron with a wood handle used for digging).22
Similar to other wärādas in the Bēnišangul Gumuz, Asossa wärāda is poor in terms of infrastructural development. Expansion of education, for instance, is a very recent phenomenon in the area. Before 2007, only a single senior secondary school was found in the capital of the region. Now days, however, four senior secondary schools are established in different rural areas of the Wärāda. Though the people of the wärāda are exposed to different types of disease like malaria due to the hot climate of the area, health facility is remained inadequate. For instance, only a single hospital, which is serving the whole community of the region, is found in Asossa town. It was only after the Beginning of the third Ethiopian Millennium that the opening of clinics and expansion of health extension programs were given emphasis though many of these institutions are not well equipped.

The main infrastructural problem of the wärāda is that it is without significant improvement is road transportation. All weather roads are inadequate and limited to the town. Only the road that connects Asossa town to Addis Ababa is asphalted. Other roads connecting different qābālés of the wärāda are used only in the dry seasons. It is too difficult to travel on them even on foot during the rainy season. Moreover, the wärāda has only dry weather roads that connect it with the surrounding wärādas. As I have observed during my fieldwork, however, there are preparations to construct a paved road from the wärāda to the Sudan through Kurmuk.
According to the Central Statistical Agency Report, the population of the region in 2000 was 560,080. Out of this, Asossa wäräda takes the largest share, 104,147. The population of the wäräda is ethnically diversified. Among the existing ethnic groups, the Bärta are larger in number next to the Amhara settlers. The Asossa Bärta also display minor cultural and linguistic variations with the Bärta which inhabit other wärädas like Mängê, Khomośa, Śārqolé and Bambäsi.

The 1994 Ethiopian Population and Housing Census Report states that the Amhara and the Oromo dominated the Asossa wäräda together with the indigenous Bärta. Generally, out of 104,147 population figure the ethnic groups of the wäräda in 2008 were Amhara (48%), Bärta (38%), Oromo (8%) and others (6%). In terms of religious composition 63.3%, 31.18%, 5.22%, 0.2%, and 0.1% of the wäräda people are Muslims, Orthodox Christians, Protestants, Catholics and traditional religion followers respectively. More than ninety-five percent of the Bärta people are followers of Islam. On the other hand, more than half of the Amhara and Oromo inhabiting the wäräda are orthodox Christians.

1.2 Historical Background

Asossa wäräda, which was re-organized under Wällägga province after the 1941 Ethiopian liberation is the product of long historical processes since the ancient period. According to scholars who conducted research on the earlier history of the region, the first inhabitants of the Bēla – Śangul region were the
Mao and Goma. Alessandaro Triulzi, for instance, argues that these scattered groups of people had owned the area around the Tumat valley as their original homeland and they were probably the first settlers of the Ethio-Sudanese border lands. After the coming of the Bärta to the region in the 17th century, however, these people have been pushed southward into Fadasi (later Bambäsi) and Bérggi areas.²⁸

Although the Mao and Goma were displaced by the migrant Bärta, they remained independent group with their own social and political organizations. In fact, detailed information with regard to these organizations is not adequately accessible. Some of my informants and Desalegn asserts that elders of the groups were playing a significant role in advising the traditional community and local chiefs.²⁹ Triulzi also indicates that the group lost its independent social and political organization only towards the end of the nineteenth century and in the beginning of the twentieth century. The cultural and political influence of the Oromo from the East and the Bärta from the West and the slave raiding activities particularly after the Second half of the 19th century were responsible for the disturbance and discontinuation of the Mao and Goma with their original identity.³⁰

The earlier history of the Bëla – Šangul region is highly related to the history of the largest established group of the region, the Bärta. The Bärta inhabit the region south of the Blue Nile on both sides of the present day Ethio-Sudanese borderlands. The term “Bärta” is applied to both the people and their dialects.
The Bärta, both in the Sudan and Ethiopia have kept their own cosmology and self-identity though they faced series of cultural and political impositions from different foreign allies.\textsuperscript{31}

Scholars are not unanimous as to when the Bärta people exactly came in to the Ethiopian land and through which direction they expanded. Nevertheless, all of them seem to agree with my informants that their origin was in the mountainous area called \textit{Gérri} in the Sudan. Wendy James argues that the Bärta came in to their present day lands in the 16\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{32} On the other hand, however, Triulzi and Ateib are of the opinion that the Bärta had certainly settled in the region by the early 17\textsuperscript{th} century. As quoted in Triulzi, the accounts of Esteven Pereira /1892-1900/ indicates that the Bärta were already settled in the early 17\textsuperscript{th} century in the Ethiopian border lands during the 1617 Campaign of Emperor Susenyos into the area.\textsuperscript{33}

The reason why the Bärta came into the Ethiopian plateau needs further and deep investigation. Traditions and written sources are non-existent to determine the exact factor for their migration. Some historians, like Triulzi and Desalegn, in fact, argue that the increasing population number of the people in the Sénnar and lack of security were perhaps responsible for their gradual movement into eastern direction.\textsuperscript{34} In supporting this argument, Tariku claims that search for arable land due to population increment and disputes that might have been among themselves forced the Bärta to leave their homeland in the Sudan for Ethiopia.\textsuperscript{35}
On the basis of oral traditions scholars try to indicate how the Bärta people came into the Ethiopian borderlands and gradually into the present day Asossa area. *Nari* (traditional Bärta diviner) suggested the Bärta’s first *Agur* (king) to move to the eastern highlands by abandoning *Gérr*.* The *agur*, then, led the Bärta to the east and they settled around the Tumat valley in which rocks were found. Since the first *Śangur* (traditional divine practice) ceremony was observed and their *aguri* (plural to *Agur*) were buried and this rock became the symbol of unity for this group of Bärta. On the same spot, the village called *Béla-Śangul* (rock of Śangur) was established as ancestral site and the name has began to be used for the whole region.³⁶

In their further stage of movement, the Bärta settled in a different site called *Jäblesud* (literally Black mountain) around Asossa region, which was formerly occupied by Mao and Goma. Gradually they continued to move southward and finally settled in as far as Béggī,³⁷ beyond Sa’id. The name Sa’id was used by the Sudan Arabs to express the upland on which the Bärta had settled. This Arabic word represents the whole area of the present day Asossa zone.³⁸

Based on their legend, the Bärta elders indicate that all the Bärta people claim descendents from the same ancestors. This legend shows that the people originated from one father and one mother named ‘Bärtu’ and ‘Endāli’ respectively and eventually scattered throughout the whole region.³⁹

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, other population movement from the *Sénnar* to the land of Bärta was observed. This group of people was called
Funji of Sénnar who were able to establish themselves as politically dominant group over the less-well organized Bärta. Since these immigrants were “wise” in preaching Islamic religion and in assimilating with the Bärta ruling class through marriage ties, they became dominant over the Bärta. Although the Bärta associated their identity to the newly arrived groups and paid tribute to them by adopting Funji’s title called Mékk, they insisted in keeping their own language, custom and culture. They were politically supervised by the Sénnar of funji under the Mékk system. Because of their active participation in trade activities, their economic domination over the indigenous group helped the Funji to take the political leadership position. As a result of marriage relation between the two groups, another generation was created with the name of Jabalwin.

Different scholars who conducted research on the region do not agree as to when the Funji of Sénnar begun to occupy the Sa’id. Deselegn claims that the Funji came to the sa’id area since the seventeenth century. Ateib and Tariku, on the other and, argue that they begun to come into the region by the first half of the eighteenth century. Debela and Bruce are of the opinion that these political group appeared in the area towards the end of the eighteenth century.

In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, however, the Sudanese Arab descendants called “weṭawit” arrived in the region. The weṭawit were able to rule the whole Sa’id which had once been under the Funji rulers by dividing
into, Béla-Śangul, Khomośa, Aqoldi and Fadasi Shiekhdoms. They also established their rule in Fazugli and Kéili.\textsuperscript{45}

Initially the Arab merchants came into Béla-Śangul region as traders and preachers of Islam. As time went on, however, they gradually were able to establish their ascendancy over the whole people by systematically integrating themselves into the Bärta ruling families.\textsuperscript{46}

As they were active in trade activities, preaching of Islamic religion and creating smooth relations with the highly assimilated Jābalawin and the Bärta through marriage ties, the weŇawiŇ became the most dominant group both economically and politically. In addition to their roles in politics and socio-cultural assimilations, the heavy blow of Turco-Egyptian expedition in 1882 and the rise of Mahdists in the Sudan had helped the weŇawiŇ to put the Bärta under their aristocracy.\textsuperscript{47}

The Turco-Egyptians, in fact, did not extend their governorship over the Ethiopian Bärta lands. Their expedition, which led to the collapse of the Funji political structure in the Sudan\textsuperscript{48} reached as far as the Sa‘īd on the eastern bank of the Blue Nile where they were stationed.\textsuperscript{49} In order to achieve their economic goal, the Egyptians launched massive slave raids as well as imposed heavy tax over the Bärta of Ethiopia. This forced many of the Bärta to disperse from their home areas and lead a bitter life. This situation had helped the minority, but wise Weľawit family to take economic and political dominance over the majority.\textsuperscript{50}
The collapse of Turco-Egyptian rule in the Sudan because of the rise of the Mahdists in the early 1880s forced the sa’id inhabitants to feel the immediate and long lasting effects. As soon as the Mahdists arrived in the sa’id they expanded Islamic religion without interfering in the political and other social affairs. The existing local sheikhs independently continued to administer their people. The Mahdists extended their influence as far as Asossa region. After the death of the Mahdi and the accession to power of Abdalahi, however, the Mahdists begun to impose their exploitative and oppressive administrative system in 1885. Their aggressive rule led to a stiff resistance by the Bärta people towards the end of the 1880s. Finally, in 1890 the rule of the Mahdists in the northwestern Ethiopian lands came to an end while the army of Khalifa Abdillahi was turned back to the north understanding the unruly behavior of the Sa’id people.

The most important long lasting effect of the Mahdists rule in the Sa’id was the power transfer from the local Bärta ruling families to the weńawiń. Due to the economic exploitation and human operation, descendants of the weńawiń family began expansion southward from Khomoša proper. During the Mahdist period, a weńawiń born trader, Mohammād Wad Fadlah moved from khomoša and settled in Aqoldi. In Aqoldi, he had a son named Al-Hassān from a Bärta woman. Al-Hassān became the first weńawiń born to bring the existing traditional Bärta ruling line under his own family. It was in this way that this ruling family started to dominate and rule the Asossa area. In fact, there are controversial arguments concerning the coming of Al-Hassān himself into
Asossa. Triulzi’s explanation is that Al-Hassän came to the area before his son, Sheikh Khojälé arrived in the region.\textsuperscript{54} On the other hand, depending on oral informants, Hosaena argues that it was in the village called \textit{Aqoldi} that Al-Hassen was taken into Omdurman prison by the Mahdists where he died before continuing his expansion to Asossa, 18kms south of \textit{Aqold}.\textsuperscript{55}

My Informants, in fact, explain that it was Khojälé who expanded southwards from Aqoldi to Asossa for economic and political reasons. Economically, he wanted to control the southern trade routes and trade activities, as well as fertile lands. Politically, Khojälé needed his southern march to be free from both internal and external powers due to the growing enmity between the Khomoşa and Béla-Śangul chiefs as well as the Aqoldi \textit{weţawit} and the harsh treatment and exploitation of the Mahadists.\textsuperscript{56}

Although the sheikhs enjoyed autonomous power after the departure of the Mahdists at the end of 1890, their independence was immediately followed by frictions among chiefs. The conflict was to control the southeast and the southwest trade routes that linked the area to the southeast and southwest Oromo lands.\textsuperscript{57} Drought that led to agricultural failure in Béla-Śangul also made the trade routes preferable by the competent chiefs of the period.\textsuperscript{58}

The most significant treat to the sheikh’s autonomous power, however, came from the Śäwan hegemony which successfully incorporated the whole of western Wälläggä from 1886-1888. The claim of emperor Menilek to Béla-Śangul region to be included into the Ethiopian empire was seen in his letter
sent to the colonial powers in 1891. However, the emperor’s southwest expansion policy reached its peak in 1898 after the Battle of Adwa in which the whole of Béla-Šangul region was incorporated.

Scholars who conducted research on the area agree that the Šāwan expansion into Béla-Šangul was attributed directly to economic motives. In the first place, the area was known for gold resource since earlier period. Secondly, its geographical proximity would allow the Ethiopian empire to have trade relation with the Sudan. Finally, the strategic location of the region also attracted the attention of the Emperor to use both the Blue and White Niles for navigation purpose.

External factors which took place in the Horn of Africa, according to some historians, were responsible for the annexation of Béla-Šangul into the Ethiopian empire. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, Italy became the main threat to Ethiopian sovereignty other than the Mahdists due to the complete rejection of the Wučalé Treaty of 1889. In order to keep political balance, the Emperor established smooth relation with the Mahdists from 1893-95. The Mahdists also sought “cordial intent” with Ethiopia due to the Anglo-Egyptian expansion in the Sudan. The French were also encouraging the interest of the emperor to make part of the right bank of the White Nile Ethiopia’s legal territory and to establishes diplomatic relation with the Mahdists. This was because, the French government needed to advance its interest to make the Sobat and upper Nile her protectorate through Ethiopia.
As a result these external factors together with the skillful diplomatic discourse of the emperor with the Khalifa initiated and accelerated the occupation of Béla-Śangul by the Śäwan army.\textsuperscript{63}

On the other hand, my informants assert that the khalifa’s recognition for the annexation of the region was associated with internal factors. Towards the end of the 1880, Sheikh Al-Hassân, Sheikh Mahmud and Sheikh Abdul Al-Rahman of Aqoldi, Khomośa and Béla-Śangul respectively were becoming more disobedient. They joined forces and attacked the Ansar (Mahdsts) using guerrilla tactics. Finally, the Ansar left the Sa‘id allowing the Śäwans to bring the region under their control.\textsuperscript{64}

In 1897, the army commanded by \textit{Ras} Mäkonnen and supported by different contingents like \textit{Dâjjazmać} Gäbrä Egziabhér of Nāqämte, Dâjjazmać Joté Tulu of Qêllâm and the Gonderian army under \textit{Dâjjazmać} Dämissė in Arjo began its campaign to Béla-Śangul. The army stationed in Mändi to penetrate into Béla-Śangul crossing the Dabus River. The number of the army, according to Triulzi and Debela was about 80,000.\textsuperscript{65} However, Desalegn and Jaba point out that the number was not more than 20,000.\textsuperscript{66}

Having heard the news of the stationed Śäwan army, the three Sheikhs were said to have agreed to fight against their common enemy by ignoring their local enmity. Emphasizing that his mission was not to exploit and devastate the region but to reconcile the dispute among themselves, \textit{Ras} Mäkonnen sent a letter demanding the surrender of the Sheikhs. Convinced by his promise
Sheikh Khojälé of Asossa sent a group of men with gift of gold to study the strength of the Śāwan army at Māndi and to express his peaceful submission. Torél Guri (Abd Al-Rahman Khojälé) and Wad Mahmud, on the other hand, continued their resistance. Unfortunately, they were defeated because of their inferiority in power and firearms. When Torél Guri fled in to Famka in the Sudan, Wad Mahmud escaped to the mountainous area of Joroko. Although the two defiant sheikhs were not captured, their countries were devastated and the peoples became captives.67

The Asossa region remained untouched since Khojälé had peacefully submitted to the Śāwan army. As a symbol of full integration of the region into the Ethiopian empire, Ras Mākonnen sent sixty horsemen caring Ethiopian flag to be hosted in the border areas where it was intended to show the Ethiopia boundary. Finally, by representing Khojälé and Alnazir Ali to administer the region until the central government assigned its appointee, the Ras returned to Addis Ababa.68

Soon after the incorporation of the region, Wad Mahamud and Abdal-Rahman submitted to Ras Dāmessāw who was distributing Ethiopian flag among local chiefs in the region. Even though Khojälé had peacefully submitted to the central state, he was imprisoned for nine years with those who resisted due to his secrete negotiation with the British who were eager to bring Bēla-Śangul under their control.69 The imprisonment of the three sheikhs and the effective annexation of their territories brought about changes in the political leadership
of Béla-Šangul. The region begun to be ruled by non-local governors who where new both to the people and their culture. From 1898 to 1903, the region was ruled under Ras Dämessäw. The period was characterized by heavy customs duties paid by the people and extensive exploitation. For instance, the people of Asossass Proper were expected to pay 300 ounces of gold annually which took the largest portion of the whole of Béla-Šangul region. From 1903 to 1918 Béla-Šangul was again ruled under Däjjazmač Gäbrä Egziabhér, the governor of Léqa Nääqmä. Debela points out that the incapability of the people to pay heavy duties and the heavy burden imposed by Dämessäw forced the central government to bring Béla Šangul under Gäbrä Egziabhér. Rashid and Deselagn, on the other hand, state that Dämessäw with his army left the region due to the harsh climatic condition of the low land area.

The period of Däjjazmač Gäbrä Egziabhér particularly in Asossass Proper was characterized by turmoil and unrest. The first cause for the turmoil was the initiations made by different group leaders to achieve their proposed objectives. Civil war broke out between Khamid, who replaced Khojälé and wanted the restoration of Khojälé’s rule and Musa Tämän who wanted to replace Khamid. Musa was also said to have been influenced by Joté Tulu who needed the unrest to expand his territory to Asossass. The second source of unrest in Asossass was the local peoples’ disobedience with the new effective administrative system implemented by Däjjazmač Gäbrä Egziabhér through his generals Fitawrari Kaba and Fitawrari Girata. When the people insisted to resist the new administrative system, the army of the two generals used force.
to suppress the rebellion and to devastate Asossa town. As a result, death of people and migration into the Sudan and other neighboring British occupied territories led to a remarkable population decrease in Asossa proper.\textsuperscript{76}

In 1908, the three sheikhs of Béla-Šangul were released after being awarded Ethiopian titles. \textit{Dājjazmač} and \textit{Fitawrari} titles were given to Torél Guri and Wad Mahmud respectively. Khojālé, however, remained with his previous title, sheikh, at his own preference.\textsuperscript{77} After being released a considerable attention was given to him by the emperor to establish smooth relation with Khojālé of Asossa at the expense of different prominent chiefs and \textit{Dājjazmač} Gābrā Egziabhér himself. Oromo lands to the southeast of Asossa became source of complaint to the emperor by Khojālé and Joté Tulu who subjugated Béggi in 1903 while Khojālé was arrested. The emperor settled the complaint in favor of Khojālé.\textsuperscript{78} Two years later, the sheikh transferred his capital from Asossa to Béggi.\textsuperscript{79}

After he was empowered in manipulating the politics of the country, \textit{Leji} Eyasu brought all the territories of the northern neighboring sheikhs, khomośa and Béla-Šangul under the control of Sheikh Khojālé Al-Hassen in 1914.\textsuperscript{80} In 1924 Khojālé also got Wabara, the territory west of Béggi, from Joté Tulu.\textsuperscript{81} In addition to his success in securing his semi autonomous status, the sheikh moreover, was able to get 10,000 Maria Theresa Thalers and 1,000 cattle to rehabilitate and to rebuild the Asossa region which was devastated both by the civil war and the force of the central government.\textsuperscript{82}
Scholars forwarded their different arguments to answer why the central government decided to cultivate smooth and strong relation with Khojälé of Asossa at the expense of the other local rulers. Based on his oral informants, Debela is of the opinion that his previous secret relation with the British helped the Sheikh to be favored by the emperor. The emperor became suspicious that Khojälé would continue his negotiation with the British in the southwestern Ethiopian lands unless ambiguous relation between the “centre” and “periphery” was resolved. Others, on the other hand, state that the skillful nature of Khojälé diplomatic approach to the central government through gifts in gold and slaves gave him an opportunity to be subsidized economically and promoted politically by outshining his rivals. Whatever the case, beginning from 1908 until the Italian invasion of the country Khojälé was said to have ruled the whole Béla-Šangul region without interference from the central government. Full responsibility and power was given to him in collecting and sending tributes directly to the central government.

However, this period of Khojälé was not free from revolt and disturbance. Particularly at the beginning of the third decade of the twentieth century, the Bārta people of Khomoša and Béla-Šangul Proper rebelled against the governorship of Khojälé of Asossa. This revolt was mainly caused by the extensive slave raids and gold exploitation by the sheikh to use them as gifts to the central government. The revolt was led by Mustafa Abda-Rahman of Bela-ansh gul and Musa Mahmud of Khomoša. The burden of taxation laid on the
shoulder of the people also aggravated the frequent rebellion in Béggi and Fadasi.\textsuperscript{87}

Hearing the news of the Italian invasion against Ethiopia and the collapse of imperial rule in western Ethiopia, the war against Khojälé was intensified. Confusion was observed at Asossa, Khojälé’s administrative center. In 1936, the Italians freed Mustäfa and Musa who had been imprisoned at Addis Ababa by the imperial government since 1934. As soon as they arrived at Asossa area, they continued to be major enemies of Khojälé.\textsuperscript{88}

The western “Galla [Oromo] Confederation” which was established in mid-1936\textsuperscript{89}, after the fall of the Hailâ Selassié’s government at the center, was another internal threat to Khojälé’s survival. Khojälé, who feared losing his communication passage to Gore where Ras Emeru was stationed, tried to have smooth relation with important figures of the Confederation through gift of gold. However, one of the organizers of the Confederation, Fitawrari Yohannes Joté, has subjugated Béggi, Khojälé’s most lucrative province.\textsuperscript{90}

In order to overcome internal revolts and threats, Khojälé requested the assistance of the central army stationed at Goré under Ras Emeru, representative of the central government.\textsuperscript{91} Nevertheless, he did not get immediate response because the target of the patriots at Goré was to liberate Addis Ababa than suppressing internal dangers.\textsuperscript{92} In August 1937 the hope of the sheikh in Asossa was revived when tens of Ethiopian patriots arrived in his region before the coming of the Italian army. He had been reinforced by them
and crushed the revolt in Khomoša and Béla-Šangul. In return, the sheikh promised the patriots to collaborate with them in fighting against Italians. Khojālē was said to have helped the patriots by providing elders and his son, Abdul-Rahim to guide them to pass into the British Sudan.\textsuperscript{93}

Scholars argue on the departure of Italians and their way of entrance into Asossa differently. According to Hosaena, they departed from Gondār and followed the way of Guba and Hor Khalifor crossing the Nile to enter Asossa.\textsuperscript{94} Desalegn argues that the Italian army came into Asossa from Gojjam via Mätākāl.\textsuperscript{95} Ateib and Debela explain that they followed the Guba direction to come to the region. After passing Guba, the group branched in to two. One group moved into Wänbāra and the rest came into Asossa. The Italians entered Asossa in October 1937 without significant resistance and made Asossa their center of administration.\textsuperscript{96}

Using his previous behavior in wellcoming foreign powers, Khojālē got the advantage of regaining Béggi in 1938, which he lost in 1936 and was promoted in to Sultan to administer their Béla-Šangul commiseriate.\textsuperscript{97} On the contrary, hereditary rulers of Khomoša and Béla-Šangul Proper and the Ethiopian patriots in the British Sudan continued their struggle against the invaders. As a result, the sheikh was ordered to mediate between the rebels and Italians in Béla-Šangul region. Finally, in the mediation Sultan Khojālē was accidentally wounded and died from gun fired by an unknown shooter.\textsuperscript{98}
The Italian period in Ethiopia in general and in Asossa in particular was the
time in which significant socio-economic developments were observed. Asossa
town was transformed from a village to a town. The Italians had built their
offices, residences and started construction of roads and buildings following a
city-plan. Constructions of dry-weather roads connecting Asossa to the
surrounding areas were also their contributions. Following the building of
roads and bridges, trade with the Sudan merchants and the Oromo producers
was revived. The existence of neither custom duties nor kéllas which were
started by the Śäwans during Däjjazmać Gābrā Egziabhér period helped the
trade activity to be flourished.

Although relative peace was seen after the death of Khojālē, the forced labor
particularly in road construction embittered the people and it led to a strong
resistance movement in Asossa. Being informed that the emperor had arrived
in Khartoum, the people massively picked up arms against fascist Italy. Finally,
the Ethiopia patriots and the British troops entered Asossa in 1941 when the
Italians left the whole Bēla-Śangul region.
Chapter Two


2.1. From Libration to Revolution, 1941-1974

The post-1941 administrative history of Asossa wäräda is directly related to the aftermath of the Italian period. Although Rashid in his thesis explains that Sheikh Khojälé died without naming hereditary successor to rule over his domain,\(^1\) my informants including his grandson, strongly assert that the Sheikh preferred Almahadi and Aşafi to be heirs. Elders, thus, begun to favor Almahadi. Considering the interest of the local people, the Italians put Almahadi in power. However, Almahadi was poisoned by the Italians themselves due to his anti-Italian activities. Secret accumulation of gold and other precious resources to strength his economic capacity to revolt against the colonialists was the immediate cause for his death. Aşafi, Almahadi’s brother was empowered by the Italiansin 1939.\(^2\) Aşafi ruled over the area for only two years. Because, the Italians brought him together with other local rulers to Jimma fearing that they would provide information to the British force. Immediately after the liberation, Aşafi was appointed by Emperor Haile Sellassie over Asossa-Bélà-Šangul awraja. \(^3\)

Different groups of oral informants give slightly different argument on why Aşafi Khojälé was preferred by the emperor among other chiefs and his family members who were in conflict to control the political position. Most of his
relatives were also ambitious to inherit properties of their father using political power. One group of elders agrees that the emperor took into consideration the governing experience of Aṣafi in the area since his father passed away. Aṣafi was active diplomatically in his effort to settle disputes with the neighboring chiefs. Therefore, the acceptance of Aṣafi by the central government, according to this group of informants, was the long-term result of his governing ability and experience.

The other group emphasizes that Aṣafi’s authorization to rule over the region was directly associated with his imprisonment in Jimma during the Italian period. For instance, Abbas, Aṣafi’s own son and others explain the reason as follows:

*He /Aṣafi/ was arrested in Arjo and later on taken to Jimma. In the year when the country was liberated, he and other detainees became free. In the same year, Aṣafi went to Addis Ababa on his way to Asossa. This situation helped him to meet the emperor whom he informed the death of Sheikh Khojālē. Aṣafi also informed his majesty that he was administering the area based on the wellbeing of his father before his death. After expressing his condolence to the death of Khojahe, his reliable ally in the western boarder lands, the emperor promised Aṣafi that he should rule over the area in the future. Keeping his promise, the emperor assigned Aṣafi to administer Asossa Awraja in 1942 and Asossa wārāda in 1943.*

Based on the analysis of the information collected from the two groups of informants, we can argue that Aṣafi, other than his relatives and competent Chiefs, was allowed directly by the Emperor to govern Asossa. His political position before he was arrested also seems to me another possible factor for his
appointment over Asossa awraja. However, the quality of his leadership over the area as a possible reason is questionable.

In 1942, the imperial government announced a decree reorganizing the empire into a new administrative system. The country was divided into fourteen Ṭāqelay-Gezat (governorate–generals), one hundred and three awrajas (provinces), five hundred and five wārādas (districts) and nine hundred and forty nine meketel wārādas (sub-district). The purpose of the new administrative division was to simplify land assessment and tax collection system and to control various government agencies in the empire. Administrative units were mostly created on the basis of their historical background. Different petty chiefs throughout the empire, were re-assigned to be governors of their respective areas, but without autonomous status.7

The 1942 national decree, however, was not implemented in Asossa-Béla-Śangul region until 1943. It was only in 1943 that the semi autonomous status of the region came to an end. The region classified into different administrative units. The awraja came under the Wällägga Provincial Government constituting Asossa, Béla-Śangul and Béggi wārādas. The wārādas were also further subdivided into meketel wārādas. Governors of these administrative units, particularly at the Ṭāqelay Gezat and awraja levels, were appointed by the emperor directly.8

Oral testimony and Dābāla in his MA thesis claims that the request of Aṣafi to the central government was the major cause for the end of the semi
autonomous status of the region. The governorship of Așafi was characterized by conflicts among the children of Khojälé due to conflicting economic and political interests. The opposition against Așafi’s power reached its peak when his younger brother, Abdulrahim organized his brothers and sisters to complain to the central government of his economic and political ill-treatment. The failure of Khojel’s children to organize themselves against their common enemies led to continuous revolts by the neighboring chiefs. The chiefs who led the dispute forwarded their dissatisfaction to the emperor in Addis Ababa expressing the humiliation and injustice imposed on them by Așafi. Thus, the emperor sent a committee to deal with the internal friction in the area. Although the committee sent from the emperor’s palace favored Așafi’s continuation in power at the expense of other chiefs, Așafi strongly asked to bring about an end to the semi-autonomous status of the region.9 “.... Așafi requested Dańña/central government appointee/to support his administration.... The emperor appointed a central representative over the whole of Béla-Šangul....”10

Taking Așafi’s request as a major factor for the formation of different administrative units and the appointment of central government representatives over the region seems less convincing. Since its incorporation by Menilek in 1898, the region was effectively administered as part of the empire. The 1942 administrative regulations on the other hand, was a national decree to be applied over the whole empire.11 Therefore, it would be more
convincing to say that the request of Aṣafi to get Dañña was a pre-text for the central government’s real intention to bring the region under its direct control.

Under Asossa-Bélašangul awraja, Asossa würädà was divided in to five meketel würädàs. These were: Gumba, Bäśer, Khomośa, Bambäsi and Mägälé. The administrative centers of these sub-districts were Asossa, Gämäl, Dull, Bambäsi and Mägälé respectively.¹² In 1943, the awraja governorship was transferred from Aṣafi to Kidanä Mareyam, a central government appointee. Aṣafi was again preferred by the emperor to rule over Asossa Wërädà.¹³ Out of about one hundred thousand people of Asossa awraja, Aṣafi governed forty thousand inhabitants. Though fewer in number than the native Bärta, other ethnic groups like the Amhara, Oromo, Guraghe and Tigre came to the Wërädà either as traders or government employees.¹⁴ Aṣafi governed the Wërädà until his death in 1969.¹⁵

Throughout his lifetime, Aṣafi gave emphasis to stay in power simply aiming at monopolizing the properties of his father. For instance, after the semi-autonomous status of the area ended, Aṣafi did not concentrate on competition to get additional territories. Due to this extreme interest to monopolize properties and political position, his period was characterized by chaos and hostility. The disorder was created by his relatives who disliked his greedy behavior related to properties of Khojälé, and by neighboring Bärta chiefs who wanted to replace him.¹⁶
Knowing Aṣafi’s weak ambition to control extra territories, Hailé Bera, who was the governor of Asossa awraja, recommended to the Ministry of Interior and transferred him to Béggī wärāda. In 1963 Abdalrahim Khojālē, the governor of Béggī wärāda and the strong challenger against descendents of Joté Tullu of Qēllām to control Wabāra, was transferred to Asossa wärāda. Transferring Aṣafi to Béggī and Abdalrahim to Asossa was calculated by Hailé Bera who favored the family of Joté to remove Dājjazmać Abdālrahim from Béggī area. Abdarahim, however, refused the transfer by complaining to the central government and after a year, Aṣafi was returned to his position in Asossa.\(^{17}\)

Informants assert that Aṣafi was popular in his relations with the Emperor and the central government appointees at the awraja and provincial government levels. He was active in advising the awraja governors. The informants claim that the 1963 complain of Dājjazmać Abdālrahim was accepted by the emperor aiming at putting Aṣafi in Asossa where the awraja center of administration was founded.\(^{18}\)

Due to the experience he had when he moved with his father to the imperial palace, Aṣafi was active in cultivating smooth relation with the emperor. Ethiopian titles like Qāńazmać, Fitawrari and Dājjazmać were given to him by the Emperor in 1957, 1960 and 1963 respectively. The acceptance of Aṣafi by the central government and his staying in power for a long period were followed by series of demotions and promotions of other governors over Asossa wärāda.
After the death of Aṣafi in 1969, Gerazmać Mohammed was appointed over the wārāda. After two years, however, Almahadi Abdurahim replaced him. Similarly in 1972 Abbas Aṣafi became the governor of the wārāda until he was removed from the position by the Dārg government in 1974.¹⁹

Aṣafi’s dominant role in the administrative history of the wārāda and his success in gaining subsequent Ethiopian political titles were decisively the results of his ability to cooperate with the central government. He acquired this personal quality during the lifetime of his father.²⁰

Like the wārāda governor, the local chiefs of the respective areas governed all meketel wārādas under Asossa wārāda. One of the descendents of Sheikh Khojālé called Babākir administered Gumba sub district, which was the central and the strongest of all. Anzir Ali who was from among the nobles of the area during Khojālé’s period was appointed over the Bāśer sub-district, the northeast sub-district of the wārāda. After his death, his son named Ibrahim Anzir who stayed in power until the 1974 Ethiopian revolution was replaced. Al-Badawi Aba Moti and Musa Mohammād were appointed to govern over Bambāsi and Khomoša sub-districts respectively.²¹ The Khomoša sub-district was situated in the northern part of the wārāda, whereas the Bāmbasi sub district had common boundary with the Bérgi wārāda in the south.²²

Based on oral informants, Debela points out that the meketel wārādas under Asossa wārāda were only four in number. This difference seems to have
emanated from his informants’ limitation in memorizing or suspecting what would have happened before their existence in the Wäräda ²³

In 1964, meketel wärädas were abolished and additional wärädas were created in many parts of the empire as part of the development effort. The trend was to abolish meketel wärädas, which were economically poor (below $17,000 tax revenue).²⁴ Bäqqālā, who was in the Asossa area to collect data for his BA thesis, clearly puts that in 1968 there was a strong intention to implement the above nationwide programme to abolish meketel wärädas.²⁵ Supporting this idea my informants underscore that in 1969 Asossa wäräda was reorganized consisting of only four meketel wärädas that Debela mentions. This was because the two small meketel wärädas, Gumba and Māgālē were combined to constitute one wäräda with their center at Asossa. The Kurmuk area, which was part of Khomośa wäräda, was also separated from Asossa wäräda to be an additional district by taking extra territory from the Bēla-Šangul wäräda.²⁶ Therefore, it seems to me that the memorial capacity of Debela’s informants is limited to the post 1969 events.

Under the governors of wäräda and meketel wärädas, there were government agents who were active participants in facilitating the imperial bureaucratic administrative system. These were the balabats and the Ćeqaśums (Karros). During the imperial period, all balabats in Asossa wäräda belonged to the two politically dominant families from which the Weńawit family descended. These families were the Albideria and Alräkabia. Informants underscore that the
Albideria group were descendants of one Islamic warrior called Bider who came
to Asossa area and established himself as a known balabat. The Alrekabia
group, on the other hand, were named after Ali Ibnu Talib, the known general
of Fadalah, who came from the Sudan to Khomośa and gradually took the
political domination from the Albideria through marriage ties. As time went,
however, the two groups intermingled and their descendants, the wețawit
continued to dominate in the governorship of the Asossa wărāda area.²⁷

My informants, infact, do not put the time when the original descendants of
these groups came to the region. But all of them unanimously underscore that
until Sheikh Khojâlê, one of the descendents of the wețawit family was
assisted by Ras Gobâna’s army, other groups, except the ‘slaves’ who did not
have ethnic name, like Jâbalawi and Alyakobab were not completely captured.
Most balabats of these people were competent enough in resisting their
neighboring balabats.²⁸

Except the Alyakobabs who were found only in Béla-Šangul wărâda, all groups
of Bârta inhabited Asossa wărâda. The Jabalwi, the first settlers of the sa’id
had better prestigious social and political status than the slaves. The most
discriminated group was the ‘slave’ group. The responsibility of this group of
the indigenous people was serving the balabats both individually and in group.
Accomplishing all indoor and outdoor activities was the duty laid on the
shoulder of this group. ²⁹
The division of the country into units and sub-units came with a new change in the administrative history of Asossa area. Before Asossa was annexed by the Ethiopian government, there were both aristocratic and democratic systems of appointment of *balabats*. This system continued even after the annexation though the central government appointed its representatives to high positions. The appointment had aristocratic element because it followed hereditary line. Only members of the families of the deceased *balabat* had the right to inherit the *balabat* position. It is also democratic in its nature. The people administered under the *balabat* had the right to participate in the election of the *balabat* among the deceased’s family based on his ability and their wish. The last will of the deceased *balabat* and his family was not solely considered to appoint the future *balabat*.  

Both direct and indirect systems of democracy were also observed. Individually or in-group the people were allowed to bring complaints and wishes directly to the *balabat*. On the other hand, indirect system of democracy was also seen among the local people of the area. If group dissatisfaction is observed, the people selected a better speaker, most of the time among the elders, to present their common case to the *balabat*. In most cases, the *balabat* consented to the will of the local people because he knew that he came to power by the will of the people. The election of the *balabat*, in fact, was not periodic. The *balabat* could be deposed from his position at any time by the people.
Both the *balabat* and the subjects had duties and responsibilities. The *balabat*, firstly, had power to interfere in different social lives of the subjects. ‘Śaria’, Islamic law was his reference to mediate such serious social cases as treason, divorce, and murder. His quality of mediation was measured by his ability to settle such social problems among his subjects. Secondly, protection of his territory and people from external aggression was also his major responsibility by which his subjects measured his strength. In return, the *balabat* expected his people to pay tribute in gold annually. Rendering personal service was also another form of their duties.  

After Asossa *wäräda* was reorganized under the post-1941 new administrative system, the only aristocratic element of appointment remained. The traditional democratic way of appointing of *balabats* was rejected. The central government became the sole responsible party to endorse the *balabat* title to the first-born son of the deceased *balabat*. The right of the people to appoint and to remove their immediate rulers was partially denied. After this period, the right of the people was limited to the appointment of the Ĉeqašum, the lowest administrative organ. In appointing and removing the Ĉeqašum, the will of the people was considered by the *balabat*.  

In the *wäräda*, most of the *balabats* were appointed by the central government as *meketel wäräda* governors. Most of them were also descendants of Sheik Khojālê. The *balabats* were actively participating in most administrative functions together with the governors of the *wäräda* and *meketel wärädas*. 
Although they were bridges between the government and the people due to their traditional prestige, the *balabats* were not getting salary in the form of cash. The governors of the wārāda and meketel wārādas were employees of the central government with monthly salary. The salary for wārāda governors extended from seventy-five to five hundred Ethiopia birr. For example, Aśafi, who controlled the wārāda governorship for a long period, was earning 250-birr salary with additional 100 birr for his Dājjazmač title.\(^{34}\) The salary of meketel wārādas was also extended from thirty to three hundred fifty birr with non periodic revision of salary scale.\(^{35}\)

Even though there was no cash payment from the imperial government, the *balabats’* major benefits were labor services rendering by the local people individually or in-group. Moreover, their respected position would give the *balabats* internal satisfaction. Since they were both religious and government leaders of their own respective areas, the local people gave priority to them and to their families in all social activities.\(^{36}\)

*Wārāda* Governors were appointed by the emperor upon the recommendation of the Ministry of Interior. The *awraja* governor also had the right to recommend the potential wārāda governors to the Governor-General who had the right to submit such recommendation to the ministry of interior.\(^{37}\) Here, what made the appointment of Aśafi special was that the recommendations of both the *awraja* governor and the Ministry of Interior were not as such considerable. Because, according to my informants, the emperor himself
directly promised the position to Aṣafi before these government organs were organized.\textsuperscript{38}

Governors of \textit{meketel wärādas} in Asossa \textit{Wärāda} were appointed, on the basis of recommendation given by the Asossa \textit{awraja} governor, by Wällāgga provincial government. With the exception of the Asossa province, all \textit{aurajas} under Wällāgga had no \textit{meketel wärādas}.\textsuperscript{39} Out of the twelve \textit{meketel wärādas} under Asossa \textit{awraja} five of them were found under the Asossa district. Furthermore, like the \textit{wärāda} governor, the imperial government from the local \textit{balabats} selected most \textit{meketel wärāda} governors. The imperial government did not emphasize the level of formal education for appointment of \textit{wärāda} and \textit{meketel wärāda} governors. Most of the governors were not able to read and write in the official language. They merely used Arabic language using translators.\textsuperscript{40}

The imperial government allowed the existence of various \textit{meketel wärādas} in Asossa \textit{awraja} generally and in Asossa \textit{wärāda} particularly due to the historical and traditional values of the local people. Firstly, the central government was conscious that the indigenous Bärta people in the wärāda, did not share political values in common with other Ethiopians for along period of time.\textsuperscript{41} Therefore, bringing the \textit{balabts} to different administrative positions might strengthen the political attachment of this people to Ethiopia.\textsuperscript{42}

Secondly, it seems that the imperial government considered the \textit{balabats} to be the most capable and acceptable to deal with the local Bärta people using their
own language and traditional way of administration. For a long period, for instance, the local Bärta did not give more respect and acceptance to the imperial government. The people gave considerable respect and acceptance for the balabats and the traditional religious leaders. Supporting this idea Triuizi states that the Bärta people respected their nérry (traditional religious leader) than the emperor himself. 43

Not only in Ethiopia, but also in various nations of the world the authorities of the central government in many cases could get more acceptances by the urban society. In addition, central governments are isolated from the frontier population due to huge traditional and cultural differences.44 Therefore, the imperial government used the existing traditional local nobles or balabats and Čeqaśums or Karros to reconcile with the indigenous local people and to introduce them to the new Ethiopian political administrative system. 45

Although initiated by few politically dissatisfied balabats, political rebels against the imperial regime were not observed in organized way. The political rebellion was intensified only after the 1974 Ethiopian revolution following the complete rejection of the local respected balabats and religious elites of their political position.46

In Asossa wăräda both wăräda and meketel wăräda governors had minor differences in their functions because, they performed dual activities. They acted as balabats as well as governors. In their area of jurisdiction, they maintained peace and security. They also worked for the promotion of
collection of taxes from the local people. The only visible difference was that the court instituted in Asossa town was headed by the wärada governor. Meketel wärada Governors, however, were only judges to deal with minor crimes and to enforce rules and regulations of the imperial government.

Under the balabat, there were other government servers without formal cash payment from the central government. These administrative organs were called Ĉeqašums (Karros). These agents were appointed by the balabats to transmit orders and regulations to the common rural people. They were directly, responsible to the balabats. They could not make decision and take action of their own in any situation. Their major duties were initiating the people to pay their tax to the wärada treasurer on time. Dividing the land among the people and interpretation of Islamic laws were also other functions accomplished by the karros. They were, moreover, the right hand of the balabats to get information in various civil and criminal issues. Similar to the balabats, labor service from the common people and mental satisfaction emanated from the social and political respect were their benefits for their position.

Concerning taxation and financial administrative system of the wärada, the local administrators and representatives of the central government had no power to generate and utilize budget in their own way and will. All local government organs and machineries were used as facilitators of both income and expenditure collected from the local people passed on to the central government and visa versa. The wärada treasurer whose office was instituted
in Asossa town was responsible in initiating ways and means for the prompt collection of taxes. Preparing balance sheet for the income and expenditure of the wäräda was also his duty. The wäräda and meketel wäräda governors were responsible for their failure in collecting the expected amount of income from tax in their respective areas.\textsuperscript{50}

Standardization of land tax was proclaimed by the imperial government in 1942, which highly affected the local people of Asossa area. This decree brought two basic changes in the history of the area. The traditional tax collection system in gold by the chiefs was replaced by new taxation system in cash. Each family head holding land was registered and land tax assessment was implemented. Secondly, the 1942 land tax decree also included all the cultivated and uncultivated lands occupied by the rural people of the wäräda. According to the decree, the amount of money collected was 15, 10 and 5 birr for cultivated, semi cultivated and uncultivated lands respectively. \textsuperscript{51}

The governor of the wäräda was responsible passing orders and to enforce meketel wäräda governors to collect income for the central government relatively equal to the expected amount. Annual income expectation from taxation in the wäräda was done based on land and property assessment techniques. Since the local people of Asossa wäräda were not as such familiar with cultivation of land, mostly, the assessment was made on the number of cattle. The tax was levied by considering animals owned by each family head.\textsuperscript{52} Meketel wäräda Governors were charged with the duty of selecting tax-
assessors in each area. The selected assessors were also expected to be recommended by the balabats of their area and to make an oath to be free from bias.\textsuperscript{53}

The subsequent tax decree of 1944 also increased the amount of tax payment expected from each family head. Until 1966, taxpayers were classified under five categories based on the number of cattle and the amount of land they were cultivating. From the first to the fifth classes, taxpayers were expected to pay 32, 27, 24, 16 and 8 birr respectively. Although the tax levied on the majority of the wäräda people was eight birr, the amount expected from the lowest class, the poor local inhabitants of the area were not able to pay it.\textsuperscript{54}

Moreover, the second problem which complicated the life of the people was the hardship they faced in traveling from their extreme frontier areas to Asossa town where the wäräda treasury was situated. Each family head was expected to pay the tax levied by the assessors directly to the wäräda treasury. The amount of money, time and labor force utilized by the local people in their journey to and their stay in town was more than the money they were paying. The journey day and night crossing rivers and mountainous areas covered with bushes and grasses aggravated the problem.\textsuperscript{55}

In 1962, however, Aśafi and the meketel wäräda governors appealed to the central government through the Asossa awraja governor for reduction of tax by considering the life of the poor local people under each government units. The imperial government, however, did not give immediate response. After a series
of appeals, in 1966 the central government responded that the taxpayers should be categorized into eight classes.\textsuperscript{56}

According to the 1966 revised tax payment, the amount of tax expected from the local people from the highest to the lowest tax payers were 32, 24, 18, 16, 8, 6, 5 and 2 birr annually.\textsuperscript{57} However, my informants assert that the Bärtä people in the \textit{wäräda} were paying the tax amount expected from the last three classes. These amounts of tax were 6, 5 and 2 birr. This revision of tax and classification of the people in to eight classes was recommended for the whole Asossa awraja people.\textsuperscript{58} This information implies directly that the first four classes of tax payers belonged to the people of Bëggi \textit{wäräda} who cultivates farm lands rather than rearing animals. The informants added that the same amount of taxes were levied on the Bëla-Šangul \textit{wäräda} people since they followed the same economic activities as the Asossa Bärtä.\textsuperscript{59}

In relation to the hardship, the local people faced in traveling to Asossa town from their villages, as far as 120 kilometers, Abass Aṣafi who became the governor of Asossa \textit{wäräda} in 1972 responded in this way:

\textit{By considering the previous problem of the people, the \textit{wäräda} governor assigned and ordered tax collectors to go to each meketel \textit{wäräda} administrative centers to simplify the distance related problem. This system however, was applied for only two years, 1967 and 68. This was because the \textit{wäräda} governor feared to take the responsibility of the probable loss of money and robbery.}\textsuperscript{60}

Moreover, since the life of the people depended on hunting and gathering, tax in cash remained unpopular in the \textit{wäräda}. Most of the land in the \textit{wäräda}
came under government control due to the failure of the people to pay tax. From 1940s to 1970s, the number of people escaping to the Sudan or shifting their original place was increased.  

Generally in Asossa awraja and particularly Asossa wäräda, the amount of income collected from the rural society and from other social services in the towns far outweighed by the expenditures cost by the central government to provide different social and political services. Fore instance in 1965 the imperial government collected only about 164, 518 Ethiopian Birr. However, the annual expenditure utilized in the awraja was about 329, 702 Birr. Only about half of the expenditure was covered by the income the central government collected from each wäräda and meketel wäräda. The other statistical data also proves this argument. In 1966, the total income the central government collected from the awraja was only about 199, 482 Birr and on the other hand, the expenditure was about 296, 772 Birr.

The administrative and political systems of the Därg government in the wäräda were characterized by exclusion of the traditional rulers and undermining the culture and identity of the rural people. As we have discussed earlier, various nobles and their descendents were appointed by the imperial government to administer different hierarchies of government. However, there were nobles who were not satisfied by the existing administrative system. As Baqqala explains “In Ethiopia in spite of order No. 43 of 1966 proclamation, an order to establish local self administration ... there is still no representative and responsible local government. The people do not directly participate in any discussion which concerns them.”

In fact Baqqala’s strong conclusion is more or less true, but there were discussions in which local governors of the wäräda and meketel wärädas took part though they were insignificant. For instance, the 1966-land tax revision in which Aśafi himself and other governors participated attests to this fact. In addition to the insignificant participation of the local governors, the interest of the imperial government to use them only as its agents through whom orders and regulations were passed from the center to the local people led to political protest by the Bärta nobles.
The protest gained its root in 1963 when nobles like Dājjazmać Yeśaba of Guba and Yosěf Śämid begun to mobilize the people secretly. In the beginning of the 1970s a series of discussions were held by the local people. This secret discourse among the Bärta people was initiated by important personalities like Abdulrahim Yassin. Finally, before the protest were put to practice the region of imperial government ended and was replaced by the Military regime following the 1974 Ethiopia revolution.66

The coming to power of the military regime was followed by the complete rejection of different wārāda and meketel wārāda governors. The ambition of the nobles and the former governors to get influential positions at the awraja and the provincial level died. Many of them were arrested and Abas Aśafi, the then governor of Asossa wārāda, was removed from his position together with other ‘retired’ governors. Representatives of the Military government were assigned to all administrative positions in the wārāda. This period witnessed the complete absence of the local people in dealing with their destiny, which was declining from time to time.67 Moreover, the assigned representatives were not voluntary to work in remote parts of Asossa administrative region. Therefore, most parts of the region had no government appointees to rule over the Bärta.68 (see also appendix II).

Moreover, what aggravated the existing and the newly created political dissatisfaction was that the cadres who were in the villages of the people begun to undermine the culture and identity of the Bärta people. They used mass
insulting their usual habit to express the people as ‘uncivilized’. The cadres always were expressing that the people lagged behind the civilized society of central Ethiopia and who were never introduced to trousers, shirts and injera.69

As a result, in 1977 a secret discussion was held by some of the Bärta people in Asossa. The discussion resulted in a popular agreement to struggle against the Military government. After three or four months, anti-government group was established. In the same year another politically dissatisfied members from Mao, Komo and Gumuz nationalities joined the anti-Military government movement. Immediately after the group was formed different members came with their own interest to give a name for the newly established political group. Part of the group proposed a name “Bärta Derejit” (lit. Organization of the Bärta) and the rest preferred a name “Jabha Wațania” (lit. Local Liberty Movement). However, this disagreement was removed by giving a name for the organization that was concerned with all members of the group. It was named “Fana” (lit. Bright). 70

In the same year, hierarchical structure of the Fana was strengthened by appointing selective members to coordinate activities of the group. The selected members were charged with the responsibility in searching financial sources and in organizing military training. In December 1977, this anti-government group formation was exposed to the military government. However, before
military measure was taken to bring them under control, the group fled to the Sudan.  

In Sudan, in a town called Dämazin the members continued their anti-military regime discussion. The number of members in the group, according to the informants was not less than thirty. They also had only about seventeen firearms that were taken by a man called Kädir Ahmåd from Ethiopia. However, their number increased when the Bärta soldiers serving the Sudan government begun to join the Fana. 

Following the exile of the Fana group, the Military government aimed at destroying the forests of Bëla-Šangul which would serve the local people as a host in revolting against it, planned to resettle people in the area from central and northern Ethiopia. In the second half of 1970s, a group of men from the central government arrived to study the proposed resettlement area. The study group selected Šärqolé and Gizän areas through which the Fana rebels took their exile into the Sudan. Later on, however, the study group in collaboration with the Asossa wäräda governors preferred areas around the Asossa town. Heavy forests and grasslands around the town where selected for resettlement sites due to their water resources. 

In 1979/80, the Military government transported thousands of Amhara settlers from Wållo area to Asossa wäräda. Thus, the first government sponsored resettlement scheme was started in the wäräda. Different scholars who studied about the resettlement scheme argue that the aim of the programme was to
help the exploited land of northern Ethiopia in recovering its soil fertility and forests. Hunger and famine caused by drought in Wállo was the immediate cause for resettlement scheme of the 1979/80.\textsuperscript{74}

Others, on the other hand, argue that the government wanted the re-settlers in this area to recruit militias and police forces to guard the frontier area day and night from internal and external threats.\textsuperscript{75} My informants, selected among the re-settlers clearly underscore that in 1979/80 there was no drought and hunger in their homelands in the north. They were accidentally transported into the area from market places, meetings and their homes forcefully. As soon as they arrived in the \textit{wárāda}, representatives of the military government began to recruit military and police forces, and to encourage the re-settlers to clear dense forests. Thus, this oral testimony clearly shows that the anti-government group stationed in the Sudan might have been the cause for the resettlement.\textsuperscript{76}

The \textit{Fana} anti-government members in Sudan faced two major problems. Firstly, they could not get financial support from any foreign party. Formerly they were getting their daily food and money from the local Bārta people in Asossa and other areas. In Sudan, conversely, these facilities were not accessible.\textsuperscript{77} Secondly, the labor forces of Sudan were mainly constituted of the Bēla-Šangul people. Thus, the Sudan government did not allow them to recruit and train military force in the Sudan. This prohibition of the Sudan government might have emanated from two possible reasons. In the first place,
it feared loss of labor force in the country. Additionally the government would be suspicious for the creation of insecurity in the area.\textsuperscript{78}

In 1985, their military problem was relatively solved because another politically dissatisfied group in the northern part of the country trained members of the group. The EPLF (Eritrean People Liberation Front) extended its financial and military assistance for the \textit{Fana}. In 1984/85, the second and massive government sponsored re-settlement scheme was accompanied on the rest of forest lands of Asossa \textit{uərəda}. In fact this phase was mainly caused by the 1984/85 extreme famine in Wallo. \textsuperscript{79}

In 1989, the TPLF (Tigrian People Liberation Front) also supported the \textit{Fana} financially and in giving Military training. In spite of deforesting the area by the Därg, the \textit{Fana} was returned to Asossa region and its name was changed in to BPLM (Béniśangul People Liberation Movement). In the place called Hägărā Sālam, about three hundred members of the BPLM were trained by the TPLF in 1989. During their war against the Därg regime, the local Bärta people in different villages like Abrahamo and Qāšemāngāl played a remarkable role particularly in providing food. After a strong confrontation in collaboration with the EPLF and OLF, the BPLM was able to see the end of the Därg regime which was its dream. \textsuperscript{80}

After the Military regime collapsed, generally the Béla-Šangul region and particularly the Asossa \textit{Wārāda} came under the control of the two political groups. They were OLF (Oromo Libration Front) and the BPLM. Finally, Asossa
became a battleground between the two groups in an effort to dominate the area. The two political groups fought at different battle fields, firstly at Dull, Śetalo, Molo Māgālé, near Khomośa-Gizan and later on at Qāsemāngāl, in Asossa wārāda. 81

The confrontation among different political factions extremely affected the life of both the urban and rural societies of the wārāda. The agricultural lands of the peasantry became a burial ground for the dead. Crop and grain plants were damaged before they became ripe. Trading with firearms by both the urban and rural people became source of tremendous income and it led to robbery. Many people moving individually or in groups to accomplish their daily life activities were killed in the forests. Mass Killing was also done surprisingly by groups of soldiers who carried firearms as it happened in the Village called Qāsemando, about 2 kilometers to the south of Bambāsi meketel wārāda. 82

In urban areas like Asossa, institutions of the government and the civil servants were destroyed. Mechanized Agricultural production materials on which the life of the rural re-settlers depended on were damaged or robbed. Moreover, the irreplaceable documentary materials, which were crucial to conduct research on the area, were burnt-out or robbed. 83

Generally, the administrative system of the Military government was bitterly opposed by the indigenous people of Asossa wārāda than the administrative system of the imperial government. The imperial government systematically ruled over the area in the name of local administration by appointing the
former *balabats* to different administrative units. Although there were some dissatisfied nobles, majority of them where represented as government employees and agents in the *wäräda* and *meketel wärädas*. The rest of the influential elites were serving the governors and most of them were allowed to be *balabats* and *karros*.84

The complete change of administrative system in the *wäräda* under the *Därg* government led the mass of the natives to be on the side of the anti-government groups. Because, their tradition of governing their own local people declined from time to time and came to end.85

The administrative system of the Military government among the Amhara resettlers also had no full acceptance. The aggressive action of the cadres of the military government in penalizing elders and women using ropes and sticks still remained in the minds of the resettlers.86 The hierarchical flow of power which was more organized and applied to administer the resettlers strictly denied the freedom of the people. About fifty five peasant associations were organized in the *wäräda*. Each peasant Association has one unit leader called *Méda Alafi* whose responsibility was mainly to communicate with the *wäräda* and *awraja* governors. Under the unit leader there were also chairmen, Managers and group leaders to rule over peasant associations (about 500), 100 and 25 Family heads respectively. These government agents among the resettlers were charged with the power to work together with the cadres for the achievement of the socialist production system. 87
The aggressive and forceful measures taken by the cadres for minor civil and criminal issues forced the re-settlers to search ways to return to their original place. Less attention was given to the peasantry for the attainment of the central government’s nation wide development plan. The unsystematic administrative system led the farmers to create informal resisting techniques against the Military government’s production plan. They expressed their resistance in the following way:

Absenteism was common. We were going to the clinic to get sick leaves. We expressed our interest to get medicine in tablet form. This was aimed at throwing the medicine in our home because we were healthy. 88

Most of them also explain that representatives of the military government also affected the lives of the rural peasantry by arresting them without satisfactory reasons. All these direct, forceful and unsystematic political and administrative systems led the military government to get less support among the poor rural re-settlers and the indigenous Bärta community. 89

The military government did not also look at things passively. In addition to covering the forest frontier area by the re-settlers and recruiting militias and police forces to avoid the threat of guerrilla fighters, the Därg used different measures to get support from the local people. The first action was to remove auraja and wäräda governors who were passive in propaganda and action. In 1975 the provisional military council appointed Commander Addisu Märdasa to administer Asossa auraja. 90 Promotion and demotion of wäräda governors
in Asossa was also common. Informants clearly explain that the military government represented a number of Wäräda governors only for not more than one or two years. Except Anagaw Wällé and Jirata Dānu who governed the wäräda from 1978-83 and 1985-87 respectively, others did not stay in their political position for a significant period.91

The next measure taken by the military government was the result of its failure to win the trust of the common people in the wäräda. Since its coming to power in 1974, the Dārg ruled the people using direct and forceful administrative systems. However, in the eve of the 1989 proclamation that declares the new administrative structure of Ethiopia, the Dārg began to follow indirect system of ruling in the wäräda. A Bärta born youngsters like Abdi Yetman, Atāib Ahmād, Šampel Khamis and Almahadi Abdārahim Khojālélé came to the political positions to govern the wäräda.92 According to the proclamation No 26/1989, Wällägga provincial administration and Asossa awraja become separate administrative units. Asossa administrative region was created and constituted five awrajas under it. These awrajas were Dul, Bēniśangul, Mănāsibu, Bēggī and Gidami. The previous Kurmuk and Asossa wärädas were also incorporated in to Dul Awraja. Civil servants and political elites of the wäräda were transferred to awraja offices and the wäräda offices were closed.93

The third action taken by the Dārg was focused only on the rural re-settlers and the urban society in the wäräda. This action was mainly focused on
expansion of political propaganda using meetings and schools. This system was begun to be applied particularly towards the end of the 1980s. Various archival materials indicate that schools in the towns and rural areas were the center of political propaganda. This expansion of propaganda in this period gained emphasis due to the increasing anti-government actions by different groups in the north and central part of the country and in Asossa area (see also appendix III&IV). In Asossa area teachers were charged by the government to expand its propaganda. Due to these activities teachers were taken by the anti-government groups into forests though their destiny was not known. (see also appendix V).

Establishing different clubs in the schools and in the qābāllēs was the fashion of the day to inculcate socialist ideology in the minds of the youth and to react against the propaganda of the rebels. (see also appendix VI). History and geography subjects were given in the propaganda programme aiming at introducing the youth with the military success of the country in the past and to introduce the topographical settings of the country. For instance, in December 1988, 12, 397 students and 261 school teachers attended the propaganda session which was held in 31 schools in Wällägga provincial government in the name of Ethiopian History. (see also appendix VII). This activity was extensively held in Asossa town and other rural schools of the Asossa wārāda.
Using dancing and singing, the anti-rebels propaganda and the socialist ideology were also conducted among the newly resettled peasantry in various Qābāllé peasant Associations. Each year, on September 12, on which the revolutionary government came to power, political propaganda using Alcohol and singing to attract the attention of the peasants was Common throughout the Dārg period. However, the propaganda was not significantly applied on the rural Bārta people due to their sparse settlement. However, none of these actions could protect the Dārg from its collapse in 1991 as we have discussed previously.
Chapter Three

3. Socio-Economic Developments of the Wäräda

3.1. Causes and Courses of the Asossa Resettlement Schemes

Although the area had been a periphery in terms of its political history and geographical location, it had been the center of social and economic interactions among the indigenous people, the Sudanese arrivals and the Ethiopian highlanders.\(^1\) Before the government-sponsored resettlement was undertaken in the wäräda, the coming in to the region of other Ethiopians was not massive.\(^2\) The history of interaction between the Bärta of Béla-Šangul and the highland Ethiopians goes back as early, as the 17\(^{\text{th}}\) century. Sources indicate that in 1617 emperor Susynious Marched into the area to capture the region\(^3\) though they do not clearly indicate why the goal of the campaign failed.

The second significant interaction had also been made in the 18\(^{\text{th}}\) and 19\(^{\text{th}}\) centuries when the Amhara traders especially from Gojjam and the Oromo from the Southwest neighboring lands came to the area for trade activities.\(^4\) A relatively considerable interaction took place towards the end of the nineteenth century. The Śäwan army Marched from the Wällägga territories in 1898 to incorporate the region into the Ethiopian Empire.\(^5\) After this period, representatives of the central government and military forces like militias and police forces continued to come into the area to accomplish their own respective missions.\(^6\) (see also appendix XI).
Moreover, after the 1941 libration of the country from the Italian rule, the Asossa ṭärāda has been highly inhabited by both government employees and ordinary people from the highlands together with foreigners and the indigenous Bärta. This existence of the highlanders relatively in large number was attributed to the Italian invasion of the area. In the ṭärāda in general and in the Asossa town in particular various shop keepers and local drink vendors inhabited Asossa together with the Italians who gave the town its present shape. Beyond the town, the northern portion of the ṭärāda was also occupied by the imperial military and police forces. In the Ethio-Sudan frontier lands of the area like kurmuk and Gizän the highlanders were settled among the Bärta to keep peace and stability of the western border area of the empire.

The establishment of various political and social institutions of Asossa-Ḥēla-Šangul awraja in Asossa town also contributed a lot for the coming of the highlanders to the ṭärāda. Awraja governors, treasurers, municipal workers, police forces and militias came to the ṭärāda following the 1943 administrative restructuring of Asossa-Ḥēla-Šangul awraja under the Wällägga provincial administration. However, the existence of these highlanders except the police forces and the militias was mainly restricted to the town. This was because throughout the imperial period, almost all administrative activities in the ṭärāda and meketel ṭärāda levels were done by the local Bärta traditional rulers who knew the tradition and the psychology of the local people.
During the imperial period, although proposals and requests were made by the *awraja* governors of the area to settle the high land people in the forest and scarcely populated areas of Asossa, it was not implemented. Fore instance, in 1964 Qañazmać Hailé Bera who was the *awraja* governor of the area in the period wrote a letter both to the emperor and the ministry of defense requesting the settlement of ex-soldiers and politically dissatisfied people in the Bärta land.

However, the attention of the central government during this period was to undertake settlement programme in the southern and central parts of the empire rather than the Bēla-Śangul area. For instance, in 1950, and 1960, the imperial government recruited re-settlers from among the ex-soldiers, family heads whose children were many in number and farmers whose inhabitants were affected by drought and famine. These recruited settlers were settled in Awasa, Śawa, and Sodo in Sidamo where large size state farms had existed until the beginning of the 1970s, peasants from Wållo, Tegrai, Gojjam and Bāgémeder were redistributed to other southern and south western parts of the empire.

It seems that it was due to this reason that the local people of Asossa area were not significantly hostile to the imperial government and settling the highlanders in the region was not considered. In other parts of the country collectivization and villagization processes were undertaken aiming at keeping peace and political stability, creating smooth public relations, utilizing natural
resources properly and to satisfy the social and educational needs of the people easily.\textsuperscript{16}

However, following the accession to power of the military government, the most considerable and massive contact between the highlanders and the lowlander Bärta community of the \textit{wäräda} was observed. The resettlement programme which was sponsored by the government brought about deep and extensive contact and later social and cultural interactions between the Bärta and the Wällo peasantry.\textsuperscript{17}

According to oral testimony and secondary sources, there are different possible causes for the resettlement schemes implemented in different parts of the country generally and in Assoa \textit{wäräda} in particular. The first reason is associated with political goals intended by the \textit{Därg} government to be achieved. “... the provisional military government of Ethiopia viewed the Béla-Šangul region as economically very useful with its virgin land and its strategic importance to counter balance the Sudan government encroachment activities in Western part of Ethiopia and to secure the boarder land better than ever.”\textsuperscript{18}

As we have discussed in the previous chapter the \textit{Därg} government undertook the resettlement schemes particularly in 1978/79, the first phase of the project aiming at reducing the grass and forest coverage of the area and to recruit militias and police forces to overcome the problems of anti-government activities in the area.\textsuperscript{19} The political reason for the resettlement programme during this period was not attributed only to the Asossa \textit{wäräda}. Other similar
schemes were undertaken in Asossa in other portions of the country to attain Därg’s political goals. For instance, partially aiming at establishing a paramilitary defense force on the Ethio-Somali border lands, resettlements were made in the area.\textsuperscript{20}

The second factor which initiated the military government to put into practice the resettlement programme was related to environmental and demographic problems. The frequent occurrence of droughts and the growing population increment in the northern part of the country had resulted in subsequent loss of lives and sufferings.\textsuperscript{21} Famine and drought particularly in the early 1970s had significantly played a role in overthrowing the imperial government and the coming to power of the military government. As a result, the new government was highly convinced that “… resettlement would provide a lasting solution to the hard pressed peasantry and particularly to the population living in drought prone areas.”\textsuperscript{22}

In fact, the 1972 and 1973 starvation and death in Wällo and Tegray administrative regions might have initiated the Därg to propose the resettlement scheme in the country generally. The view that the under utilized lands which are suitable for agricultural activities and for human habitation cover large portion of the country was the corner stone of the resettlement projects in the country.\textsuperscript{23} However, this view could not be fully acceptable in the case of the Asossa project. Because, the area was neither suitable for human habitation nor for agricultural activities. There are two basic problems
which the area has been endowed with naturally. The first and the most significant one is related to weather and climate of the region and the subsequent diseases like malaria and deharea which are dangerous for the re-settlers and trypanosomiasis (Africans sleeping sickness) and render pest for their cattle.\textsuperscript{24}

Before the highland re-settlers came to the area, these diseases had negatively affected the lives of the indigenous Bärta people and their livestocks.\textsuperscript{25} Moreover, the problem was highly aggravated on the newly arrived settlers who had no experience to live in a very hot climate with rampant malaria. As a result significant number of settlers lost their lives and their family members. Due to the remoteness of the project site health centers established by the government were also not well equipped with medicines and well trained professionals.\textsuperscript{26}

In addition to the health problem, the second was the natural environmental problem which is related to the type of soil in the settled \textit{wārāda}. The soil type is almost similar throughout the \textit{wārāda}. Red clay type of soil which is suitable only for limited kinds of crops and cereals production was selected by the \textit{Dārg} government. Though virgin the agricultural land was not much fertile naturally. As a result, the peasantry could produce crops and cereals to satisfy their household food needs and it was not more than a decade since they settled in their respective areas.\textsuperscript{27}
The productivity of both the land and the peasantry decreased from year to year. Moreover, this problem was also exacerbated by water and soil erosion which took away the existing limited fertile soil. The topography of the area and the bad habit of the Wällo settlers in cutting and destroying the forests of the wäräda were responsible factors for the increasing occurrence of soil degradation in the Wäräda.28 Now a days as I have observed during my fieldwork, the settlers are changing their living and cultivation areas. Thousands of family heads are resettled in the previous Bambäsi meketel wäräda territories by eradicating the remaining forests of the region.29

The 1975 land reform which was applied based on the March 4, 1975 government proclamation was also one event to change the environmental and demographic history of the wäräda. Based on this proclamation which brought about an end to the existing land tenure system, a settlement authority had been established in 1976.30 Before the 1974 revolution of the country, the wäräda land was owned by the descendants of the previous balabats privately.31 However, the proclamation number 31 of March 1975 which allowed the nationalization of rural lands gave a chance for the government to transport the Wällo peasantry to the wäräda to attain its political and environmental related objectives.32

“….In 1979 the settlement authority and the Awash valley authority were integrated into RRC (Relief and Rehabilitation Committee.”33 RRC was responsible government organ in recruiting potential settlers and in making
follow ups after the project has been undertaken. In 1978 peasants in Wällo were recruited by members of the RRC at village level. Although secondary sources generalize that farmers were selected mainly based on their willingness, many of my informants who came into the wäräda during the first phase of the resettlement programme strongly oppose this idea and stress that they were captured by force before they were given any information or made preparations. As they refused to accept the proposed resentment, most peasants were tied up with ropes by the government until the recruitment process had been completed.

At the national level there were two types of resettlement schemes planned by the RRC. These were Low Cost Settlement Schemes (LCSS) and Special Settlement Schemes (SSS). The former was characterized by short distance transportation. 250 family heads were settled in a single unit on 625 hectares of land. Moreover the areas selected for those kinds of projects were free of animal diseases like trypanosomiasis because plowing using oxen was applied rather than using tractors.

The second type of resettlement scheme, the SSS in which the Asossa project was included was different from the above kind of scheme by its cost and distance of transportation, number of settler family heads per unit and by its mechanized plowing techniques. The Asossa wäräda project covered a large distance and high cost to transport the Wällo farmers to Asossa through the hot climatic area of Asaita in Afar in 1978. About 500 family heads were
assigned to settle over a single unit, plowing using tractors purchased by the socialist government of Ethiopia were utilized than plowing with oxen.\textsuperscript{40}

Three possible and interrelated ideas are forwarded by the 1978/79 re-settlers on why the military government took them to Asaita where they were stationed for more than five months rather than transporting them directly to the destination area. The first idea is related to the economic benefit they contributed to the government using their labor force. Staying in Asaita where there was large-scale state farm, the peasantry were engaged in collecting cotton and crops mainly sorghum for a long period of time. There, the labor force of the peasantry was highly exploited by the \textit{Därg} by forcing them to work day and night. Their rest time was only on Sunday in the afternoon, for only four hours a week.\textsuperscript{41}

The second group of informants, on the other hand, explains that the \textit{Därg} took them to the hot area aiming at creating environmental adaptation in Asaita which has hot climate relatively similar to their destination site. They further explain that in Asaita the peasantry was highly affected by diseases like malaria and Deharea due to the climatic nature of the area and luck of cooked foods which resulted from a very limited number of women in this phase of the campaign.\textsuperscript{42}

The third explanation, additionally, given by the re-settlers of the period was related to testing and modifying the working culture and religious tolerance of the recruits who had different backgrounds. Majority of the recruited farmers
who came from the southern Wällo like Dässié, Kombolća and Qallu were Muslims in their religion. On the other hand, the peasants who were recruited from the northern parts of Wällo like Ambasäl, Lasta, Yäju, Dälanta, and Boräna were mainly followers of Orthodox Christianity. There, the government was successful in creating public relations and more or less in avoiding religious rigidity among the peasantry. For instance, working on Saturday and Sunday for the Orthodox Christians and on Friday for the Muslims was not common. However, this tradition was not followed by the campaigners due to the forced labor work. As a result in Asossa, working on these and other holidays, was not new for the re-settler farmers. Although religiously their psychological well beings were not kept by the Därg, the peasants did not directly resist working on holy days.

In terms of strategy at a national level, there were two types of systems of resettling the peasants. The first one was conventional type which refers to settling the farmers on lands which were not utilized completely. The second kind of settling the farmers was an integrated type of settlement which was undertaken in sparsely populated or previously inhabited areas of the country. In Asossa wäräda the first type of resettlement was implemented on most parts of the project sites. In some cases, however, particularly in the surrounding of the town the second type of resettlement had been put into practice.
According to elders, the land up to six kilometers north of the town was formerly occupied and cultivated by the indigenous Bärta inhabitants. Later on, when the Wällo settlers came to the area, the local people moved into different parts of the *wäräda* like Agośa, Ura and Qäsemängāl. In fact, the military government allowed and advised the local inhabitants to live together with the highland peasants though they did not accept it. In different sites of the project there was a problem of integration with the local people. Misunderstandings arose among the newly arrived settlers and the local community.

In 1979 when the re-settlers arrived at Asossa they were stationed at Dabus camp, about five kilometers away from Asossa town. After a year, they were transported to a place called *Amba A’nd* (unit one) where their remnant dependent families and relatives had directly landed from Wällo.

In 1980 the government stationed about 6,000 family heads and 2,185 dependents in *Amba A’nd (Hoha)* farmers’ village. In *Hoha* farmers’ village the settlers were accommodated without arrangements made for them. The camp was highly infested and vulnerable to serious epidemic disease. Lack of sanitary provision and limited medical facilities also aggravated the problem. Afterwards, it was decided by the Rehabilitation Commission to distribute the villagizers to three areas in the *wäräda*. As a result the present day *Amba Two (Finča)* and *Amba Zätāń* (unit nine) were established.
Gradually, these farmers were redistributed to different sites in the waräda together with their dependent relatives and families. In 1982, sixteen farmer villages called Ambas or units were created based on the supervision given by RRC consisting of 500 family heads. About 1,250 hectares of land in the waräda was given to each settlement unit. Each resettlement unit was allowed 1,000 hectares, 200 hectares and 50 hectares of land for cultivation activities, for forestry and pastoral land and for constructing their homes in a village form respectively.52

The second phase of resettlement scheme in the waräda was conducted in 1984/85. 69,489 heads of house holds and 151,147 dependents were moved to Wällägga only from Wällo due to the famine and drought catastrophes. This number covers 68.8% of the Wällo settlers distributed to different parts of the country.53 out of these family heads around 20,000 house hold heads were settled in Asossa waräda. In this phase, the government moved a large number of family heads and independent members from drought and famine affected areas of northern and central parts of Ethiopia into various southern and southwestern parts of the country.54

Contrary to the 1978/79 settlers, locally known by the name the ‘Seventy one Zämačs’ to refer to the campaigners of the 1971 Ethiopian calendar, the ‘Seventy sevens’ those who came in 1977 Ethiopian calendar were directly transported from Wällo to Asossa. These re-settlers were greater in number
than the first phase re-settlers (the campaigners). Now a days they are locally called “Egerāňayā” (followers of the campaigners).

All oral informants unanimously agree that the cause for the coming to the wārāda of the Egerāňayā was directly associated to the 1984/85 famine and drought who claimed the lives of many people in Wállo. From November 17, 1984 to August 21, 1985 about 85,069 family heads and 167,673 dependents were moved to Wällāgga province from Wállo, Tegray and Gondār. Unfortunately, similar to the first phase all settlers moved to Asossa wārāda in this period were recruited also from Wállo only.

3.1.2 Consequences of the Resettlement Programme on the Environment and the Society

Among various resettlement projects implemented in Ethiopia, the Asossa project which was undertaken in wällāga was the largest scheme in its number of settlers and area of resettlement size. The project extended for about fourteen kilometers to the north and twenty two kilometers to the south of Asossa town. As a result, the social and environmental consequences which resulted from this project were directly proportional to the number of arrivals and the size of the area they utilized.

The most significant environmental change brought about by resettlement schemes in the wārāda was deforestation and the subsequent soil erosion and reduction in agricultural productivity. For instance, the number of settlers in 1978, the first group to arrive on the project site was only 143. However,
though they were few in number, they were able to clear about 263 hectares of forest land to produce maize, sorghum, pepper, téff and figure millet.\textsuperscript{60}

Beyond making the forestlands suitable for cultivation activities, the removing of forests were explicitly aimed at reducing spread of diseases in the project area. As quoted in the BA thesis of Lakech, the plan prepared by the settlement authority in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) shows that removing the woodland and increasing the number of re-settlers in the area were the main control measures taken by the military government to reduce the impact of trypansomiasis and renderpest.\textsuperscript{61}

Before the settlers came to the \textit{wareda} there were only goats and donkeys that have from survived animal diseases which were sever in killing livestock. Since the animal health service in the area was very poor, the indigenous local people were helplessly watching their animals dying. However, after the forest destruction plan was implemented by the \textit{Dārg} government, Cattle rearing has began in the area extensively due to the subsequent reduction of the spread of animal and human diseases. The impact of malaria which was rampant and claimed the lives of the local Bärta and the re-settlers was also reduced in the \textit{wärāda}.\textsuperscript{62}

After the resettlement project was undertaken, the highly forested land of the \textit{wärāda} dwindled as a result of the socialist production plan. The \textit{Dārg} used machineries to remove big trees and bushes beyond the labour force of the
newly arrived peasantry for agricultural and settlement lands. Accordingly, agricultural and settlement lands were extremely expanded in the *wäräda* and the ecological imbalance of the area had also increased.\(^{63}\)

After the resettlement programme ended influx of immigrants towards the study area was not stopped. Since the government did not allow the settlers to return to their homeland, most of them invited their remaining relatives who were in need of support to improve their lives. Therefore, the growing population in the *wäräda* increased the pressure on forests, grazing and wet lands.\(^{64}\)

The re-settlers’ low level of education could do nothing for the maintenance of the natural environment. They often used wood for fuel, construction and for other domestic consumption. Nevertheless, their consumption level was inhospitable to the ecological aspects of the area.\(^{65}\) It seems that the *Därg* government inculcated the tradition of removing big trees in the mind of the villagizers. Even after each peasant had got his/her respective farm land and land for housing compound, it was fashionable to cut trees including their roots and stems simply aiming at using only a single branch for outdoor and indoor tools and to feed their cattle its leaves. Moreover, this problem had also exacerbated the tradition of the Wällo re-settlers which allowed them to carry axe and move everywhere at any time.\(^{66}\)

After the *wäräda* land began to be used for cultivation extensively, the involvement of the indigenous Bärta people in sedentary farming system was
increased. Their existing tradition of selling forest products like charcoal and bamboo products in the town which grew more after the resettlement schemes also facilitated the deforestation of the area. Prior to the implementation of the government sponsored resettlement schemes and the influx of the immigrants in to the area, the Bärta were engaged in trade activities, traditional gold panning, hunting and gathering ways of life. Plowing using oxen was not significantly used by them (if not at all). 67 The manuscript by Bäkurä Šeyon clearly explains how the Bärta people undertook agricultural activities in different meketel wärädas under Asossa wäräda during the imperial period. According to this manuscript in Gumba, khomośa, Bambäsi and Šärkolé meketel wärädas, less than half of the Bärta were engaged in farming. Moreover, only few of these farmers used oxen to plough the land, whereas majority of them used Pallé to dig the land. 68 In Bäšer meketel wäräda cultivating land using oxen was not at all practiced by farmers of the area. 69 However, after the coming of the re-settlers, the Bärta people increasingly used oxen and were even able to sell products like maize, sorghum and millet in markets. 70

Their increasing participation in sedentary farming together with their existing traditions in burning of forests for hunting purpose particularly after the ero (annual hunting ceremony) was celebrated contributed to the destruction of forests in the area. 71 However, though the local people lived in their land since the 17th century, they did not completely destroy the natural forests. The re-settlers are more responsible for the ecological imbalance of the area than the
natives are. As compared to the lands covered by the natives, the area which
the settlers cultivated repeatedly remained completely without forests. The
decreasing productivity of the soil caused by water and wind erosion was also
intensified in the Amhara occupied lands than the Bärta occupied areas.72

During my fieldwork, the Amhara peasantry was producing not more than
three quintal of crops per family. It seems that this problem is the long lasting
effect of the problem of careless and exploitative utilization of land by the
peasantry. In fact, the Därg government had a problem in selecting sites for the
resettlement project. Informants explain that from the beginning the soil was
poor. Due to lack of natural nutrients in the soil even the virgin lands of the
wäräda were not productive unless the farmers used agricultural inputs like
urea and dup. These inputs were supplied by the socialist government.73

Aiming at coming up with solution for shortage of food products due to
environmental destruction, the settlers have now engaged in changing their
sites to the remaining forestlands along river courses.74 Therefore, the
concerned body should deal with this issue before they repeat their history in
distracting the ecology of the area by removing the remaining bamboo forest to
change into arable lands.

On the other hand, the coming and settling of the Amhara peasantry into the
area brought a change in the social history of the wäräda. Changes in
demographic, language and religious composition were the most observable
ones. After the resettlement programme was accomplished in 1985 and the 55
settlement village sites were established the number of population in Béla-
Šangul region in general and in Asossa wäräda in particular showed a radical
increment. For instance, after the resettlement, the population number of the
re-settlers reached 55,0075 out of the total population of the region numbering
208,155.75 Therefore, the region which was known as “a no man’s land” was
began to be known by a densely populated area.76

The other important thing which the Amhara re-settlers brought with them was
the Amharic language. Before the coming of the re-settlers the local Bärta
including the common people and the nobles were not able to speak the official
language. Al-ru澹ana and Arabic were the most widely spoken languages in the
area. Two out of the three main varieties of dialects of the Bärta people with
insignificant differentiation were extensively used to communicate in the
wäräda. These were the Mayu and the Fadash. The former is used by the
arabized Bärta of the Asossa area and the latter is used to communicate with
the Bambäsi area Bärta. The third dialect, the undu was used to communicate
in the Béla-Šangul and the Khomośa area Bärta together with Arabic.77
However after the resettlement programme, the interaction between the Bärta
people and the settlers in various social and civil institutions like markets,
schools, mosques and offices helped them to be fluent in the Amharic
language.78

The religious composition of the wäräda was also changed due to the settlers
arrived to the wäräda. Although the Bärta throughout their history were
known for their own traditions and religion, the villagization process of the military government had changed the composition of the religion in the area. Before the schemes were practiced more than 90% of the population were followers of Islam. However, since more than 50% of the Wällo settlers and the Oromo town dwellers in the town were Orthodox Christians, the percentage of Islamic followers in the wäräda has been reduced. As a result, recently the Muslims in the district were only around 63% of the population.

The government sponsored resettlement schemes also had impact on the lives of the villagizers. The programme brought re-settlers from highlands to a completely different location in the lowlands. Their production system by clearing big trees and their survival in the new area demanded stressful adaptation to the hot climate and diseases. Together with insufficient medical facilities, the disease had claimed many lives before they adapted the climate.

The resettlement site has only one harvest season a year. The rainfall in the area was abundant and heavy with frequent thunder, hailstorms and wind. On the other hand, the heat of the dry season is also very strong resulting in common wild bush fire that frequently destroyed crops. Such wild fires were not known in the home of the settlers land. The hot climate, new crops and cropping seasons had been changed and brought tremendous adverse effects on the adaptive adjustments of highland peasants.

The forced resettlement scheme of the first phase has also put its own psychological problem on the settlers. Transporting them forcefully using the
government militias caused dispersement and dismantling of social organizations. Personal relations and kinship groups became scattered as well. Most of the recruits of the 1978/79 were also forced to be transported leaving their farmlands, houses, livestock and other properties.\textsuperscript{83}

Like the new arrival re-settlers the indigenous local Bärta people in the \textit{wäräda} were also affected by the resettlement schemes of the military government. Firstly, they moved into new sites abandoning their inhabitants. Many Bärta families who were living around Asossa town, for instance, left their farm lands with their plants like mango trees and moved to different areas beyond the resettlement Camps. Informants including the re-settlers and the Bärta themselves assure that properties and houses of the previous Bärta inhabitants in the project sites were burnt in the process of clearing the forest lands. They left their inhabitants after they lost their properties without any compensation given from the government.\textsuperscript{84}

On the other hand, though not fully successful the \textit{Därg} government began to implement the viillagization schemes on the local Bärta. For instance as part of the resettlement programme of the period the Bärta were gathered together by the government to create Bärta villages. In 1984/85 two hundred Bärta family heads were gathered in \textit{Ura} from the surrounding areas and around three hundred Bärta families were taken from the Bela-shanguhl \textit{Wäräda}.\textsuperscript{85}

Secondly, the increasing expansion of sedentary agricultural ways of life among the Bärta after the coming of the settlers was very crucial in reducing
the high labor exploitation of the Bärta women. In their history, most of their income highly depended on panning gold in a traditional way. Women spent hours panning heaps of gravel for an insignificant amount of gold. During dry season, when the rivers and streams dry out and the storage of water gets critical, alluvial gold mining could be unrewarding. They were profitable only during the rainy season and were engaged mainly on the laborious and time-consuming job. However, they gradually began to participate in the expanded sedentary farming which is simpler than the exploitative traditional local gold panning.  

3.3. Infrastructural and Social Service Developments in the Wäräda

Although relatively significant changes were witnessed after the revolution, development of infrastructure which could provide public and private services for the community was sluggish in Asossa awraja generally and Asossa wäräda particularly. The first reason for the low level development of public institutions was that though the annual budget allocated by the imperial government was greater than the annual tax collected from the region, it was not significant enough to construct institutions to serve the society. Moreover, the budget allocated for the wäräda was allowed mainly to pay government employees and for perdiem and transportation purposes. Secondly, the low level income of the inhabitants of the region was also responsible for the existence of weak infrastructural and social service developments. Neither
individually nor in group the inhabitants were capable enough to build social institutions which could provide social service for the people.\textsuperscript{89}

Expansion of educational institutions and services in the \textit{wärāda} remained insignificant particularly before the 1974 Ethiopian revolution and the subsequent resettlement programme.\textsuperscript{90} According to archival materials, in the history of Bélas-Sangul and Asossa \textit{wärādas} construction of educational institutions only began in 1945. In this year two primary schools in Béggì and Asossa town were established.\textsuperscript{91} In 1947 the Imperial government in collaboration with the Orthodox churches allocated budget for the salary of teachers and for other school workers and modern education began to be delivered in Asossa. For instance four thousand birr from the government and ten thousand birr from the churches were allocated for nine schools in the Asossa awraja.\textsuperscript{92}

In this particular year beyond the Asossa primary school which was established in Asossa town, three primary schools namely Bambäsi Primary School and Täkur Primary School in Bambäsi \textit{meketel wärāda} and Dull Primary School in Khomoşa \textit{meketel wärāda} were established. These schools were administered directly by the respective \textit{wärāda} governments.\textsuperscript{93} As administrator of the schools, the \textit{wärāda} governors were responsible to the Wällägga provincial government. The Orthodox Church had also played a big role in interfering in the internal and external affairs of the schools.\textsuperscript{94} However, in 1960 the schools come under the direct control of the Ministry of Education
due to the expansion of the number of students and teachers and the budget needed for them. 95

In 1970, the Asossa First Cycle School was established by the Ministry of Education. In the same year, office of schools was organized to facilitate educational issues in the *awraja* and *wārādas*. This office was initially located in the compound of Asossa Primary School. After two years however, the office changed its location due to the expansion of students and shortage of classroom.96

In spite of problems in the area related to shortage of classrooms and administrative buildings, the imperial government did not give emphasis to construct a separate building for the office of schools. Renting private house with 30 birr per month was the solution made by the government. Not only for education purpose but also for administrative office, the imperial government did not built a single office in Asossa. Old offices built by the Italians during their invasion of the area were used until 1974.97 (see also appendix VIII). Experienced Teachers were brought from Näqāmté and Béggī to administer and facilitate the works of the office in a modern way.98 Beyond the shortage of buildings for offices and classrooms, absence of senior secondary school in the area was the main problem for students. Students who completed their junior schools were forced to go to Näqāmté and Dambi Dollo. 99

Establishing senior secondary school in the *awraja* in general and in the *wārāda* in particular and constructing of extra classrooms in the previously
established schools was observed after the 1974 revolution. In 1980 the Asossa Senior Secondary School was opened in Asossa town.\textsuperscript{100} Moreover, many primary schools were built in many villages. In addition to this, relatively a number of classrooms in different junior and primary schools were constructed.\textsuperscript{101}

Informants underscore that the military government emphasized the expansion of schools in the region than the imperial government for different factors. Firstly, the number of students in the \textit{wäräda} mainly after the resettlement scheme was accomplished had increased.\textsuperscript{102} Secondly, the government was interested to expand socialist ideology among the youngsters. As we have discussed earlier, schools were the centers where political propagandas were diffused. In this period, the \textit{Därg} government was also significantly successful in eradicating illiteracy among the peasantry and the town dwellers by expanding basic education for adults.\textsuperscript{103}

Even though schools were constructed and modern education was delivered in the \textit{wäräda} since the imperial government, the schools were mainly dominated by children of the re-settlers and other town dwellers. The Bärta children were far from modern education for various reasons. The demographic distribution of the indigenous people was one of the problems which deterred them to bring their children to the schools. They were sparsely settled and were far from the town where modern schools were opened.\textsuperscript{104} Moreover, the \textit{Därg} gave more attention only to the newly arrived villagers who lived in dense settlements. 105
The existing political administrative tradition in the region particularly during the imperial period was also responsible in making the Bärta children to be far from modern education. Wäräda and meketel wäräda governors, nobles, and Ĉeqaśums were selected to rule over their respective areas without considering their modern education background. Therefore, to get the prestigious political position, their children were eager to get acceptance from the community rather than attending their modern school. Blood ties and ability to read and write Arabic language were enough to be potential political appointee. 106

The hot climate of the region and the existence of disease mainly malaria and headache were also the problems of their children to attend modern education by moving to the few existing schools. Moreover, textbooks distributed in the wäräda schools were published in Amharic. Therefore, shortage of using the official language as instructional media was their problem to attend their education heartfully.107 Moreover, sending their children to school to be educated in Amharic under the Christian teachers in Ethiopian schools was believed by the Bärta to undermine their religious faith. As a result, even those who could afford to educate their children especially the karros sent their children to schools in the Sudan. For instance, in 1966 out of 200 students in Asossa schools only 20 were children of the natives.108 Other children of the Bärta were engaged in looking after the cattle.109

As far as development of health institutions for both human and animals in the wäräda are concerned, there was relatively better improvement and expansion
after the 1974 revolution than during the imperial government. It was only during the military government that more health centers were established in the town as well as in the rural areas of the wäräda. The newly established health centers were also not proportional to the number and distribution of the population. During the imperial government only a single health center in the town of Asossa was established in the 1950s. The relative development of health centers was also associated with the 1970s and 1980s resettlement programmes. For instance, the single hospital situated in the wäräda to serve the whole community in the region was established in the early 1970s aiming at treating the patients among the newly arrived re-settlers. Following the establishment of the hospital, clinics were constructed in different farmer villages.

Similar to educational facilities, health centers in the Wäräda were limited to the town and resettlement sites. Throughout the imperial and the Därg period the native Bärta remained far from modern health services. Though their inhabitant was known for malaria and yellow fever which claimed the lives of the natives, the central government did not pay attention to solve this social problem. In addition to human disease, trypanosomiasis which forced the natives to remain without livestock did not get the attention of the central government. In fact, Malaria Eradicating Center and Veterinary Centers were established in the 1950s and 1960s respectively. However, due to lack of trained professionals and equipments these institutions could not solve the problem.
The other problem which was related to the hospital and health centers found in the town and rural areas was the imbalance between the number of patients and the capacity of these health institutions. Lack of equipments and shortage of bed rooms forced the patients to remain for a long period without treatment. Due to the remoteness of the area, health professionals did not volunteer to serve the community for a long period by resisting the climatic hardship. Moreover, all clinics found among the re-settlers were robbed and completely destroyed during the political instability which took place in the area among the political factions towards the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. ¹¹⁶

In terms of transportation and communication services development, it was only during the Italian period that infrastructures were significantly built generally in the awraja and particularly in the wäräda of Asossa. Only limited works in road and bridge rehabilitations were done by the imperial period after the 1941 liberation. Throughout the imperial and the Dārg regime, transportation using vehicles was possible only during the dry reason. The roads were neither asphalted nor gravealed.¹¹⁷

Under Asossa awraja, Asossa wäräda in which the capital of the awraja was found was the most advantageous in connecting with other parts of Ethiopia and the Sudan. There were four main dry weather roads spreading out in four main directions from Asossa wäräda. The first and the most important road to
connect the *wărāda* with Addis Ababa through Bambāsi and Mändi was used by big trucks and small cars like land rovers frequently.\textsuperscript{118}

The second route which connected the *Wărāda* with the Sudan via Khomoşa and Gizān and the third route that went to the Sudan through khomoşa and kurmuk were the main outlets to export coffee to the Sudan and import trade items mainly ‘*Abujad*’ clothes and cooking materials to Asossa. These two routes were frequented by big trucks and pack animals. The fourth road line which goes from Asossa to Bérggi *wărāda* crossing Bambāsi was predominantly frequented by the local traders who transported food crops and coffee from Bérggi *wărāda* using mainly donkeys and rarely trucks.\textsuperscript{119}

Throughout the imperial period no single new road was constructed. However, the *auraja*, *wărāda* and *meketel wărāda* governors of the area played significant roles in rehabilitating the roads which were damaged by the Italians during their departure in 1941 from the region. For instance the Asossa-Bambassi - Mendi road which was a short cut to connect the area with Addis Ababa was not in a way to provide service for the society due to the destruction of the Dabus river bridge by the Italians. The whole region beyond the river was isolated from the rest of Ethiopia after the liberation. In solving this problem the then Asossa *wărāda* governor, Aşafi Khojālé in collaboration with other *wărāda* and *meketel wărāda* governors and the *auraja* governor, Qāñazmać Hailé Birra actively participated in collecting money in cash from the community. Following the local community contribution, the central
government gave additional money and the bridge was rebuilt in 1956 \(^{120}\) (see Appendix IX and X).

Air transportation service, in addition to surface transportation, was started during the Italian period and continued to provide service to the people of Asossa. However, though there was a three-day flight per week using two directions from Addis Ababa to Asossa, there were only a few passengers to use the service mainly from Asossa to Béggi and *vice versa*. The first flight from Addis Ababa to Asossa was Via Jimma, Goré, Dämbo Dollo and Béggi and returned through the same direction. The second line from Addis Ababa was through Nääqämte, Nädjo, Mändi and Béggi.\(^{121}\) Due to the low level economic capacity of the people of Asossa and Béla-Śangul *wärädas* and their interest to move to the Sudan than other parts of Ethiopia,\(^{122}\) the air planes were often coming empty from Béggi to Asossa and returning empty from Asossa to Béggi. \(^{123}\)

Telegram and postal communication services which began during the Italians invasions in the second half of the 1930 remained without significant improvement and expansion in the *wäräda*. In both the imperial and the Därg periods a daily telegram service and three days per week postal services were provided only for the people of the town.\(^{124}\) During both regimes the rural and the indigenous people of the *wäräda* in particular and the *awraja* in general were not able to get communication services.\(^{125}\)
In terms of economic activity and infrastructural development distribution in the *wäräda*, Gumba *meketel wäräda* was advantageous than other *meketel wärädas*. This was because, Asossa town which was the center of the *wäräda* and the *auraja* was situated there and the majority of the farmer villages of the re-settlers were found in it. Schools, health centers, roads and other infrastructures were predominantly found in Gumba *meketel wäräda*.\(^{126}\) although both the imperial and the *Därg* governments did not give emphasis to overcome water shortage in the *wäräda*, Gumba was the most advantageous in its water resources than other sub provinces. For instance, throughout their history the rural Bärta people in the Ethio-Sudan borderlands were affected by shortage of water. They were importing drinking water from the Sudan.\(^{127}\) (See also appendix XI).
Conclusion

Asossa *wäräda* was the main political, socio-economic and cultural center of the people of Béla-Sangul. Prior to the advent of the Bärta in the region in the 17th century, the area was inhabited by the Goma people. After the arrival and expansion of the Bärta in Asossa proper, the region had been affected by different foreign invasions. Its frontier geographic location between the Sudan and Ethiopia and its environs valuable resources were the reasons for the invasion of the area by foreigners. Beginning from the 17th century to the last decade of the 19th century the area became the target of the Funji of Sennar, the Turco-Egyptians and the Mahdists. Towards the end of the 1890s, the Śäwa army also made campaign to get the submission of different Sheikhs who ruled over the region among whom Sheikh Khojälé, the Asossa proper ruler was the known. In 1898, the region was incorporated to Menilek’s Empire. The Asossa proper had been the center of trade activities and trade routes for more than three centuries. This trade activity, however, was declined towards the end of the first half of the 20th century because of the strict trade control of the imperial government by establishing custom duty office and various Kéllas. These and other government institutions were organized to limit the import-export items between the Sudan and Ethiopia and to collect tax and custom from traders. However, these institutions were dissolved during the Italian period and trade activity with the Sudan was flourished.
The Asossa Sheihkdom had lost its semi-autonomous status in 1943 when the whole Béla-Šangul region was reorganized based on 1942 national administrative decree. In the same year the Asossa ṭäräda was formed. Though Asossa lost its semi-autonomous status, descendants of the former Sheikhs and nobles who ruled over the area were appointed by the imperial government. Through out the imperial regime all administrative units under the ṭäräda like the ṭäräda, the five weketel ṭärädas, nobles and karros were held by the sons of the pre-1941 libration sheikhs. There fore in the ṭäräda the imperial government applied the indirect and self-government system.

The indirect and self-administrative system after the 1974 revolution, however, was completely changed in to direct and oppressive type of administration. The direct control of the local administrative units by the Dārg appointees brought about an end to the political positions of the indigenous rulers which was declining beginning from the incorporation of the region in to the Empire towards the end of 1890s. The direct and oppressive system of the post 1974 government highly initiated members of the indigenous people to organize in to anti-government group, Fana which struggled and played a lot for the collapse of the Military government in 1991. The formation of the Fana was also finally resulted into the distraction of properties and loss of life which highly affected both the rural and the town people of the ṭäräda.

In terms of social interaction, traders, soldiers and government employees were the only Ethiopian highlanders to arrive in to the ṭäräda before the 1970s and
1980s government sponsored resettlement schemes. However, during the Dārg regime thousands of Wållo peasants with their families arrived in the wäräda for different reasons. The first reason was related to the political goal of the military government. The Dārg transported and settled the Wållo peasantry in 1978/9 in the wäräda by separated them from their willingness. The first goal of this phase of resettlement in the wäräda was to recruit local militia and police force to keep the peace and stability of the frontier area which was dominated by anti-Dārg groups.

The second reason for the second phase of resettlement scheme in 1984/85 was related to drought and famine occurred in Wållo. Contrary to the first phase massive number of re-settlers came in to the wäräda based on their willingness. The ethnic interaction created between the Wållo villagizers and the indigenous Bärta followed by various consequences. Some of these were ecological imbalance due to deforestation and repeated plowing, change in demographic, religious, ethnic and language compositions and transformation of way of life between the two ethnic groups.

Social services and infrastructural development in the wäräda remained low during both regimes. In fact, education and health services which were started after the libration witnessed relative expansion during the military period. Public services got emphasis neither by the imperial nor by the military government. All main surface roads and air transport infrastructures were built by the Italians during their occupations.
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17 Debela, p.4; Ateib, Sheikh, p.43.


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3 Ibnformants: Abbas and Aša.

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5 Informants: Ibrahim, Abdālmunēm Hamis and Abdāla Hamas.

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9 Informants: Abdulfatah Abdulkarim, Yassin Abdilrazaq and Aša..

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6Informants: Amina and Abbas; (see Also Appendix XI).

7Informants: Ahmād Kamid and Abbas

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<td>1</td>
<td>Abära Hailu</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Asossa, March, 2011</td>
<td>He had been peasant group leader in <em>Amba</em> Eight peasant village. He is a very good oral informant on the historical development of the <em>wäräda</em> during the military period.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Abbäbäć Läma</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Asossa, December, 2010</td>
<td>She is one of the 1978/79 re-settlers. She knows about the process of recruiting, transporting and setting the Wällo peasantry. Her knowledge on the expansion of social services in the rural parts of the <em>wäräda</em> is quite important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Abbas Ašafi</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>Asossa, December 2010</td>
<td>He had been the governor of the <em>wäräda</em> from 1972-1974. He is a remarkable oral historian on the political and infrastructural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informant Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Location, Date</td>
<td>Remarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Abdāla Hamas</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>Khomośa, December 2010</td>
<td>He had been Čeqašum in Khomośa meketel wäräda. He has good memory on the administrative and social history of Asossa wäräda and Khomośa meketel wäräda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Abdāla Yusuf</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Asossa, March, 2011</td>
<td>He is the member of the 1984/85 re-settlers. He is a remarkable informant on the course and consequence of the resettlement schemes in the Asossa wäräda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Abdālmuném Hassān</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Khomośa, December 2010</td>
<td>He had been Čeqašum during the imperial period. He is a remarkable informant on the general history of the region particularly on the administrative and social history of the wäräda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Abdu Hassān</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Asossa, March 2011</td>
<td>He was one of the 1984 recruits for resettlement from southern Wällo. He has a very good knowledge on the interest of the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A resettler to move in to Asossa due to the famine in Wällo.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Abdulfatah Abdulkärim</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Khomoša,</td>
<td>March, 2011</td>
<td>He has lived in Gumba, Bášir and Bambäsi meketel wärädas for a long period of time. His knowledge on administrative, social service and infrastructural development in the wäräda is very good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Abdulrahim Mohamäd</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Asossa,</td>
<td>December, 2010</td>
<td>He was one of the founding members of the Fana anti-military government group. His knowledge on the collapse of the Därg and frictions among political groups in Asossa area is important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Abtaw Asfaw</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Asossa,</td>
<td>December 2010</td>
<td>He was one of the resettlement recruits in 1978. He has a good memory on the forceful transportation of the peasantry to Asossa by the military government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Adana Alamu</td>
<td></td>
<td>Asossa,</td>
<td></td>
<td>He had been unit manager in                                                                nígí.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Amba 14 peasant village. His ability in comparing and contrasting the forest coverage and soil fertility of the *wārāda* before and after the arrival of the villagers is quite important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>December, 2010</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Addisu yedāg</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Asossa, December 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>He lived with the Wällo resettlers in Asossa <em>wārāda</em> since 1978. He is a very good informant on the social and ecological impact of the coming in to the <em>wārāda</em> of the resettlers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Agāritu Awakaw</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Asossa, March 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>She was one of the recruited settlers in Lasta area. She has a good memory on the forceful labor exploitation of the <em>Dārg</em> in Asaita in 1978.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Ahmād Kādir</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Bambāsi, March, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>An informant with knowledge on the history of the region particularly on the environmental degradation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Location</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Ahmād Khalifa</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>Asossa,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Ali Yassin</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Asossa,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Almāhadi Abdālmunēm</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>Asossa,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Location</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Al-ṣaqr Aman</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>Kurmuk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Amarā Assāfa</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Amina Mustāfa</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>Kurmuk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Aṣa Ibrahimm</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>Kurmuk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
informant on the self-governance system of the *wäräda*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Informant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Assadeq Abbas</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Asossa, December, 2010</td>
<td>He is a grandson of Aśafī Kojālè and the son of Abbas Aśafi. He has quite important oral information on the political situation of the <em>wäräda</em> during the governorship of his grandfather and his father.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Ayaléw Yemär</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Assoa, March, 2011</td>
<td>He had been a peasant group leader in <em>Amba</em> Nine. He has a very good knowledge on the social and environmental consequences of the resettlement schemes in Asossa.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Baguja Mahmud</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>Bambāsi, March, 2010</td>
<td>He lived in the borderland between Bambāsi and Béggī for more than 60 years. He has very good information on the political history of the area.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Bāšer Sāid</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Asossa</td>
<td>He was student during the Dārg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Details</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Bâyänä Akalu</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Bambäsi, March, 2011</td>
<td>December, 2010</td>
<td>He had been peasant group leader in Bambäsi 47 village and has remarkable information on the increasing expansion of ecological imbalance and public services in the wäräda after the resettlement programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Bayuš Käbbädä</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Asossa, December, 2010</td>
<td></td>
<td>She was one of women peasant resettlers transported to the area in 1978/79. Her knowledge on the shortage of women to cook food in Asaita and the socio-environmental consequences of their arrival in the wäräda is quite important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Dásalān Sisay</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Asossa, December 2010</td>
<td></td>
<td>He has conducted historical research in the Béla-Šangul region.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in 1995. He gained important historical information particularly on the imperial period. He lived in Asossa since the 1978 resettlement scheme. Therefore, he is remarkable informant on the socio-environmental impacts of the resettlement programme.

<p>| 29 | Fatiha Ahmäd | 55 | Asossa March, 2011 | Her oral information on the origins and interaction of groups among the Bärta the administrative and socio-cultural history of the region is very important. |
| 30 | Faţo Al-Hassân | 68 | Khomośa, December 2010 | She is the wife of Abbas Ali who was <em>balabat</em> in Khomośa <em>Meketel wărāda</em>. She has participated in traditional gold panning activity during the military period. Therefore, she is very knowledgeable informant on the political and economic history of |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Date of Interview</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Gërmay Čäkolä</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Asossa, March 2011</td>
<td>His knowledge on the recruitment, transportation and settling of the 1978/79 Asossa re-settlers is quite good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Gëtachäw Abatä</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Asossa, March 2011</td>
<td>He had been a chairperson of Fineča peasant association during the Därg period. His knowledge on the administrative history of the wäräda during the Därg period is quite good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Hassän Abägaz</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Bambäsi, March, 2011</td>
<td>He has a very good memory on the forceful resettlement scheme in 1978/79. He was among the recruits who tied up their hands due to their refusal to move to Asossa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Ibrahim Seraji</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Asossa, December 2010</td>
<td>He was one of the founding members of the Fana anti-military government group and lived for more than 60 years in the Bärta people in the wäräda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Date</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Ideris Kämal</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>Bambäsi, March, 2010</td>
<td>He lived in Bambäsi town for more than 60 years. He is a very good oral informant on the history of the Asossa <em>wäräda</em> and Bambäsi <em>meketel wäräda</em> during the imperial and the <em>Dārg</em> period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Ismaël Abdälrahim</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>Bambäsi, December, 2010</td>
<td>He has very important oral information on the administrative system and way of taxation during the imperial region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Ismaël Yusuf</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Asossa, December, 2010</td>
<td>He was one of the founding members of the <em>Fana</em> anti-military group. He has important memory on the collapse of the <em>Dārg</em> and the conflict among political factions in the Asossa area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Kädeja Musa</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Kurmuk, December 2010</td>
<td>She was active participant in the traditional gold panning activity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
She also knows the activities of the *Fana* group in various villages of the *wäräda*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Kamid Säid</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Asossa, December 2010</td>
<td>A very knowledgeable oral historian on the activities of anti-<em>Därg</em> groups and the social developments in the <em>wäräda</em> particularly during the Military regime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Kasaw Biša</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Bambäsi, March, 2010</td>
<td>He was one of the 1978/79 resettlers in Asossa. He has a good memory on the gradual distribution of the peasants into different units and on the socio-ecological effects of the resettlement programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Mahmud hassän</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Asossa, March, 2010</td>
<td>He is the son of Hassän Aman who was one of the <em>balabats</em> in Bäsër <em>meketel wäräda</em>. His information on the political and social developments of the area is very crucial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Place, Date</td>
<td>Details</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Mahmud Hassän</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Asossa, March 2011</td>
<td>He has inhabited Bambäsi <em>meketel wäräda</em> since 1940s. He knows well about the administrative and socio-economic history of the <em>wäräda</em> and the <em>meketel wärädas</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Mäkätä Däräsä</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Asossa, March 2011</td>
<td>He had been peasant group leader in <em>Amba</em> two during the Därg period. He is a very good informant on the effect of the resettlement on the indigenous Bärta surrounding Asossa town and on the environmental impacts of the schemes in the <em>wäräda</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Mäku Fäyesa</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Asossa, March 2011</td>
<td>He has lived in the <em>wäräda</em> for more than 40 years serving as government employee. He is a remarkable informant on the infrastructural developments in the <em>wäräda</em> and the problems of the Bärta children to join modern school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Description</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Mārima Abdu</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Asossa, March 2011</td>
<td>She has good information on the interest of the people during the second phase of Asossa resettlement scheme. She has a good memory on the 1984 Wällo famine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Mulat Mäkonän</td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
<td>A very knowledgeable informant on the impact of the resettlement scheme in Asossa ወርארבע. He has lived with the peasant settlers in Asossa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Nägasi Abära</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Bambäsi, December, 2011</td>
<td>He lived in Gumba and Bambäsi meketel ወርادات since his childhood. His knowledge on the environmental, political and socio-economic history of the ወርąda is very important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Näjat Kämäl</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Kurmuk, March, 2011</td>
<td>She is one of womern Bärta oral historians whose explanation and knowledge on the administrative history of the ወርąda during the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
imperial period is important.

<p>| | | | |</p>
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<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Ordoa Kämäl</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Bambäsi, December, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>He was one of the nobles in Bambäsi meketel wäräda. He knows about the amount of salary paid for the governors of meketel wärädas during the imperial period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Säid Ahmádo</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Bambäsi, March, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>He has very crucial information on the political and tax collection system of the imperial period in Asossa wäräda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Säid Amanu</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>Asossa, March 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>He was one of the 1984 recruits of resettlement from southern Wällo. He has a good memory on the interest of the settlers to transport in to Asossa due to the 1984 famine in Wällo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Sisay Kasäw</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Asossa, December, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>His knowledge on the recruitment, transportation and resettlement processes of the Asossa Schemes is quite good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Location</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Taddäsä Ayäle</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Asossa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Taddässä Kabbädä</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Asossa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Tafäsä Fufa</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Asossa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Location, Year</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Täsäma Ali</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Asossa, December, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Tiruyä Yemär</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Asossa, March 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Yassin Abdirazaq</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Khomośa, March 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Yassin Mahmud</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Bambāsi, March 2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
His knowledge on the willingness of the peasantry to come in to Asossa and the subsequent impacts of the resettlement in Asossa area is quite good.