

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY**

**A History of Wänbära Wäraḍa, 1941-1991**

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**A History of Wänbära Wäraḍa, 1941-1991**

**By**

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## Key to the Transliteration System

I. The seven sounds of the Ethiopian alphabets are represented as follows:

1 <sup>st</sup>	በ=Bä
2 <sup>nd</sup>	ቡ=Bu
3 <sup>rd</sup>	ቢ=Bi
4 <sup>th</sup>	ባ=Ba
5 <sup>th</sup>	ቤ=Bé
6 <sup>th</sup>	ብ=Be
7 <sup>th</sup>	ቦ=Bo

II. Palatalized sounds are represented as follows:

ሸ=Š
ቸ=Ča
ኸ=nä
ጸ=J

II Glottalized Sounds are represented as follows:

ጠ=tä
ቀ=q
ጨ=Ĉä

III. Germination sounds should always be indicated by doubling:

በቀለ=Bäqqälä
ታደሠ=Tädässä
ከበደ=Käbbäda

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## **Abbreviations**

<b>AMC</b>	Agricultural Market Cooperatives
<b>BA</b>	Bachelor of Arts
<b>CSA</b>	Central Statistical Agency
<b>DMUAC</b>	Däbrä Marqos University Archival Centre
<b>EC</b>	Ethiopian Calendar
<b>EPLF</b>	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
<b>EPRDF</b>	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Party
<b>EPRP</b>	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party
<b>MA</b>	Master of Arts
<b>PA</b>	Peasant Association
<b>PHD</b>	Doctor of Philosophy Degree
<b>SC</b>	Service cooperative
<b>SIDA</b>	Swedish International Development Agency
<b>TPLF</b>	Tigrayan People's Liberation Front
<b>WWARDO</b>	Wänbära <i>Wäräda</i> Agricultural and Rural Development Organization

## Acknowledgment

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I would also like to forward my heartfelt thanks to all my informants for their cooperation and willingness to provide me what they knew about the *Wäräda* during the time of my field work.

I would also like to thank the library workers of Kennedy, Däbrä Markos University Archival centre and Institute of Ethiopian Studies for their support they gave me to get related sources that enabled me to reconstruct the history of Wänbära.

## ***Abstract***

*The main aim of this thesis is reconstruct the administrative and socio-economic history of Wänbära Wäräda from 1941-1991. The study covers the time from the liberation of Ethiopia and the restoration of Emperor Hailä Selasié I to power in 1941 until the removal of the Därg government in 1991, in which the inhabitants of the Wäräda like the other countryside peoples of Bénišangul Gumuz region observed important socio-economic and political developments. It begins with historical study of the district by revealing different developments in the Wäräda before the Italian occupation. The restoration of the Imperial administration and the reforms that took place by the Imperial government in various fields, in connection with the administration and land related issues and the response of the peoples of the Wäräda to these changes will be the main area of concern. Besides this, the study points out taxation issues and views on security problems in the district. Moreover, the study attempted to assess changes and developments that the Wäräda had gone through during the military government. The Därg was interested to consolidate its power by taking different measures which had their own merits and demerits on the political and socio-economic conditions for the inhabitants of Wänbära Wäräda. Besides this, the study has tried to address the socio-economic situation of the district in which the area has not made much progress.*

## Preface

This thesis attempts to reconstruct a history of Wänbära *Wäräda* from the liberation of Ethiopia from the Italians in 1941 to the downfall of *Därg* regime in 1991. The thesis consists of four chapters. The first chapter deals with the geographical and historical background of the *Wäräda*. This chapter tries to look at the geographical features as well as the people of the district. It also tries to assess the political and socio-economic situations of the *Wäräda* prior to the liberation period. Conducting assessment of these issues could enable us to know the historical development of the district for the period prior to 1941.

The second chapter emphasizes on the administrative and land tenure system in the *Wäräda*. It briefly describes taxation, security problem, maladministration and corruption which were visible in the study area from 1941 to 1974. Chapter III attempts to describe the main reforms carried out after 1974. It also states different platforms of the military government, for instance, land reforms, peasant association, cooperatives and villagization that were implemented in the *Wäräda*. The last chapter concentrates on the description of the major issues of the socio-economic developments in the *Wäräda*. It tries to address problems of socio-economic development of the inhabitants of the *Wäräda*.

In carrying out the study, oral sources as well as written materials were used. Majority of archival materials that could support the study had been destroyed due to the turmoil of 1989-1991. So the study as a result, depended largely on oral sources which were gathered from the district from December 2015 to February 2016. To write this thesis efforts have been made in order to support the oral information with written literature. Moreover, to avoid problems in the use of oral sources significant measures have been taken, in selecting knowledgeable

informants, use of collected data, evaluating and checking them with the existing literature was the necessary step that were carried out.

Finally, the inclusive study of the history of Wänbära *Wäräda* has not still taken place. The works by a few geographers and historians reveal lack of comprehensiveness in scope. Therefore, the aim of this study is to fill the prevailing gap by reconstructing the political, social and economic history of the *Wäräda*. Despite this fact, the work is far from being complete but, I hope that it can motivate and provide hints for other historians who may be interested to conduct further research on the *Wäräda*.

# CHAPTER I

## General Background of Wänbära *Wäräda*

### Geographical Setting

Wänbära *Wäräda* is found in Bénišangul Gumuz regional state. It is one of the seven *Wärädas* in Mätäkäl zone, situated at a distance of 665 kilometers northwest of Addis Ababa, 564 kilometers west of Assosa-the capital of the regional state, and 190 kilometers from Gelgäl-Bälläs, the administrative capital of Mätäkäl Zone.<sup>1</sup> With its relative location, it is bounded by Guba and Dangur *Wäräda* in the north, in the south by Yaso and Agalo Mité, in the east by Bullän *Wäräda* and in the west by Sirbä Abbay *Wäräda*. The administrative center of the *Wäräda* is Däbrä Zäyt town. Based on figures published by the Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia in 2007, the territorial extension of Wänbära *Wäräda* was estimated to be 786.425 square kilometers. As a result, it is one of the largest *Wäräda* in Mätäkäl Zone.<sup>2</sup>

The *Wäräda* in general is composed of 32 *qäbälés*, out of which 30 are rural *qäbälés* while the rest two *qäbälés* are small towns. According to the communication office of the *Wäräda*, the rural *qäbälés* in Wänbära are: Addis Aläm, Däbrä Zäyt, Čänčo, Sänki, Ębäča, Yäšošimo, Sänkora, Gawla, Gäsängäsa, Kitar, Gočor, Wägidi, Minižo, Bolälé, Mänäsibu, Anibifäta, Mälika, Hubi, Mango, Piré, Jädiya, Jämära, Ašémbänet, Gojjam Sisé, Muzä, Bäğonji, Zämatiya, Härbu,

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<sup>1</sup>Wänbära *Wäräda* Communication Office, “Wänbära *Wäräda* Statistical Bulletin of 2001 E.C,” (Assosa, 2003E.C.), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Central Statistical Authority, *2007 Census Result for Benišangul Gumuz Region I: Part VI Statistical Report on Population Size and Characteristics* (Addis Ababa, 2008), p. 18.

Késiya, Durä, Wäbo Abay, Nägär. Of all Sänkora and Däbrä Zäyt are regarded as small towns in the *Wäräda*.<sup>3</sup>

The *Wäräda* is mostly dominated by plains and lowlands with some undulating features.<sup>4</sup> The elevation of the *Wäräda* ranges between 1, 900 and 2, 380 meters above sea level. In Ethiopia, the most significant factor which causes differences in climatic conditions is altitude. As a result of the impact of altitude, Wänbära *Wäräda* has three climatic zones. These are *däga* (high altitude), *wäyena däga* (temperate or moderate altitude) and *qolla* (lowland with hot climate). Each zones account for 11%, 55% and 34% of the total area of the *Wäräda* respectively.<sup>5</sup> The *Wäräda* is, therefore, to a large extent characterized by favorable climatic conditions of the *wäyena däga*. The predominance of ecological variations in the *Wäräda* gave chances to produce different kinds of crops and rear different livestock. The *Wäräda* experienced an average temperature between 14<sup>0</sup>c and 35<sup>0</sup>c.<sup>6</sup>

Depending on the existing data, the mean annual rainfall ranges from 900 to 1,400mm. The *Wäräda* receives relatively, higher annual rainfall compared to other parts of the Zone. Like most parts of Mätäkäl zone, the absence of enough rainfall is not a problem for crop production and livestock rearing in the *Wäräda*. The climate and soil types of the *Wäräda* have made it favorable for cultivating various crops and growing vegetations.<sup>7</sup> Besides this, the natures of soils in Wänbära *Wäräda* are appropriate for growing their crops and different kinds of

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<sup>3</sup>“Yä Wänbära *Wäräda* Gebrena enna Gätar Lemat Şefät bét, Yä Akstenšn Yä Sera Hidät Report,” (2001E.C), pp. 1-4; informants: Diribé kábädä, Tälässa Sädi, and Amsalu Däreßsa.

<sup>4</sup> Wänbära *Wäräda* Agricultural Development Plan Bulletin, 2006 E.C, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup>Sälämon Zäwdu. Etal, “Village Chicken Production in Mätäkäl Zone, North Western Ethiopia,” *Woodpecker Journal of Agricultural Research*, XII, 9, Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research, 2013, p.23; Wänbära *Wäräda* Agricultural Development Plan bulletin, ..., p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Wänbära *Wäräda* Communication Office, “Wänbära *Wäräda* Statistical...,” pp. 10-11.

<sup>7</sup>Gété Zäläke and Häns Hurni, “Implications of Land Use and Land Cover Dynamics for Mountain Resource Degradation in the North Western Ethiopia,” *Mountain Research and Development*, XXI, 2, (2001), pp.184-191.

vegetations. The main types of soil found in the *Wäräda* are red clay soil, black soil (vertisol), gray soil, brown soil (vertisols), and other soils. As it indicates most of the areas in the *däga* agro-ecology have brown soil where as *qolla* areas have both brown soil and red clay soil.<sup>8</sup>

As it is the case in the other areas of the region, the *Wäräda* is found in the Abbay River basin. Wänbära *Wäräda*, encompasses nine main rivers and many streams. It is also believed that the *Wäräda* is rich with large amount of underground water. The main rivers of the *Wäräda* are Nägär, Durä, Šar, Gorši, Tiši, Alältu Kāla, Bälās, Aba Gonbo and Lomiča. The Nägär, Durä, Bälās, Šar, Gorši and Tiši rivers are perennial rivers though which the volume of their water decreases at various degrees in the dry season. Despite their decrease in volume, on a few scale and traditional system, the society has been using these rivers for irrigation purpose in the dry season. On the other hand, Aba Gonbo, Lomiča and Alältu Kāla Rivers are more or less seasonal flood in the rainy season and totally interrupted in the dry season. These perennial rivers are believed to have potential for the development of irrigation and hydroelectric power. But, no attempt has been made so far to use them either for irrigation or hydropower generation.<sup>9</sup>

The population of the *Wäräda* is ethnically diversified. The five major ethnic groups inhabit in Wänbära are the Šinaša, the Oromo, the Gumuz, the Amhara, and the Awi a subgroup of the Agäw.<sup>10</sup> Oromiffa is predominantly spoken language in the district. Regarding religion, in the *Wäräda* there are different beliefs. The large numbers of the settlers believe in Orthodox, Christianity, which accounts for seventy one percent of the total population, where as eighteen

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<sup>8</sup> Yä Wänbära *Wäräda* Gebrena enna Gätar Lemat Šefät bät,..., p. 5; informants: Jläta Gidäda, Eäšo Alga, Tälässa sädi, and Gäläta Kitäla.

<sup>9</sup> Wänbära *Wäräda* Agricultural Development Plan Bulletin,..., p.7; Wänbära *Wäräda* Communication Office, "Wänbära *Wäräda* Statistical Bulletin..."p.13; informants: Dārassa Yädässa, Dässaleğni Tässäma, and Abäbä Gudäta.

<sup>10</sup> Dabela Alemu, "A History of Debre Zeyit Town from its Foundation to 1991," (B.A Thesis, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 2000), p.1.

percent were Muslim believers and the rest eleven percent were observers of traditional religions.<sup>11</sup>

The main economic activity of the people in Wänbära *Wäräda* is agriculture, i.e engaged in crop cultivation and herding of domestic animals. Moreover, trade is one of economic activities that supplemented agriculture in the district. Besides agriculture it plays a pivotal role in the history of the people of Wänbära *Wäräda* particularly in the towns.<sup>12</sup> The urban settlers of Däbrä Zäyt town are simply small scale traders. However, around eighty-five percent of the people of the *Wäräda* are mainly dependent on agriculture. Unlike the lowlanders, Gumuz, the Šinaša and the Oromo who live in the highlands have been self-sufficient in their economy. This may be related to their better socio-economic makeup and material culture.<sup>13</sup>

The prevailing conducive climatic condition and fertile soil of the area have made the inhabitants to cultivate a variety of food and cash crops. Maize (*Zea mays*), *teff* (*Eragrotis teff*), barley, finger millet and wheat (*Triticum*) are the major cereals produced by the settlers.<sup>14</sup> Pulses such as, chickpea, haricot bean, and field pea and vegetables like pepper, potato, tomato, *carrot*, cabbage, lettuce, onion and beet root are also widely grown in the *Wäräda*. Coffee, sugar cane, hops, *mango* (*Mangifera indica*), *chat* (*Catha edulis*), lemon, peach, citron, *papaya* (*Carica papaya*) and banana constitute the important ones grown in the *Wäräda*.<sup>15</sup> Among the cash crop, the area is renowned for its coffee and sesame. In the *däga* (high altitude) climatic zone, potato,

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<sup>11</sup> Wänbära *Wäräda* Communication Office, “Wänbära *Wäräda* Statistical Bulletin...,” pp.15-18; informants: Emiru Aräga, Tadässä Mäkonän, Yäšwas Amänté, Oligira Däbäba, and Zälälam Mämo.

<sup>12</sup> Tsega Endalew, *Inter Ethnic Relations on a Frontier:- Ma'takka'l (Ethiopia)*, (Germany: Otto Harrassowitz and Co- KG Wiesbaden, 2006), p. 33 ; informants: Wägari Jaläta, Jäbre Bäki, Kälbässa Oliğira, and Adämu Yäwdhu.

<sup>13</sup> Sälämon Zäwdu. Etal, “Village Chicken Production in Mätäkäl Zone, North Western Ethiopia”, p. 12.

<sup>14</sup> Birehun Mebratie, “Spontaneous Settlement and Inter- Ethnic Relations in Mätäkäl North Western Ethiopia”, (MA, Thesis, Department of Social Anthropology, Addis Ababa University, 1996), p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Informants: Kälbässa Oliğira, Zämänu Bäläy, and Amsalu Daréssa.

pea, bean, and barley are commonly grown. *Teff* (*Eragrotis teff*), maize (*Zea mays*), wheat (*Triticum*), and sorghum are also grown in large amount in the *wäyena dāga* climatic zone. Pepper, sesame, and chickpea are more of *qolla* crops. Based on annual production report, *teff* (*Eragrotis teff*), coffee, and maize (*Zea mays*) are the leading crops in the *Wäräda* during the period under study.<sup>16</sup>

Concerning domestic animals, there are cattle, sheep, goats, horses, mules, donkeys, poultry and beehives in the *Wäräda*. Animal diseases have become a very serious challenge to the inhabitants. Among the commonly known diseases in the area are; Blackleg, Rinderpest (*däseta*), Anthrax (*Abba Sängga*), pasteurellosis, external and internal parasites, and Coccidiosis which attack domestic animals in the area. The various crops and animal products from the *Wäräda* are used at home and the surplus products after consumption in the area are often brought to markets.<sup>17</sup>

Bénišangul Gumuz Regional State in general and Wänbära *Wäräda* in particular is rich in natural resources. Before the second half of twentieth century, the region was renowned with different types of plants and was home to a variety of wild animals.<sup>18</sup> Indigenous tree species in the *Wäräda* such as *Wanza* (*Cordia africana*), *Korč* (*Erythrina bruci*), *Besana* (*Crotonmacrostachys*), *Yäfärenji lid* (*Cupressus lusitanica*), *Yabäša lid* (*Juniperus procera*), *Säsa* (*Albiziagummifera*), *Bärbära* (*Millettia ferruginea*), *Zägäba* (*Podocarpus falcates*), *Šola* (*Ficus sure*), *Warka* (*Ficus vasta*), *Qäy Baher Zaf* (*Eucalyptus camaldulesis*), and bamboo. However, it is essential to point

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<sup>16</sup> Wänbära *Wäräda* Agricultural Development Plan bulletin, ..., p. 8; informants: Gäläta kitiäla, Yäšwas Amänté, and Dässaleğni Tässäma.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p.10; informants: Abära Mäbéyo, Šumété Däbäla, Sädi Jirata, and Abäbä Gurméssa.

<sup>18</sup> Maru Šité, "Implication of Land Deals to Livelihood Security and Natural Resource Management in Bénišangul Gumuz Regional State, *the Journal of Peasant Studies*, (Institute of Development Studies: University of Sussex, 2011), P.24.

out that such trees are experienced in Wänbära in very limited numbers.<sup>19</sup> Majority of the indigenous tree species have been significantly reduced as a result of frequent cutting of forests for crop cultivation, wood for fuel for making charcoal, and for the building of houses fences. This great amount of clearing and burning of trees has led to serious soil erosion and environmental degradation.<sup>20</sup>

It is difficult to know the *Wäräda* population numerically. It was in 1984 that the first national population census was carried out. According to the census, Wänbära *Wäräda* is one of the most densely populated areas in Mätäkäl Zone. Based on the first national population and housing census conducted in 1984, the population of Wänbära *Wäräda* was 49, 018 with 24,183 male and 24,835 female. As the census notes that about, 1,508 of the total population were living in the urban areas whereas the remaining 47, 510 inhabitants lived in rural areas.<sup>21</sup> However, in the second population and housing census undertaken in 1994, numerically the total population number has been reduced to 41, 686 probably due to some *qäbälés* in the *Wäräda* were demarcated to be under Bulän *Wäräda*. On this report of the census out of the total population, 20, 411 were male and 21, 275 were female. 39, 257 populated in rural areas while the remaining 2,429 lived in urban area.<sup>22</sup> According to 2007 population and housing census of Ethiopia the total population number was elevated to 60,000, of which 29, 196 were male and 30, 804 were

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<sup>19</sup> Sälämon Zäwdu. Etal, “Village Chicken Production in Mätäkäl Zone... p.14: informants: Abäbä Gudäta, Gäläta Kitäla, and Amssalu Däréssa.

<sup>20</sup> Informants: Kibitu Märäga, Amsalu Däréssa, Yäšwas Amänté, and Dässaleğni Tässäma.

<sup>21</sup> Central Statistical Authority, *1984 Population and Housing Census: Analytical Report on Gojjam Region* (Addis Ababa, 1990), p.77.

<sup>22</sup> Central Statistical Authority, *1994 Census Result for Benišangul Gumuz Region I: Part VI Statistical Report on Population Size and Characteristics* (Addis Ababa, 1995), p.18.

female. From the total population of the *Wäräda*, 54, 524 inhabit rural areas and 5,476 lived in urban area.<sup>23</sup>

Similar to other *Wärädas* in Mätäkäl Administrative Zone, Wänbära is poor in terms of its infrastructure. The main infrastructure problem of the *Wäräda* is road transportation. All roads are limited to the town. Only the road that connects Däbrä Zäyt to Čagni is well constructed. Other roads connecting different *qäbälés* of the *Wäräda* are used only in the dry seasons.<sup>24</sup>

In Wänbära *Wäräda* there are both manmade and natural heritages. These heritages are Däbrä Zäyt Maryam Church, Mänäsibu cave found in Mänäsibu *qäbälé*, Aba Mänäka cave in Sänqi, Gäsängäsa cave in Gäsängäsa, Minjo cave in Minjo, Anbifäta cave in Anibifäta. Addis Aläm water fall, Sänqi water fall, Gäwula water fall and Ebäč. Bäğongï mountain hot spring is found in Bägonğ *qäbäle*. Reserved forest in Sänki, Addis Aläm, Tumina Kéchéna, Minjo, Anbifäta, Wäbo Abay, Wägdi, Gäwula, Muzi are some of the potential tourist attracting sites of Wänbära *Wäräda*.<sup>25</sup>

## **Historical Background**

### **Peoples of the *Wäräda***

Wänbära *Wäräda* is inhabited by various ethnic groups, Such as the Šinaša, Oromo, Gumuz, Amahra, and Agäw. These different ethnic groups have their own cultural practices and socio-

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<sup>23</sup> Central Statistical Authority, *2007 Census Result for Benišhangul Gumuz Region, I: Part VI Statistical Report on Population Size and Characteristics* (Addis Ababa, 1995), p.21.

<sup>24</sup> Benišhangul Gumuz National Regional State Mätäkäl Administrative Zone Finance and Economic Development Department (Assosa, 1999E.C), p.25; informants: Kibitu Märäga, Gäläta Ayäna, Abäbä Gudäta, and Gäläta Kitäla.

<sup>25</sup> Wänbära Wäradä Communication Office, “Wänbära Wäradä Statistical Bulletin...,” p. 8.

economic formations, despite their long period of intensive cultural and socio-economic interactions. The origin and early settlement of these ethnic groups will be discussed below.<sup>26</sup>

According to local informants, long before the arrival and settlement of other ethnic groups, Wänbära was occupied by the Gumuz. The Gumuz had settled in the region of Mätäkäl since at least the Aksumite period and speak the language which belongs to Nilo-Saharan family.<sup>27</sup> It is also pointed that the Gumuz ethnic group occupied the lowlands of Wänbära from the Northern direction along the border land of Guba. Since the 1880s they continued to move southwards by crossing the Abbay river from Guba and Wänbära to Wälläga. They were initially taken as slave to Digga Wārāda in Wälläga from these districts.<sup>28</sup> But after 1910s the Gumuz from Mätäkäl particularly from Wänbära and Guba districts began to migrate southwards in great numbers because of heavy taxation burden and continuous disagreements with the Amhara, Agäw and Šinaša. Of course, a continuous slave trade was practiced in the Gumuz area of Wänbära and Guba for decades, which seems one of the factors that evicted them to migrate southward crossing the Abbay River.<sup>29</sup>

Another ethnic group that has been living in the same area for the centuries is Šinaša. It is clear that the oral traditions and oral data are the most significant source to reconstruct the history of illiterate society; according to this their origin was traced outside Ethiopia. Accordingly, a few written sources reveal that, it was from Canaan that the Šinaša were directed to Egypt, where they are said to have learnt their traditional medicine for which they are still known. Their

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<sup>26</sup> Dabela Alemu, "A History of Debre Zeyit Town--," p.1; Bénišangul Gumuz Information Bureau, "Addis Me'eraf Mäšehét", ( VII, 13, Sep, 2005), p.28

<sup>27</sup>Tadesse Tamirat, "Early Trend of Feudal Superimposition on Gumuz Societies in Western Gojjam," *International Symposium on History and Ethnography in Ethiopian Studies*, (Addis Ababa, 1982), pp. 343-346.

<sup>28</sup>M. Lionel Bender (ed), *People and Cultures of the Ethio Sudan Borderland* (Michigan University, 1981), p.81.

<sup>29</sup>Wolde Selassie Abbute, *Gumuz and Highland Resettler: Deferring Strategy of Livelihood and Ethnic Relation in Mätäkäl, North Western Ethiopia*, (Instate of Ethnology Gottingen: Gottingen University Press, 2002), p. 29; informants: Gäläta K äba, Diribé K äbädä, Birätu Etäfa, and Abäbä Gurméssa.

migration was due to lack of grazing land and other factors. In addition to the above factors as well as famine and conflict with the inhabitant people, they were forced to leave Egypt and finally migrated southward in search of better opportunity along the Abbay River basin and settled in central Ethiopia.<sup>30</sup>

According to this source, upon their arrival in Ethiopia the Šinaša first inhabited in Šäwa. Later, as the result of increasing number of population and disagreement with the inhabitants they moved northwestwards by crossing the River Abbay to settle in Gojjam particularly in Damot and Burié, Wambarma and Zigam. Their migration is said to have continued and they dispersed to Gondär and Western Wälläga, where they had easily assimilated into the Amhara and the Oromo respectively.<sup>31</sup> From Damot and Burié, they also expanded to Mätäkäl areas and inhabited in the different *Wärädas* such as Dangur, Guba, Wänbära and Dibati. Some available sources and oral informants indicate the presence of Šinaša in Wänbära even before the sixteenth century.<sup>32</sup> They are also regarded as part of Gonga people who had settled in the northern part of the Abbay after they were separated by the Oromo population movement of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Šinaša who are found dispersed in the northern part of the Abbay between the Guba district and

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<sup>30</sup>Tsega Endalew, *Inter Ethnic Relations on a Frontier:- Ma'takka'l (Ethiopia)---*, pp.23-24; Abebe Anno ena Addisu Adaminé, *Yä-Boro Šinaša Bahersb Ačar Tärík Ena Bahel Esietäch*,(Asossa:Tje Mastäwaqiya Enna Hetmät Serä Dirjet,2007E.C),pp.10-11; Abebe Ano, "The Luba Basa Institution: The Challenge on Šinaša Identity", *Star Journal*,(Department of History and Heritage Management, Wälläga University, Ethiopia, 2012),p.117; informants: Yäšwas Amänté, Jäbre Bäki, and Gäläta kába.

<sup>31</sup> Addisu Adamé, "Yä Šinaša Hezib Bahel Ena Tarik" ,Bullän, 2001, p.11; Abebe Ano, "The Luba Basa Institution: The Challenge on Šinaša Identity--",p.117.

<sup>32</sup> Dabela Alemu, "A History of Debre Zeyit Town--," p.3.

Dura river represent the Omotic-language speakers which is closely related to the Gonga language.<sup>33</sup>

According to the Šinaša elders, their descendants lived in Wänbära under their fore father Abaguri. Before they arrived in their recent settlement area, the Šinaša are said to have inhabited near the area of Kurish hills. However, through time the Šinaša expanded all over Wänbära and specifically settled in the *wäyna däga* (temperate zone) of the Wäräda, while the lowlands have been occupied by the Gumuz.<sup>34</sup> It is not clear when exactly the Šinaša came to Wänbära and settled in its different parts. However, by the time they initially arrived in the region, the Šinaša are believed to have faced less resistance from the Gumuz people, who have been settled in the region prior to their arrival. This was because of their better weapons like arrows and spears that the Šinaša were well equipped or armed.<sup>35</sup>

Another ethnic group with different linguistic background who has inhabited the same area is the Oromo. They are a small branch of the Borena Oromo who came from the region of Wälläga in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Despite their sixteenth century settlement in Wälläga to the south of the Abbay River, they did not expand soon into the neighboring area to the north of the Abbay River immediately. After their long stay there, they were finally able to cross the Abbay and populate Wänbära. It seems that the people were not aware that they could have easily crossed the Abbay River. They thought the Abbay was deep and difficult to cross.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Peter Garretson, "The Gonga: a People of Ethiopia-Sudanese Frontier *Africa*." *Rivista Istituto trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell Istituto italiano per l' Africa el Oriente Anno 44, No.4, Italiano per l' AfricaeI, (Oriente IsIAO, 1989), P.657*; Abdussamad H.Ahmad, "The Gumuz of the Low lands of Western Gojjam: The Frontier in History 1900-1935," *Africa: Rivista Istituto trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell Istituto italiano per l' Africa el Oriente Anno 50, No.1, Italiano per l' AfricaeI, (Oriente IsIAO,1995),p.55.*

<sup>34</sup> Dabela Alemu, "A History of Debre Zeyit Town ---", p. 4.

<sup>35</sup> Informants: Tälässa Sädi, Oliğera Däbäba, Birätu Etäfa, Eäšo Alğa, and Abäbä Gudäta.

<sup>36</sup> Tsega Endalew, "The Oromo of Wänbära: A Historical Survey to 1941," (MA thesis, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 1997), p.3; informants: Birätu Etäfa, Mäkonän Wägäna, and Alämu Käbäda.

Informants indicate that the earliest movements of the Oromo to the region were related to feelings of adventure among the youth. They practiced the ancient customs of hunting big game and killing, which brought them honor in the society and special admiration from women. While they were practicing hunting, however, they observed that elephants and other wild animals were able to cross the river. From such knowledge the people successfully crossed the Abbay River and moved in to Gojjam.<sup>37</sup> As some oral informants insist, the hunters, Gačana Jatäma (literary sixty swords) were able to cross the Abbay at a place called Mälka Ančo. They are said to have found the region which was comfortable for their future settlement. The hunters then reported the news back to their people.<sup>38</sup>

Under the leadership of Jälo Wabi, the Oromo invaded Wänbära particularly the Kittar hills. They were successful due to their war strategy against the Šinaša. This was because of improvements the Oromo made in their traditional warfare and better organization in their expedition. In the process of this expansion the former settlement pattern of the indigenous peoples had been greatly endangered. The Šinaša moved farther north while the Gumuz went to the neighboring lowlands. The Oromo of Wänbära are said to have come from Bojji, Gidami, Mändi and Näjjo districts of western Wälläga from where Wänbära could be seen across the Abbay.<sup>39</sup>

The tradition of the Amhara settlement in Wänbära was not as old as that of the Gumuz, the Šinaša, and the Oromo. The Amhara, locally called Gojjamé, were brought into the area as Boju

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<sup>37</sup>; Tsegga Endalew, “The Oromo of Wänbära...”, p. 33; informants: Abäbä Gudäta, Kibitu Märäga, Mäkonän Wägäna, and Yäšwas Amänté

<sup>38</sup> Informants: Därassa Yädässa, Jäbre Bäki, Eäšo Alğa, and Kälbässa Oliğira.

<sup>39</sup> Fekadu Jaläta, “Oromo- Šinaša Relation: A Historical Survey From 1941 to 1991,” (BA Thesis, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 2000), pp.19-22; informants: Kibitu Märäga, Jäbre Bäki, and Tälässa Sädi.

(literally captives).<sup>40</sup> It is said that, before the integration of Wänbära into the central government by *Neguś Täklä Haymanot* of Gojjam, the Gojjamé soldiers came to the area for hunting and plundering. But, they had not always been successful. Sometimes they faced stiff resistance from inhabitants of the Šinaša, the Oromo and the Gumuz. Consequently, some of them were taken as captive by the local people to be used as domestic servants. But, through time they were set free and were allowed to inter and to settle in the region.<sup>41</sup>

However, towards the end of the nineteenth century, with the subsequent integration of the area, the Gojjamé began to settle freely and willingly in search of fertile land. They also started to move in large numbers into the area as administrators, priests, soldiers and for the purpose of other opportunities. It is said that the Gojjamés were the founders and the first settlers of the Däbrä Zäyt town, the seat of Wänbära *Wäräda*.<sup>42</sup>

### **The Foundation and Incorporation of Wänbära *Wäräda* into the Central State**

Wänbära was autonomous until its integration by *Neguś Täklä Haymanot* in 1898, but there were frequent raids in the area by the Christian kings. Historically, the early trend of feudal superimposition on the Gumuz and other societies in the region of Mätäkäl could be traced back to the Aksumite period, which had continued until early twentieth century.<sup>43</sup> In the early fifteenth century, the warrior king Yeshaq (1413-30) made an expedition into the Šinaša and Gumuz regions of Mätäkäl. The expansions of the Christian kingdom into the area were to bring the

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<sup>40</sup> Berhanu Mäbraté, “Spontaneous Settlement and Inter Ethnic Relation in Mätäkäl---“, p.36; informants: Mäkonän Wägäna, Oligira Däbäba, Eäšo Alğa, and Kibitu Mārāga.

<sup>41</sup> Informants: Tälässa Sädi, Zämānu Bäläy, Alämitu Fufa, and Jäbre Bäki.

<sup>42</sup> Dabela Alemu, “The History of Debre Zeyit Town---”, p.6 ; informants: Oliğira Fäyissass, Oliğira Däbäba, Kälbässa Oliğira, and Šumété Däbäla.

<sup>43</sup> Tadesse Tamrat, “Early Trend of Feudal Superimposition on Gumuz Societies in Western Gojjam--” ,p.146.

varity of natural resources and slaves under their direct control. These campaigns had endangered inhabitants such as the Šinaša, Gumuz and the Agāw people in the region.<sup>44</sup>

The growing hobby of the Ethiopian kings in the western lowlands seems to have continued until the last two decades of the nineteenth century. In 1882, Gojjam soldiers pushed along borderlands and destroyed the area between Guba and Kierien, Abbay and Dabus. In the same year, Wānbāra and Bāri hill were plundered. The early Gojjam expeditions against Wānbāra were mainly attempted at slave raids, booty and control of important trade items such as civet, coffee, ivory, and gold. Some written sources indicate continuous military campaigns were carried on the place until the integration of Wānbāra by *Neguś Tāklä Haymanot* in 1898.<sup>45</sup>

Available sources give various data as to when the *Wārāda* was founded. However, most of the informants argue that the *Wārāda* was founded in 1898. Some written sources also suggest the same date for its foundation. For brief understanding of the emergence of Wānbāra *Wārāda*, it is significant to discuss the military expedition of *Neguś Tāklä Haymanot* into the area.<sup>46</sup> Before Wānbāra was formally incorporated by *Neguś Tāklä Haymanot*, as the informants described, there had been devastating plunders in the area. *Däjjazmač* Wale was one of those, who had temporarily garrisoned to the north of Wānbāra at a place currently called Wale Alälitu (named after him). As it is said, he preceded further north to Sānqi and to the Rabbo forest for hunting. Due to stiff local resistance he was forced to leave the country. In the process of this opposition large number of Šinaša and Oromo chiefs were captured and taken to Gojjam as war prisoners.

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<sup>44</sup> Abebe Anno ena Addisu Adaminé, "Yä-Boro Šinaša Bahersb Ačar Tārik Enna Bahel Esietäch--", p.18; M.Lioner Bender, "People and Culture of the Ethio- Sudan Borderland...", p.83.

<sup>45</sup> Wendy James, "Lifelines: Exchange Marriage among the Gumuz," in D. Dunham and W. James (eds), *Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia: Essay in History and Social Anthropology* (Cambridge, 1986), p.122.

<sup>46</sup> "Wānbāra Wārāda Yāmastawoqya Šifat Bet Yä Wānbāra Tarik," Wānbāra, (1996), p.6; Informants: Yāšwas Amānté, Abābā Gudāta, Zālālam Māmo, Diribé Kābādā, and Emiru Arāga.

On the other hand, Gojjamé troops were taken as Boji (war captive) by the Oromo and Šinaša. These became the first settlers who were introduced to the region as aggressors.<sup>47</sup>

After the battle of Embabo (1882) *Neguś Tāklä Haymanot*'s raids into the western lowlands was revived. In spite of continued military expansion, Mätäkäl region was not effectively integrated until 1898. Perhaps, this was due to the preoccupation of *Neguś Tāklä Haymanot* in his expansion along the southern periphery in the Oromo areas, the Mahdist invention and battle of Adäwa. Consequently, Wänbära was not considered as the main target of his expansion and conquest until its final incorporation in 1898. But, after the downfall of the Mahdist state, the *Neguś* decided to control the western territories bordering the Sudan.<sup>48</sup> It was under this situation that Wänbära was fully incorporated as part of Gojjam province.

The factors that seem to have forced King Tāklä Haymanot to carry out campaigns in the region are for slave raids and plunder in the region. Civet, coffee, ivory, gold and other important items brought to the market of Wänbära from south of Abbay was another factor to be considered. Unlike the former expansions, some sources indicate that there was little or no resistance when *Neguś Tāklä Haymanot* arrived in Wänbära.<sup>49</sup>

Traditions indicate that Tāklä Haymanot begun his expeditions from his seat at Däbrä Marqos and passed through Agäw-Gimijabét, Zigäm, and Bulän had reached Wänbära. As it is claimed,

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<sup>47</sup>Tsega Endalew, "The Oromo of Wänbära...", p.59; informants; Zäläläm Mämo, Abäbä Gurméssa, Amsalu Däreśsa, and Diribé Kābädä.

<sup>48</sup>Wendy James, "Lifelines: Exchange Marriage among the Gumuz...", pp.122-123; Wolde Selassie Abbute, "Gumuz and Highland Resettler...", p.33.

<sup>49</sup>Jira Mäkurya, "A History of Gumuz People of Mätäkäl (1941-1991)", (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University, 2008), p.5; John Young "Along Ethiopian Western Frontiers: Gambélla and Benišhangual in Transition," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, XXXII, 2, (1999), p.65.

in this manner, he took a Tabotä Maryam and nine priests from Gimijabét together with him to Wänbära where he finally established church.<sup>50</sup>

As reports claim, he also established St. Giorġis Church in Zigäm. The nine priests had carried out the propagation of Christianity and converted the inhabitants who practiced traditional religion at Däbrä Zäyt Maryam Church. Informants remember only two of the nine priests namely Abba Moġäs and Abba Wubé Baymot. When the Nigus returned, the latter was designated as a chief priest. Their settlement place is said to have been initially *safar* or quarter in the *Wäräda* currently named *Qéss Mändär*.<sup>51</sup>

According to the oral tradition, the seat of Wänbära, Däbrä Zäyt town was not initially attempted to be founded in its current location. The belief is that, King Täklä Haymanot encamped east of Sänkora town, at a place called Adämi, where he desired to establish a church. Unfortunately, the mules and donkeys used to pack their logistics had disappeared and said to have moved as far as the current site of Däbrä Zäyt. While searching for the beasts following their foot prints, his troops discovered the Alälitu River and the forest area on its western outskirts. On their return, they informed the *Nigus* about the new place that is more comfortable with sufficient water and firewood. Hence, the king changed his mind and moved to the site where he established a new church named Däbrä Zäyt Maryam. In the mean time, the king began to watch the topography of the region. After observing and wondering about the topography of the area, *Nigus* Täklä

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<sup>50</sup> Dabela Alemu, “The History of Debre Zeyit Town--”, p.11; Abdussamed H. Ahmed, “Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capitalism and the World Economy, 1901-1935”, (PhD, Dissertation, University of Illinois at Urban-Champagn, 1986), p.62.

<sup>51</sup> Täfäri Wonbär, “Ya Däbrä Zäyt Maryam Bétäkristan Tärik,” 1998, p.3; Abebe Anno ena Addisu Adamié,” *Yä-Boro Šinaša Bahersb Ačar Tärik Ena Bahel Esietäch--*”, pp.88-89; informants: Zälälam Mämo, Emiru Aräga, and Dässaleġni Tässäma.

Haymanot said...this site is like comfortable throne (chair) to his own loyal companions. It was then after this time that the place was called by the name Wänbära.<sup>52</sup>

*Niguś* Täklä Haymanot carried out administrative reforms in Wänbära, but before this time there was a kind of loose confederation of chieftains' administration, with frequent and complicated conflict among themselves. The *Niguś* had restructured the administrative system and thus designated twelve *qoroos* over Wänbära, west of Šar River providing them with different court titles.<sup>53</sup> The table below indicates the twelve *qoroos* with their administrative region and successors.<sup>54</sup>

No	List of twelve <i>qoroos</i>	Region they governed	First generation of their Successors
1	<i>Fitäwrari</i> Biftu Anno	Kitar and Däbrä Zäyt	<i>Fitäwrari</i> Jara (his son)
2	Jimma Dämki	Sänqi	<i>Fitäwrari</i> Godano Bojoğo
3	Bullo Moti	Minijo	Desisé (his daughter)
4	Kumé Tanqi	Mänsibu	<i>Grazmach</i> Guduré (his son)
5	<i>Grazazmach</i> Safano Gama	Babbo Gali	Fäyisa (his son)
6	Awäyi Igğu	Qäqé	Wabušo
7	<i>Fitäwrari</i> Burso Morki	Terimmi	Atomsa(his son)
8	<i>Fitäwrari</i> Tura Jimma (Täsamma)	Gawilla	-
9	<i>Fitäwrari</i> Morka Jano	Babbo Kutän	<i>Qanazmach</i> Muléta (his son)
10	<i>Fitäwrari</i> Mächa Aruo	Wägidi	Dästa (his son)
11	<i>Grazmach</i> Däläna Koré	Gonğo	Ašo Zanabo
12	<i>Fitäwrari</i> Bayäro Bultum	Dorä Jalla	Ibsa (his son)

Source: Abäbä Anno ena Addisu Adaminé," *Yä-Boro Šinaša Bahersb Ačar Tärük Ena Bahel Esietäch*", p.46; informants: Kibitu Märäga, Gäläta Kitila, Diribé Käbädä, and Marämé Jirata.

<sup>52</sup> Tsega Endalew, "Inter Ethnic Relations on a Frontier...", pp. 62-63; Täfäri Wonbär, "Ya Däbrä Zäyt Maryam Betakristän Tarik," 1998, p. 4; informants: Diribé Käbädä, Amsalu Däreśsa, Direba Kumässa, Tälässa Sädi, and Oliğira Däbäba.

<sup>53</sup> Tsega Endalew, "Inter Ethnic Relations on a Frontier...", p. 63; Wänbära Wäräda Communication Office, "Wänbära Wäräda Statistical Bulletin...", p.14.

<sup>54</sup> Abebe Anno ena Addisu Adaminé," *Yä-Boro Šinaša Bahersb Ačar Tärük Ena Bahel Esietäch*", p.46; informants: Kibitu Märäga, Gäläta Kitila, Diribé Käbädä, and Marämé Jirata.

As the above table clearly reflects, the governorship in Wänbära was inherited to the family or relatives like in other parts of Ethiopia. *Fitäwrari* Biftu Anno was the governor (*qoroo*) of Kitar including Däbrä Zäyt. Having made Täklä Haymanot his god-father he was renamed GäbräSelassie. He was also appointed as the governor general who ruled over the twelve *qoroos* of Wänbära. The twelve *qoroos* of the various regions were responsible to him.<sup>55</sup> He collected tributes from all of them in gold at Wänbära and transferred it to Täklä Haymanot's court at Däbrä Marqos. Having restructured the administration and appointed *qoroos*, Täklä Haymanot returned to Däbrä Marqos.<sup>56</sup> However, this administrative arrangement was interrupted by the five years of Italian occupation.

### **Trade and Trade Routes in Wänbära Wäräda**

Since its foundation, Wänbära was developed into a chief market and served as center for caravan merchants. Important caravan trade routes originated from Wänbära. Then, these trading routes developed and extended north wards to Guba and even beyond up to Rosieris in the south. Another branch of trade route stretched towards the south crossing the river Abbay and connected it with markets in western Wälläga such as Näjo, Goré, Mändi, Boḡi, and some others. The other branch of the trade route ran into the interior to link Wänbära with Zigäm, Burié and other markets.<sup>57</sup>

The most important trading item in the northern trade route of Guba and Rosierise was coffee. According to oral tradition, coffee trees were introduced to Wänbära from Wälläga. In the process of introducing coffee in Wänbära region, certain person, FaarooWaarsuu, nick named

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<sup>55</sup> Tsega Endalew, "*Inter Ethnic Relations on a Frontier...*", p.63.

<sup>56</sup> Informants: Abäbä Gurmässa, Direba Kumässa, Marämé Jirata, and Oliḡira Fäyissa.

<sup>57</sup> Abdussamed H. Ahmed, "Trade and Politics in Gojjam 1882-1935" (MA Thesis: Department of History Addis Ababa University, 1980), pp.29, 43; informants: Anäne Fälaté, Zämänu Bäläy, Wägari Jaläta, and Gäsäsä Ali.

Abba Qonxe played a pivotal role. Then it started to be cultivated widely around the Kitar hills and Bolälé. Plantation of coffee was carried out by irrigation of mountain streams. However, in recent time coffee cultivation has almost spread to the wäynä Däga parts of Wänbära. Bolälé emerges one of the known coffee production area. It was this coffee production that enhanced Wänbära to be upgraded into significant market center.<sup>58</sup>

*As Cheesman stated in 1929 “Kitar is an outlying con-shaped hill on the wanbera south slopes, and the village clustered round the base of the hill present a glorious vista of mountain scenery. It is more densely populated than most Abyssinian districts, and there is much cultivation, the coffee of its gardens being famed throughout Abyssinia.”<sup>59</sup>*

In the meantime, Wänbära came to be known in its coffee cultivation. The following poem could reflect the significance of coffee production in the region.

Oromo	Gloss
Xaafii qoon qoof qotannaa	we cultivate teff for livelihood
Koottaa buna haa qonnuu	let us farm coffee
Ittiin biyya horanna <sup>60</sup>	to develop our nation

Coffee has remained the most important export item of trade of *Wäräda*, besides crops like peas, beans, and onions were produced in large amount and exported from Wänbära. In return, salt, cotton clothes, colored carpet, soup, metal tools, sugar, spices, and some other household equipment were imported. Salt and *abujädi* were among the top commodities which had high demand in the district.<sup>61</sup> Mules also became one of the main export items in the *Wäräda*. This is

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<sup>58</sup> Informants: Anäné Faläte, Gäsäsa Ali, Abäbä Gudäta, and Kibitu Märäga.

<sup>59</sup> Cheesman Rechar E, *Lake Tana and Blue Nile*, (London: Francass, 1968), p.349.

<sup>60</sup> Informants: Oliğira Däbäba, Gäläta Kitäla, Abäbä Gudäta, and Gäsäsa Ali.

<sup>61</sup> Tsega Endalew, “*Inter Ethnic Relations on a Frontier...*”, p.33; informants Anäné Fälaté, Adämu Yäwdhu, and Gäsäsa Ali.

due to its good quality that in 1903 the Sudanese political officials moved up to Wänbära in order to buy mules.<sup>62</sup>

However, merchants from Wänbära had several short-comings while trading with the Sudanese merchants. As informants explained, some Sudanese merchants lost their life due to malaria infection. Their mules died due to lack of water and fodder. The Sudanese merchants also appropriated Wänbära merchants and difficulties to the local merchants by deciding lower prices to export commodities and goods.<sup>63</sup> Inhabitant merchants from Wänbära had faced severe problem of unbalanced trade in their transaction. Communication due to language barrier was another challenge to the Oromo and Šinaša speaking of people of the region. They were unable to communicate directly with the Arabic speaking Sudanese merchants.

The trade route that ran southward to Wälläga passed though Kitar, Gočor hill, Gébo River, Qilaji and crossed the Abbay at Ančo ford. Caravan merchants from eastern Wänbära also crossed the Abbay at Mälka Limmu and Mälka Ibäntuu.<sup>64</sup> As informants confirm, in the first half of the twentieth century the most significant commodities gained from Wänbära market were onion, oxen, cotton, honey and others. These trade items had found their way to Wälläga following the southern route. Slaves and some luxury goods such as ivory and civet from the south reached Wänbära local markets.<sup>65</sup> Agricultural tools such as hoes and plough share were also imported. Coffee was the main commodity which reached Wänbära market then passed and sold at Rosieries in the Sudan or exported to the interior market along the eastern route.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Cheesman Rechar E, *Lake Tana and Blue Nile--*, p.18.

<sup>63</sup> Informants: Zämänu Bäläy, Anäné Fälaté, Adämu Yäwdhu, Jäbre Bäki, Wägari Jaläta, and Gäsäsä Ali.

<sup>64</sup> Tsega Endalew, "The Oromo of Wänbära..." p. 32; informants: Gäläta Kitila, Jaläta Gidäda.

<sup>65</sup> Informants: Kälbässa Oliğira, Abära Mäbéyo, Gäläta Kitäla, and Anäné Fälaté

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

Another interior important markets route was from Wänbära to Burié, Zigäm. It is said that *amole* (salt bar) had very high demand in the local market that reached Wänbära in exchange of cotton from Burié. However, the route is said to have declined since 1920s in favor of Burié.<sup>67</sup>

The eastern route to Burié passed through Gäsängäsa, Mora or Bullän, Dibati, Mätäkäl, Gamäha and Gimijabét. Through this route coffee, civet, ivory, gold, bee wax and cotton, reached Burié market from Wänbära. Onion from Wänbära is loaded to Guba to be exchanged with cotton. The cotton from Wänbära is taken to Burié and *amole* brought back to Wänbära, which had high demand in the local market and also in Guba.<sup>68</sup>

Wänbära was also known, to providing civet-cat to the market. Civet-cat is important in that it secreted musk which was exported to Addis Ababa then finally for European markets as a raw material for the preparation of perfume. In the early twentieth century its demand and price was increased because of rapid growth perfume industries.<sup>69</sup>

It is said that, in the 1930s the trade route from Wänbära to Burié started to extend further into the interior markets such as Däbrä Marqos and Dangila. In addition to this, in the 1950s merchants from Wänbära started to go as far as Addis Ababa. The most prominent merchants who were actively engaged in the trade between Wänbära and Addis Ababa were *Näğadras* Däbäb Ali, Ejigé Taqä and Šišaw Emiru. Informants recognized them in the following song.<sup>70</sup>

Oromo	Gloss
<i>Näğadiras ġéréré</i>	<i>Näğadras</i> made a song
Näğadiras gäraa raasee	Motivated merchants

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<sup>67</sup> Tsega Endalew, “The Oromo of Wänbära...,” p. 72.

<sup>68</sup> Abdussamed H. Ahmed, “Burié-A Study of Long Distant Trade 1900-1935”, (BA Thesis in History, Addis Ababa University, 1977), p.21; informants: Wägira Jaläta, Oligira Däbäba, and Gäsäsä Ali.

<sup>69</sup> Tsega Endalew, “*Inter Ethnic Relations on a Frontier...*,” p. 84.

<sup>70</sup> Informants: Gäsäsä Ali, Amssalu Deressa, Gäläta Kitila, and Kälbässa Oliğira.

Šawätti kára baaseé                      Explored a way to Šawa  
Wambaaraaf deembii baaseé      Made regulation for Wänbära.<sup>71</sup>

Therefore, the valuable trade activity of the region has stagnated by the five years Italian occupation. This was because of security problem on the trade routes and the resistance struggle held in Gojjam and other parts of the country.<sup>72</sup>

### **Italian Period (1936-41)**

Italy launched invasion of Ethiopia on October 3, 1935 so as to build a large extent of colonial territories in east Africa and to avenge Ethiopians for their victory against the invading Italians at the Battle of Adäwa in 1896.<sup>73</sup> According to oral informants, the Italians occupied Wänbära in 1937. However, before the surrender of the region, about 400 soldiers had prepared from Wänbära to fight against the Italians in the battle front of Šare in 1935. They were commanded by *Grazmač* Taye Jara and *Fitawrari* Ejäta Biftu and poorly armed with traditional weapons then they joined the Gojjam army under *Ras* Emiru. However, *Ras* Emiru scored some initial victories but was finally unable to withstand the well armed Italian force. After all, patriots who were engaged in the war returned to their home land, Wänbära. Due to their victory, the Italians entered central Ethiopia.<sup>74</sup>

Wänbära failed under the invading Italian force in the direction along the coastal lowlands area. They occupied it easily with little or no resistance because of lack of internal political unity and

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Täkläšadiq Mäkurya, *Yä Ityopiya Tarik: Kä Aše Tewodros Eskä Qädamawi Haile Selasse*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, (Addis Ababa: Qedus Giyorgis Printing Press, 1951E.C), p.257.

<sup>74</sup> Informants: Därassa Yädässa, Kälbässa Oliğira, Anäné Fälaté, and Jäläta Gidäda.

their military superiority.<sup>75</sup> And they settled in the southern part of Däbrä Zäyt on the important hill called Čambo. After settling at Däbrä Zäyt, the Italians built temporary clinic at the site where today primary school is located. Informants described that the Italians were the first to introduce modern medical treatment into the region. In the pre-Italian period different kinds of diseases such as, smallpox, gonorrhoea and others were common in the *Wäräda*. These diseases which were formerly treated traditionally were now easily protected by the Italians.<sup>76</sup>

The Italian military force settled at Däbrä Zäyt made attempts to cease the twelve *qoroos* administration system arranged by *Niguś* Täklä Haymanot in 1898. They also influenced in the economic activity and started to collect tribute in gold and others. Moreover, they had new platform planned to arrest the *qoroos*, they had collected all kinds of weapons from local peoples. Notably, their attempt of moving the youth into their military force sparked popular uprising.<sup>77</sup> The nationwide struggle in various parts of the country pushed forward the already started resistance struggle. The arrival of the Šäwan patriots in Wänbära in 1937, on their way to the Sudan further added fuel on the struggle, and strengthened the *qoroos*'s stiff resistance that had already begun in September 1937. The stiff resistance and struggle demonstrated Ethiopian's readiness to die for their liberty and independence.<sup>78</sup>

In Wänbära the patriotic resistance encouraged by the patriots in Gojjam, who had the will to seize Wänbära in order to possess weapons and money stored in the Sudan. It might also have helped them to spread and agitate the interior population and to establish relation with the exiled

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<sup>75</sup> Dabela Alemu, "The History of Debre Zeyit Town ---", p. 21; "Wänbära Wäräda Yämastawoqya Şifat Bet Yä Wänbära Tarik...", p.15; informants: Emiru Aräga , Atomssa Qänati, and Diribé Käbädä.

<sup>76</sup> "Wänbära Wäräda Yämastawoqya Şifat Bet Yä Wänbära Tarik...", p.16; informants: Abäbä Gurmässa, Jaläta Gidada, and Dässaleğni Tässäma.

<sup>77</sup> Informants: Amsalu Däreśsa, Emäru Aräga, Märämé Jirata, and Direba Kumässa.

<sup>78</sup> Yohannes Birhanu, "The Patriots in Gojjam 1936-1941: A Study of Resistance Movement" (BA Thesis, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 1972), pp.19-21.

emperor and the British government.<sup>79</sup> Over all, in Wänbära Italian rule was hated. Their interest of ruling the region using the local chiefs, who had surrendered to them, was unthinkable. They faced stiff resistance struggle in the area. A new kind of guerilla warfare came into being which was organized and led by the local *qoroos* in their respective regions. Even local collaborators also interrupted their loyalty and joined the patriotic resistance.<sup>80</sup>

As indicated, the patriots organized themselves in various districts in the rural areas. In Kitar, south of Däbrä Zäyt, *Fitawrari Ejäta* Biftu led the resistance movement. In Mänasibu area west of Däbrä Zäyt *Qännazmač* Guduré Kumé commanded the struggle. In Ebeč and Mändiq, east of Däbrä Zäyt, *Qännazmač* Mängša Kābāšo and *Grazmač* Čali Gama, in that order organized the local people in their administrative areas to struggle. Moreover, in northern *Warada* in Sänqi *Grazmač* Nequs Godano led the struggle.<sup>81</sup> In short, the resistance movement embraced almost all regions and ethnic groups in Wänbära.

Tolerating the prevailing condition, the Italians were encouraged to send soldiers to Kitar, where, stiff resistance was organized and led by *Fitawrari Ejäta*. About forty Italian troops are said to have participated and met with the force of *Fitawrari Ejäta* in Kitar at a place known as Mati. It was in this area that the Italian soldiers were unable to reveal their military superiority. They retreated in disarray and returned to Däbrä Zäyt than many of died themselves in the real fighting. In addition to this, other patriotic forces encircled the remaining Italian troops on their way back to Däbrä Zäyt at a place called Hämibifäta.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Informants: Dārassa Yādässa, Dässalečni Tässäma, Jaläta Gidäda, and Emäru Aräga.

<sup>80</sup> Informants: Fäyssa Märiğa, Kālbässa Oličira, Jläta Gidäda, Dārassa Yādässa, and Anäné Fälaté.

<sup>81</sup> Dabela Alemu, "The History of Debre Zeyit Town---," p. 22; informants: Atomssa Qänati, Kibitu Māräga, and Anäne Fälate.

<sup>82</sup> Informants: Oličira Däbäba, Yāšwas Amänté, and Atomssa Qänati.

Following their complete success the patriots abort the Italian readiness and encouragement to war for at least three months. The shortage of water supply was the main problem for the soldiers who were besieged. The former collaborators such as Sädi Jirata, *Grazmač* Atomsa Dibäba and others joined the Italians with their firearms.<sup>83</sup> Beyond this others like, Dibaba Wanjo, Mänğäsh Käbašo, Däirisa Dängala, Bogalé Jarsoye, *Grazmač* Čali Gama and others continued their stiff resistance defying the Italian rule. To overcome the existing problem Italians built impressive fort at the seat of the *Wäräda*, Däbrä Zäyt in which the remaining soldiers fortified.

At this stage, to stop the condition the reinforcement was instructed from Guba on air and on ground. It is indicated that numerically one thousand Italian soldiers were recruited from Guba and using the newly constructed motor road proceeded for the purpose, to Wänbära.<sup>84</sup> However, the road had little economic value in the region because of its poor construction. The arrival of the supportive forces immediately changed the situation. The Italians wanted to remove the record of shame they suffered from local patriots. The actual fighting came to a full force by the Italians at the seat of Wänbära *Wäräda* and Alälitu River. Their advanced military technology and the use of air plane enhanced their good advantages. Due to this confrontation many patriots lost their lives while some of the patriots surrendered in the fighting. Moreover, the patriots were unable to resist the Italians army and even to recover from catastrophic defeat.<sup>85</sup>

In spite of the encouragement from the patriots of Gojjam to secure the strategic significance of Wänbära, so as to establish communication with the Ethiopian officials in the Sudan, the locust invention of Wänbära undermined the local resistance struggle. Due to the invention of locust,

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<sup>83</sup> “Wänbära Wärađa Yämastawoqya Şifat Bet Yä Wänbära Tarik...,” p.18; informants: JalätaGidäda, AbäbäGurméssa, and Emiru Aräga.

<sup>84</sup> Informants: Emiru Aräga, Anäne Falaté, and Marämé Jiratas.

<sup>85</sup> “Wänbära Wärađa Yämastawoqya Şifat Bet Yä Wänbära Tarik...,” p. 21; informants: Kläbässa Oliğira, Eäšo Alğa, Oliğira Däbäba, and EmiruAräga.

famine started to push the patriots, and forced many people to go to the Italian camp for assistance. To attract the people who had supplied the patriots, the Italians started to provide food, give free medical treatment and as well other services. Many people crossed the Abbay River and settled in many regions in Wälläga while the rest pushed into the lowland areas. Among the Patriots, *Fitawrari* Ejäta was dissatisfied by the constraint of supply and joined the Italians. Later, he played pivotal role in attacking the remaining patriots specifically in the north and east of Däbrä Zäyt. Incidents of the famine are well memorized as *Bara Šibru* (lit. period of anarchy).

Even if the Italians achieved an upper hand, the resistance struggle against Italians still continued in eastern Wänbära assisted by the governor of Dängäb and reinforcement from Gojjam patriots also was there.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, the arrival of Emperor Häilé Sellassié from the Sudan supported Gideon forces and British soldiers entered Gojjam motivated and boosted the fighting moral of the patriots.<sup>87</sup> Hearing this news, the Italians in Wänbära and Guba were forced to evacuate and cross the Abbay into Wälläga. It is said that the Italians destroyed their camp at Däbrä Zäyt while they exiled. Together with them, many people were taken including *Fitawrari* Ejäta Biftu.<sup>88</sup>

In Wälläga the Italians from Wänbära, Guduru and Guba cooperated and encamped at twenty kilometers west of Naqamtee. Oral informants also describe that patriots from Wänbära followed the Italians crossing the Abbay. From this time on Wänbära was freed, and after liberation *Fitawrari* Ejäta came back and was appointed as the governor of Wänbära, and continued to rule until 1948.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Tsega, “The Oromo of Wanbara...,” p. 54; informants: Anäne Falaté, Yäšwas Amänté, and Atomssa Qänati.

<sup>87</sup> Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1974*, (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 1992), p. 176.

<sup>88</sup> Informants: Jaläta Gidäda, Kibitu Märäga, Emiru Aräga, and Diribé Käbädä.

<sup>89</sup> Informants: Emiru Aräga, Gäläta Kitila, Direba Käbädä, and Ešho Alga.

## CHAPTER II

### Wänbära Wārāda during the Imperial Period, (1941-1974)

#### Administration

The year 1941 saw the time when Ethiopia was liberated from the yoke of Fascist Italian rule and the restoration of Emperor Hailä Sellassié I to power. This brought about the revival of centralization attempts to the country. To achieve this objective, the Emperor introduced a series of decrees and proclamations starting from 1942 to re-arrange the administration.<sup>90</sup> As part of the centralization attempt, the imperial government was interested to establish similar local administration system throughout the country. In fact, the Hailä Sellassié government wanted to enhance its influence in the peripheries; as the result all governors were centrally appointed. On this basis the period between 1941 and 1974 was marked by the announcement of successive policies that aimed to centralize administration in the country and consolidate the absolute power of Emperor Hailä Selassié I.<sup>91</sup>

In 1942, the imperial government issued a decree directing the empire into a new administrative system. According to this proclamation, the country was divided into fourteen *Ṭäqelay Gezat* (governorate–generals), one hundred and three *awrajjas* (provinces), five hundred and five *Wārādas* (districts) and nine hundred and forty nine *meketel Wārādas* (sub-districts).<sup>92</sup> Administrative units were mostly established on the basis of their historical background. Various minor chiefs in all parts of the empire were appointed to be governors of their respective region, but denying autonomous status. The 1942 national order, however, did not come to effect in

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<sup>90</sup> Markakis and Nega Ayele, *Class and Revolution in Ethiopia*, (Nottingham: The Russel Press, 1978), p. 44.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>92</sup> Bäqälä Gälätä, “Assossa Awrajja: People and Local Government,” (BA Thesis, Department of Political Science, Addis Ababa University, 1981), p.13.

Agäw Meder until 1943. It was only in 1943 that the semi autonomous status of the region came to an end.<sup>93</sup>

The *awraja* under Gojjam Provincial Government included Däbrä Marqos, Mota, Bičäna, Agäw-Meder, Däga-Damot and Bahir Dar.<sup>94</sup> From this, Agäw Meder was one *Wäräda* that was with its capital at Injibara which, later shifted to Dangila. The *Wärädas* were also further subdivided into *meketel Wärädas* like Bäläya, Zigäm, Mätäkäl, Ankäša, Kwakura, Čara, Banġa and Wänbära. Under this rearrangement, Wänbära was made a *Wäräda mesläné* under Agäw Meder *Wäräda* (district).<sup>95</sup> In such administrative structures *Wäräda* governors were directly appointed by the emperor through the recommendation of the Ministry of Interior. In some cases the *awrajja* administrators could recommend skilled *Wäräda* governor to governor-general, who had responsibility to present recommendation to the Ministry of Interior. The administrative structure brought Mätäkäl under Gojjam *Ṭäqlay Gézat* with the exception of the district of Guba and Dangur. They were within the province of Bägemeder and Sämen as the result of geographical barriers of Bälläs River.<sup>96</sup>

To this end Gojjam was made one *Ṭäqlay Gezat* and was again divided into administrative *awrajjas*. Accordingly, the *awrajja* administrative unit was restructured to *Ṭäqlay Gezat* level, and the *Wärädas* were upgraded to *awrajjas* while *meslänés* were promoted to *Wäräda*.<sup>97</sup> Therefore, Gojjam governorate general was divided into seven *awrajjas*. From this time,

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<sup>93</sup> Adinew Abtew, "Political and Socio-Economic History of Asossa Wäräda 1941-1991," (M.A. Thesis, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 2004), p. 25.

<sup>94</sup> Gebru Tareke, *Ethiopia; Power and Protest, Peasant Revolts in Twentieth Century*, (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1996), p.178.

<sup>95</sup> Däbrä Marqos University Archive Center (Here after DMUAC), Folder No.672, File No.15/21, A Letter from Yä Ityopia Negusä-Nagäst Mängesté Yä Gojjam Ṭäqlay Gézat Lä Mätäkäl Awrajja Gézat Şefet Bét, Ref. No.275/94/47, Date Hidar 3, 1951 E.C; Nebeyu Eyasu, "Administrative History of Gojjam 1941-1974," (M.A. Thesis, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 2004), pp.48-50.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, p. 50.

<sup>97</sup> Informants: Amsalu Däreśsa, Däśsałeġni Täsśäma, Jäbre Bäki, and Kälbäśsa Oliġira.

Wänbära was one of the *meslanes* upgraded to the *Wäräda* standard and put under Mätäkäl *Awrajja*, which was composed of two *meketel Wäräda* within it.<sup>98</sup>

Informants noted that in the post liberation period, *Meketel* governors were appointed by the emperor himself from local *balabats*. In most cases the central government did not take formal education into consideration in the selection of *Wäräda* and *meketel Wäräda* governors in Wänbära. At this stage, it is important to know that the formal requirement for appointment of higher officials in this period was initially based on their faithfulness to the Emperor, their leadership quality and their commitment to combat the enemy. Moreover, loyalty and maintaining of peace and security were another prerequisite.<sup>99</sup> Imperial government attempted to include the prevailing tradition of notable persons who were actively involved in facilitating the imperial bureaucratic administrative system. These were the *Ĉeqasums* (*qoroos* and the *balabats*).<sup>100</sup>

Prior to the annexation of Wänbära to the effective administration system of the imperial government there were aristocratic systems of appointment of administrative figures such as *balabat*. This trend continued after the incorporation but the central government was responsible to assign its representatives to high ranking positions. The appointment of the *balabats* followed hereditary line. Thus, in which members of the families of the deceased *balabat* had the claim to inherit the position of *balabat*. Therefore, the people ruled under the *baläbat*, had the right to involve in the election of the *balabat* among the deceased family based on his potential and their interest.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Informants: Oliğira Däbäba, kälbässa Oliğira, Kibitu Märäga, and Oliğira Fäyissa.

<sup>99</sup> Informants: Abäbä Gurmessa, Amsalu Däreessa, and Šumété Däbäla.

<sup>100</sup> Adinew Abtew, "Political and Socio-Economic History of Asossa Wäräda---," p. 36.

<sup>101</sup> Informants: Därassa Yädässa, Kälbässa Oliğira, and Marämé Jirata.

Resemblance to other areas of the country after Wänbära *Wäräda* was restructured under the post1941 new administrative system, aristocratic element of appointment of the *balabats* was rejected. The central government became the main responsible body to approve the title of *balabat* to the first born son of the deceased *balabats*.<sup>102</sup> The rights of the people to appoint and to demote their immediate rulers were partially denied. From this time onwards, the right of the people was to designate low ranking administrative organ, the *qoroos*. The *balabats*, considered the will of the people by appointing and removing the *qoroos*.<sup>103</sup>

In Wänbära *Wäräda*, the *balabats* came to power with the help of the central government. The *balabats* were engaged in most administrative activities in collaboration with the governors of the *Wäräda* and *meketel Wärädas*. Moreover, due to their honorable status, they created positive relations between the government and people. The *balabats* were not earning monthly salary. However, the *Wäräda* and *meketel Wärädas* were employees of the central government with monthly salary. The amount of monthly salary to a *Wäräda* governor was four hundred birr. For instance, *Fitäwrari* Bäyänä Bišaw, who had been governor of the *Wäräda* for a long period, was getting a salary of three hundred birr and additional one hundred birr for his *Fitäwrari* title. The salary of *meketel Wärädas* governor was two hundred fifty birr.<sup>104</sup>

Despite the absence of cash payment from the imperial government, the *balabats* mainly benefited from the labor services by people of their respective area. In addition to this, their position would provide mind satisfaction for them. As they were leaders in the community they earned prestige for themselves and their families in all social activities. *Wäräda* Governors were

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<sup>102</sup> Adinew Abtew, p.33.

<sup>103</sup> Bäqälä Gäläta, “Assossa Awrajja: People and Local Administration...,”p.27; informant: Jäbre Bäki, Oliğira Fäyissa, and Abäbä Gudäta.

<sup>104</sup>“Wänbära Wäräda Yämastawoqya Şifat Bet Yä Wänbära Tarik...,” p.21; Informants: Zämänu Bäläy, Diribé Käbädä, and Wägari Jaläta.

appointed by the emperor upon the advice of the Ministry of Interior. The *awraja* governor also had the right to recommend potential *Wäräda* governors to the Governor General, who had the right to provide such recommendation to the Ministry of Interior.<sup>105</sup>

Rulers of *meketel Wärädas* in Wänbära *Wäräda* were designated based on the recommendation provided by the Mätäkäl *awraja* governor and by Gojjam provincial government. Moreover, the same is true to the *Wäräda* governor; the imperial government selected most *meketel Wäräda* governors from the local *balabats*. The imperial government did not consider the status of formal education for appointment of *Wäräda* and *meketel Wäräda* governors.<sup>106</sup> From 1942 to 1974 seven governors administered Wänbära *Wäräda*. These were *Fitäwrari Ejäta Bifitu*, *Fitawrari Täfära Yemär*, *Fitäwrari Bāyānā Bišaw*, *Fitäwrari Embialä Gässäsä*, *Fitäwrari Gässäsä Asägé*, *Fitäwrari Berhanu Faris* and *Ato Abäbä Gobäna*. Except *Ato Abäbä Gobäna* all were non-natives who had little knowledge about the society.<sup>107</sup>

The central governments are far away from the frontier population as the result of large cultural and traditional variations were created.<sup>108</sup> Therefore, the imperial government used the prevailing traditional local notables or *balabats* and *qoroo* to control the indigenous local people and to bring them into the new Ethiopian political administrative system. Even if few were politically disappointed *balabats* played a big role and political oppositions against the imperial regime were not experienced in organized manner. The political uprising was widened only after the

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<sup>105</sup> Baqala Galata, "Assossa Awrajja: People and Local Government...", p.27; informants: Amsalu Däreśsa, Alämtu Fufa, and Oliğira Däbäba.

<sup>106</sup> Abayneh Girma, "The Nature of Administration and Development in Ethiopia: The Case of Wolamo Development," (BA Thesis, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, May 1971), pp. 34-35.

<sup>107</sup> Informants: Gäläta Kitäla, Direba Kumässa, Adämu Yäwdhu, and Abäbä Gurméssa.

<sup>108</sup> Clifford Geerty, *Old Societies and New states* (London: Macmillan Ltd., 1963), p.282.

1974 Ethiopian Revolution following the total rejection of the locally honored *balabats* and religious elites of their political position.<sup>109</sup>

In Wänbära *Wäräda* both *Wäräda* and *meketel Wäräda* governors had minor differences in their activities and they carried out dual activities. They acted as *balabats* and also as governors. In their respective area, they had authority to maintain peace and security. They were also engaged in collection of taxes from the local people. The clear difference was that the court was established in Däbrä Zäyt town and was managed by the *Wäräda* governor. While *Meketel Wäräda* governors, were only judges concerned with minor crimes and enforced rules and regulations of the imperial government.<sup>110</sup>

Below the *balabat*, there were other government servants without formal cash payment from the central government. These were called *qoroos (Ĉeqasums)*. They were assigned by the *balabats* in order to pass regulations and orders to the rural people. Since they were, responsible to the *balabats*, therefore, they could not take action and make decision of their own in any condition. The principal works of *qoroos* were to encourage the people to pay their tax to the *Wäräda* treasurer on time and distributing the land among the people. Moreover, they were the right hand of the *balabats* and also provide different information on civil and criminal issues. Resemblances to the *balabats*, their main benefits were mind satisfaction and free labor service from the local people emerged due to the political and social respect they had among the local population.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Bēnišangul Gumuz Information Bureau, "Addis Me'eraf Mäšehét", p.23.

<sup>110</sup> "Wänbära Wäräda Yāmastawoqya Şifat Bet Yä Wänbära Tarik...", p.26; Informants: Jäbre Bäki, Oliğira Däbäba, and Diribé Käbädä.

<sup>111</sup> Dabela Alemu, "A Historical Survey of Asossa Town to 1991," (MA Thesis Department of History Addis Ababa University, 2007), p.6; Informants: Zämänu Bäläy, Marämé Jiräta, and Şumété Däbäla.

## Taxation in Wänbära *Wäräda* After 1941

Immediately after liberation, following the restoration of the imperial regime in 1942 the Ethiopian government introduced new taxation decrees in order to enforce peasants to pay tax in cash instead of kind. Thus, the amount of tax paid varied depending on the size and fertility of land possessed by peasants. Its main objectives were to increase government revenue. The government gave due attention on the task of introducing administrative reforms that could enable it to fulfill the stated economic objective.<sup>112</sup> Thus, from 1941 onwards, in many parts of the country the administrative changes were put into effect. And as resemblance to other parts of the country Wänbära had experienced administrative changes.

Regarding taxation and financial administrative system of the *Wäräda*, the representatives of the central government and local governors had no power to generate and utilize their own budget. All local administrative bodies were used as initiators of income collection from the common people and to send it to the central government and vice versa.<sup>113</sup> The *Wäräda* treasurer, whose office was established in Wänbära, Däbrä Zäyt town, was responsible in motivating ways and mechanisms for the punctual collection of taxes. Preparing balance sheet for the income and expenditure of the *Wäräda* was also its duty.<sup>114</sup>

The *Wäräda* administrators were responsible to collect the predetermined amount of tax from their respective areas. Standard land tax that was proclaimed by the imperial government in

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<sup>112</sup> Gebru Tareke, "Rural Protest in Ethiopia: Study of Three rebellions," (PhD Dissertation, Syracuse University, 1977), p.275; Dessalegn Sisay, "The process of Incorporation of Bela-Shangul Region into Ethiopia Empire 1936-1991", (BA Thesis, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 1997), p.29.

<sup>113</sup> J.C.D. Lawrance, *Land Taxation In Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa, 1964), p.1.

<sup>114</sup> Informants: Wägira Jaläta, Oliğira Fäyissa, and Amsalu Däreessa.

1942, greatly affected the local people.<sup>115</sup> This decree brought two main reforms in the history of the region. Firstly, the new taxation system in cash replaced the prevailing traditional tax collection system in gold by the local chiefs.<sup>116</sup> Tribute in Wänbära was collected in gold until 1942 which was to be benefit of government bodies. The quantity of gold paid altered from time to time based on the size of the *qoroo* governed land and according to the accessibility of gold and good quality of soil in the area. A middle class peasant paid a *tamuni* (*mahalaq*) of refined gold annually while the poor peasant paid a *walansu* (half of a *tamuni*). In order to pay tribute in gold to their respective *qoroos* both the Šinaša and the Oromo brought the gold from the Gumuz.<sup>117</sup> In 1943, the peasants requested the government to be able to pay their yearly tribute in money instead of gold. To this end, *Billata* Reqitu Obse and Gudiné Jimma were appointed to present their matter to the provincial administrator at Däbrä Marqos. According to this claim, the request of the peasants was taken into account and the tribute payment was changed to money. Since then, tax was paid in terms of money in Wänbära. This truth was indicated as follow.

Amharic

*በወንበራ ወረዳ ግዛት ግብር የሚከፈለው ወርቅ በመሆኑ ገዢዎች ችግር አለበት ምክንያቱም ህዝቡ ወርቅን በገንዘብ በወ.ደ. አይነት እየገዛ ለመገኘት መክፈሉ ቀርቶ... በብረ ቢከፈል:: (see Appendix I-II).<sup>118</sup>*

Gloss

*In Wänbära Wäradā tribute is paid only in gold. This had problems to the people because they are required to buy gold which is expensive to pay to the state. This has to be changed and paid in Birr.*

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<sup>115</sup> Shiferaw Bekele (ed.), *An Economic History of Modern Ethiopia: The Imperial Era, 1941-1974*, I (Dakar: CODESRIA, Antony Rowe Ltd, 1995), p.109; Dessalegn Sisay, "The Process of Incorporation of Bela-Shangul Region---", p.29.

<sup>116</sup> Informants: Gäläta Oligira, Dässaleğni Tässäma, and Amsalu Däréssa.

<sup>117</sup> Dabela Alemu, "The History of Debre Zeyit Town---", p.27; informants: Abäbä Gudäta, Gäläta Oligira, and Oliğira Fäyissa.

<sup>118</sup> DMUAC, Folder No. **ዞን/አስ/0163**, File No. **መ.መ46**, A Letter from Mätäkäl Awraiija Gézat Şefet Bét Lä Gojjam Täqlay Gézat Gézat Şefet Bét, Ref. No.275/94/47, Date Mägabit 18, 1951 E.C.

Secondly, based on tax proclamation of 1942 the size and fertility of land occupied by the rural peasants of the *Wäräda* was identified. On the basis of the decree, the amount of money in cash to be collected per *gaša* varied for (*lam*) cultivated land, for (*lam taf*) semi cultivated land and for (*taf*) poor land.<sup>119</sup> Depending on this situation, the highland areas of Wänbära, the traditional inhabitants the Šinaša and Oromo areas were classified under *lam*(fertile land) while as the lowland Gumuz areas were categorized as *taf* (poor land).<sup>120</sup> Each family head, holding the land, was registered and land tax assessment was implemented.<sup>121</sup>

The administrator of the *Wäräda* was responsible for announcing orders and enforcing *meketel* *Wäräda* governors to collect income for the central government relatively equal to the expected amount. The determined annual income from taxation in the *Wäräda* was carried out based on land and property assessment methods. Since the lowland Gumuz people of Wänbära *Wäräda* were not as such involved in cultivation of land, the tax assessment was made on the basis of the number of livestock and amount of gold they possessed. During the period under study the tax collected by the governor of the *Wäräda* was sent directly to Däbrä Marqos, and later Čagni after Čagni began to serve as an *awrajja* administrative center in 1948.<sup>122</sup>

*Meketel* *Wäräda* Governors were given the task of selecting tax assessors by the recommendation of the *balabats* of their respective area. And each tax assessor was also required to swear an oath to be honest. The succeeding tax decree of 1944 also increased the amount of tax payment required from each household. Until 1966 people were expected to pay tax on the

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<sup>119</sup> Shiferaw Bekele, “The Evolution of Land Tenure in the Imperial Era”, *An Economic History of Modern Ethiopia: The Imperial Era, 1941-1974*, 1 (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1995), p.109; Dessalegn Sisay, p. 29.

<sup>120</sup> Informants: Oliğira Däbäba, Kälbässa Oliğira, Käbädä Deréssa, and Eäšo Alğa.

<sup>121</sup> Dessalegn Sisay, p.29

<sup>122</sup> Bazezew Gälaw, “A History of Čagni Town from its Foundation to 1974,” (BA Thesis, Department of History, 1991), pp.25-30.

basis of their livestock and fertility of land.<sup>123</sup> In the same way, the amount of tax paid by the inhabitants of the *Wäräda* increased through time and the local peoples of the area were unable to pay it.<sup>124</sup>

In addition to this, the other problem which challenged the life of the people was the difficulty they faced in traveling long distance from their respective areas to Däbrä Zäyt town where the *Wäräda* treasury was located. Each family head was expected to pay the tax imposed by the assessors directly to the *Wäräda* treasury. The amount of money, time and labor force utilized by the local people in their tour to and their stay in town was more than the money they were paying.<sup>125</sup>

People in Wänbära *Wäräda* seriously opposed such land tax reforms platform. In response, the government and its officials forced the people to believe and accept the land tax reform using the propaganda that they were frequently proclaiming to the peasants.<sup>126</sup> According to their propaganda, peasants who were in this district could assure their land as their own property if and only if they could pay tax for it. Even if the government used various misinformation campaigns to make people accept the land tax reforms, all the people of the district expressed their grievances through successive petition to the *awrajja* and *Ṭäqalay gezat* as well as to the central government. They asked for reduction of tax taking into account the life of the poor peasants. The imperial government, however, did not give urgent solution.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Bäqälä Gälätä, “Assossa Awrajja: People and Local Government--“, p.39.

<sup>124</sup> Informants., Alämitu Fufa, Oliğira Fäyissa Gäläta Oliğira, and Amsalu Däréssa

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> Peter Schwab. “Rebellion in Gojjam Province, Ethiopia”. *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, IV, 2 (Spring 1970), p. 249.

<sup>127</sup> DMUAC, Folder No.ሰግ/አስ/0613, File No.278, A Letter from Mätäkäl Awrajja Gézat Şefet Bét Lä Gojjam Täqalay Gézat Şefet Bét, Ref. No.935/94/47, Date yäkatit 5, 1951 E.C

Generally, in Mätäkäl *awrajja* and particularly Wänbära *Wäräda*, the amount of income collected from the rural population 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. Thus, peasants, who lived in great discontented situations, and who were denied fair justice for their cases sought for great changes in state structure and for better living conditions.<sup>128</sup>

### **Land Tenure System in Wänbära *Wäräda***

The post 1941 period saw structural transformations in many fields of state and society. Among them the most significant areas of change was land tenure. Accordingly the two basic principles of land tenure mechanisms were *Gult* and *Rest*. Thus *Rest* implied the system of land holding through clan or lineage, or hereditary ownership of land. It was through such ancestry system of land ownership that the peasant could claim a plot of land as long as he could trace his descent.<sup>129</sup>

In Wänbära *Wäräda*, peoples who firstly cleared the forest and possessed a certain area by force were named as *Qomoo Gida* (lit.*Gida* Oromo tribe). Such land from the *Qomoo Gida* was transferred through inheritance. All descendants who inherited the land continued to use the name of the land owner which was already given by the first settlers or *Qomoo Gida*. In the *Wäräda*, such names of *Qomoo Gida* were commonly used as the name of family groups. Therefore, in order to have land the descendants had to trace the name of *Qomoo Gida*. Individuals had the right to transfer their *rest* lands to their family members or relatives.

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<sup>128</sup> Gebru Tareke, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, --, p. 166; informants: Yäšwas Amänté, Wägira Jaläta, Oliğira Fäyissa, and Jäbre Bäki.

<sup>129</sup> Shiferaw Bekele, "The Evolution of Land Tenure in the Imperial Era", ---, pp. 73-74.

However, in Wänbära an individual who was regarded as slave was denied the right to claim *rest* land until the 1975 land reform proclamation.<sup>130</sup>

Emperor Hailä Sellassé and his family had *rest* lands in the *Wäräda*, which was specified by the local *balabats* of Wänbära. The *balabats* had decided with each other to guarantee rest land to the Emperor and his family. This was because of their admiration to the emperor. The land given to them was 18 Gaša and transferred to the delegates of the Emperor based on written agreement by the support of the governor of Wänbära, *Fitäwrari Ejeta Bifitu*. The agreement was described as follows.

Amharic

የወንበራ ቆሮዎችና ባላባቶች ለግርማዊ ቀዳማዊ አዲ ኅይለስላሴ፡ ለግርማዊት እቴጌ መነን፡ ለልዑል አልጋ ወራሽ አሰፋ ወሰን፡ ለልዕልት ዘነበ ወረቅ፡ ለልዑል መኮነን መስፍን፡ ለልዕልት ተናኘ ወረቅ ኅይለስላሴ፡ ለልዕልት ፀሀይ ኅይለስላሴ፡ ለልዑል ሳህለ ስላሴ ኅይለስላሴ፡ ርስት ስንተክል ከአቶ ታደሰ ገብረ መድህን ጋረ ከዚህ እንደሚከተለው ተዋውለናል...ከዚህ በላይ የተሰጠንን ርስት ዙርያው ባህረ መሃሉ ርስት ሆኖ ከግርማዊ ጃንሆይ ርስት ጠባቂ በቀረ ማንም ሹም እንዳይደረስበት ተዋውዬ ተቀብያለሁ። (see Appendix III-V ).<sup>131</sup>

Gloss

*We the local rulers and hereditary chiefs (qoroos and balabats) of Wänbära have agreed to establish rist land for Emperor Häile Sellassié, Empress Ṭaitu, the Prince heir Asfa Wäsän, Princess Zänäbäwärk, Prince Mäkonän Mäsfen, Tänägnwärk Häile Sellassié, Šähäy Häile Sellassié, Princess Sahelä Sellassié while making convention with the delegates of the majesty Ato Tadässä Gäbrä Mädhin as follows...the land which are guaranteed beyond this are strictly respected and I received it on the behalf of the ruler and not to pass to new guest who has no delegation by the emperor.*

The *rest* tradition which stayed during the whole imperial regime was a cause for many problems in Wänbära *Wäräda*. In the first place it could be the source of conflicts among the state and

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<sup>130</sup>Informants: Tälässa Sädi, Kälbässa Oliḡira, and Käbädä Deréssa.  
<sup>131</sup>DMUAC, Folder No.፲፯/አስ/0163, File No.፳፱፱46, A Letter from Mätäkäl Awraija Gézat Şefet Bét Lä Gojjam Täqlay Gézat Gézat Şefet Bét, Ref. No.2099/37, Date Genbot 17, 1941 E.C.

peasants, and also a certain family members. The same family members might mistrust one another if one of them owned much land. In addition to this, to ensure their rest lands from the rivals' peasants spent their energy, time and money at the court. These competitions led them to disagreement, family conflict in the *Wäräda*.<sup>132</sup>

However, *Gult* was a type of right over the land of *rest* owners to collect different types of incomes from the *rest* holder. Most of the time people within the royal family or local chiefs and potential individuals had *Gult* right over many areas. *Gult* right was given as a salary for the service given by the *Gult* holder. *Gult* rights had the right to collect taxes from those who cultivated it. In addition to this, the *Gult* owner also had both the judicial and administrative power over their respective territory. If they failed to do so, their *Gult* right would be either minimized or totally cancelled.<sup>133</sup>

Ethiopian Orthodox Church had also *Gult* land granted by the government for the service and retained it as well collected tribute on the land and in kind. Accordingly, Däbrä Zäyt Maryam Church in Wänbära *Wäräda* had approximately around thirty hectares of land guaranteed by the government. In the period under study in the *Wäräda* the higher clergy had also *Gult* right to collect tribute and to keep peace and order over the areas they administered. Those who served in the churches were also given land.<sup>134</sup> For example, priests and deacons owned land in the *Wäräda* which was known as *Yä-qäs märét* and *Yädiquna märét*, respectively. The priests who give service to church did not pay taxes. Rather than paying taxes, they gave service to the

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<sup>132</sup>Informants: Kābādā Deréssa, Kālbāssa Oligira, Šumété Dābāla, and Addisu Guruno.

<sup>133</sup> Markakis and Nāga Ayāle, *Class and Revolution in Ethiopia---*, pp. 45-46; Shiferaw Bekele, *An Economic History of Modern Ethiopia---*, p.73.

<sup>134</sup> Tāfāri Wānbār, “Ya Dābrā Zāyt Maryam Betakristān Tarik...”, p.5; nformants: Zālālam Māmo, Kibitu Mārāga, Emiru Arāga, and Eāšo Alğa.

church. The peasants on their part provided free labor for churches and contributed grain from their produce.<sup>135</sup>

### **Maladministration and Corruption**

In the post liberation period there was administrative prejudice and corruption in Mätäkäl *awraja* in general and Wänbära *Wäräda* in particular. Based on the new administrative platform, the *Wäräda* governors were appointed by the Emperor upon the recommendation of the Ministry of Interior. But sometimes a governor of the *awraja* recommended individuals for such status to the governor general who transferred it to the Ministry of Interior.<sup>136</sup> Thus, this paved the way for unfairness in the appointment. Informants noted that, there was nepotism in the selection and appointment of *Wäräda* and *meketel Wäräda* governors in Wänbära. Those who had friendly relations with the *awraja* governors were given key positions and were promoted to higher positions.<sup>137</sup>

The existing system of government of the period under study increased the level of administrative injustice. On the basis of structural administrative system the governors in the lower level were responsible to officials at the next higher status of the administrative hierarchy. Thus, in the Wänbära administrative structure, there were different agencies stationed in *Wäräda* and *meketel Wäräda*. These include *Wäräda* and *meketel Wäräda* treasuries, courts, the secretaries and others. Each body implemented particular tasks assigned to it by the central

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<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> Informants: Direba Kumässa, Oliğira Däbäba, and Kibitu Märäga.

<sup>137</sup> Informants: Amsalu Därässa, Alämitu Fufa, and Abäbä Gurémssa.

government.<sup>138</sup> But occasionally the government agencies in Wänbära *Wäräda* performed functions out of their specific duties because of the complex nature of the bureaucracy.<sup>139</sup>

However, either due to inability of the governors in implementing their tasks or due to the failure of the higher administrators to respond urgently to requests and directions, several administrative issues remained unsolved. Informants state that, most of the governors of Wänbära made little attempt to the progress of the *Wäräda*. In many cases, they were described as inefficient, incompetent and highly corrupt in implementing their administrative tasks. Peasants also provided gifts to officials. The collected income was also exploited by government bodies. The justice dispensed at each level of the district was unfair and was not carried out on time. Judges decided in favor of their relatives, friends and those who could pay good bribes. The judges always rescheduled hearings. This in return set more burdens on the peasant who made long tour leaving his work, since the courts were stationed in town. In some cases he may need to stay a few days in town, he was obliged to bring some money and food with him.<sup>140</sup>

Moreover, in the *Wäräda* the judges are ineffective and no judge is found who valued and solve the people grievance due to this people are mistreated and discontented, beyond this judges are rent seekers who wanted to corrupt the system of getting money. This makes people demoralized.<sup>141</sup>

Broadly, however, there were administrative injustices in Wänbära in the post1941 period as informants confirmed. In Wänbära *Wäräda* the governors were mainly corrupt in administration.

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<sup>138</sup> Cohen, John M. and Koehn, Peter H. *Ethiopia Provisional and Municipal Government and Imperial Patterns and Post Revolutionary Changes* (East Lansing: African Study Center, Michigan State University, 1990), pp.270-75.

<sup>139</sup> Informants: Abäbä Gudäta, Kälbässa Oliğira, and Oliğira Fäyissa.

<sup>140</sup> Informants: Jaläta Gidada, Ešo Alga, Kälbässa Oliğira, and Tälässa Sadi.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

They were involved only in exploiting human and the material resources of the district but no attempt was made to develop the district. Besides this, complicated and slow bureaucratic systems of administration brought great exploitation and suffering on the local people.<sup>142</sup>

### **Problems of Security**

The imperial government gave due attention to the safeguard of the country. This can be understood from the manifestation of the government itself for the reason that the rearrangement of the administrative system carried out at different times. Consequently, the first thing mainly stated was to make the security protection easy.<sup>143</sup> Despite this, since the post liberation period as had been the case in other regions, there was also security problem in Wänbära *Wäräda*. Various reasons have been responsible for such unstable condition. On the basis of sources majority of the people in the district were armed with different weapons that was provided by the state to defend the country during the time of Italian occupation. Moreover, leader were also well equipped with rifles gained from the Italians and these weapons were not totally gathered, which became source of insecurity among the people. Even in the *Wäräda*, this created good opportunity of unauthorized trading of weapons.<sup>144</sup>

Another critical issue for the introduction of illegal activities in the *Wäräda* was the existence of favorable areas like escarpments, ravines, river gorges, mountains and jungles forests used as hiding places of *Šiftas*(banditries) arriving from Wänbära and from neighboring *Wärädas*. The life of the inhabitants in the *Wäräda* was in miserable situation because of the presence of

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<sup>142</sup> Informants: Gäläta Kitäla, Kälbässa Oliğira, and JäbreBäki.

<sup>143</sup> DMUAC, Folder, No. **ሀ/አ/0163**, File No.18, A Letter from Gojjam Awraija Gézat Şefet Bét Lä Mätäkäl Täqlay Gézat Şefet Bét, Ref. No.4955/94/47, Date 19, 1954 E.C; Seltane Seyoum, “A History of Resistance in Gojjam 1936-1941.” (PhD Dissertation, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 1999), p.104.

<sup>144</sup> DMUAC, Folder, No. **ሀ/አ/0672**, File No.278, A Letter from Mätäkäl Awraija Gézat Şefet Bét Lä Gojjam Täqlay Gézat Şefet Bét, Ref. No.4263/94/47, Date Tir 13, 1952 E.C.

robbers and their involvement in killing people, theft of animals, looting the property of travelers, destroying the property of households in Wänbära *Wäräda*.<sup>145</sup> There were factors which forced individuals to become robbers. From these, denying claim to land, failure to pay government taxes and opposition against government orders were the main ones. Inhabitants were not willing to expose the bandits to government official; instead, they supplied information to them. This was because of the reality that the people used the *Šiftas* as agents to antagonize different government policies.<sup>146</sup>

In the 1950s, there was also strong uprising of Gumuz in the area antagonized by augmentation of tax. Accordingly, they were required to pay unusual tax than they expected within the year. The increment of tax became an immediate cause for the 1950s rebellion which had gradually expanded to the different areas in the Gumuz regions in the early 1960s.<sup>147</sup> During the times, the Gumuz attacked nearby societies, merchants and blocked the road from Čagni to Bullän, Bullän to Bärebär and up to Wänbära. It threw the security into turmoil and prohibited free movement between Wänbära and the other parts of Gojjam. Moreover, they were also fighting each other and led the situation of security worse.

In Wänbära *Wäräda* the Gumuz people murder each other and made disturbance. For this matter unless the *Wäräda* administrators and the police security force could attend and address to the govenors, the case may be worsen. The uprising now was wide spread to the neighboring areas, to Bullän, Gäsangäsa, Kitar and Bolälä by creating resistance on tribute payment unlike the

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<sup>145</sup> Informants: Jäbre Bäki, Oliğira Däbäba, and Biräto Etäfa.

<sup>146</sup> Abebe Dires, "Banditry and Insecurity in Eastern Gojjam, 1941-1991," (M.A. Thesis, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 2008), p. 21.

<sup>147</sup> DMUAC, Folder, No. **ሀ/አ/** 0163, File No. 52, A Letter from Gojjam Ṭäklay Gézat Šefat Bet to Mätäkäl Awrajja Gézat Šefat Bét Ref. No.4935/94/47, Date Yäkatit 13, 1952 E.C; informants: Oliğira Fäyissa, Galata Oliğira, and Gasassa Ali.

previous time. Therefore, consideration should be given to take corrective measures to control the people protest.<sup>148</sup>

Because of these, Wänbära *Wäräda* became one of the districts in the region where insecurity was observed. The inhabitants of Wänbära criticized the government officials regarding them accountable for the increment of insecurity problem.<sup>149</sup> In order to safeguard different criminal actions such as banditry, resentment and destruction of property and maintain community peace and order the government brought new forms of security forces and judiciary system to solve the problem of insecurity in the *Wäräda*. This action was taken with the intention that the problem of insecurity in Wänbära *Wäräda* was the outcome of the absence of strong police force and efficient judiciary activities in the area.<sup>150</sup>

The government, therefore, designated individuals to engage in the security of their localities under the title of *naç läbbaš* (local militia) recruited from the peasants on basis of their loyalty to the government and their former knowledge in military service in the *Wäräda*. In return for their service the *naç läbbaš* to get free labor from the peasant at the time when he was involved in taking care of the security of its respective area.<sup>151</sup>

Moreover, another responsible organ in keeping peace and security in the *Wäräda* under study was *atbiya- dañña* (local court) which emerged by the proclamation. The introductions of the *atbiya- dañña* in *Wärädas* and *meketel Wäräda* were intended to give quick justice and solve disputes in their respective villages. It is significant to note that cases beyond their ability were

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<sup>148</sup>Bazezew, pp. 25-30; DMUAC, Folder No. **ዞን/አስ/** 0163, File No. 52, A Letter from Yä Mätäkäl awrajja Polisé Mämerya to Lä Gojjam Ṭäklay Gézat Asetädadär Şefät Bét; Ref. No.6135/94/47, Date Nähase 26, 1967 E.C.

<sup>149</sup>Informants: Direba Kumässa, Amsalu Däreßsa, and Alämitu Fufa.

<sup>150</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>151</sup>DMUAC, Folder No.**ዞን/አስ/**0163, File No.**ሠ.ሠ**46, A Letter from Mätäkäl awrajja Gézat Şefet Bét Lä Wänbära *Wäräda* Şefet Bét, Ref. No.278/94/47, Date Tähisas 14, 1953 E.C; informants: Yäşwas Amänté, Oliğira Däbäba, and Alämitu Fufa.

directly pushed to the *meketel Wārāda* and the *Wārādä* court accordingly.<sup>152</sup> The establishment of local judges had its own drawback since there were no means set out by the state to control their every activity. Due to this problem, the *atbyia- daññas* were irresponsible and highly corrupt. Besides, court case gave opportunity to them to get some amount of money, they made themselves busy in hearing minor cases and this made them to be highly exposed to corruption.<sup>153</sup> Accumulated grievances of the land tax and administrative reforms during this period further aggravated insecurity problem in the Wänbära particularly and the nation in general after total rejection of locally honored *balabats* and elites following the outbreak of the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Informants: Jäbre Bäki, Oliğira Däbäba, Oliğira Fäyissa, and Amssalu Deressa.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> Bénišangul Gumuz Information Bureau--, p.23.

## CHAPTER III

### **Wänbära Wäradä during the Därg Period, 1974-1991**

The discontent of the oppressed peoples of Ethiopia gathered momentum in the late 1960s and early 1970s culminating in a creeping coup that saw the imperial regime increasingly dismembered. Factors such as the world oil price rise, Emperor Hailé Sellassié's government failure to deal with the Ethiopian famine of 1973-1974 coincided with more general grievances about imperial regime's inability to generate wide spread improvement in the living standards of societies.<sup>155</sup> Moreover, the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution was the outcome of long years of popular dissatisfaction and discontent with the imperial government. Emperor Hailé Sellassié failed to solve the country's problems; especially the agrarian crisis and the grievances of the army, teachers, taxi drivers and students discredited the system.<sup>156</sup>

The main objective of revolution was that each social group was interested in radical changes to fulfill its ambitions. The opposition initially started in the city of Addis Ababa. The resistance came from the students, teachers and taxi drivers in which they staged strikes and demonstrations. Teachers and students rebellion was targeted against the educational program that the reigning emperor formulated in the educational policy known as the Educational Sector Review. In addition to this taxi drivers compared the price of petrol with the former time and

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<sup>155</sup> Bahru Zewde, *A History Modern Ethiopia 1855-1991*, (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2002), p.229-236.

<sup>156</sup> Fred Holiday and Maxine Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution* (London: There Ford Press Ltd, 1981), pp. 83-85; Christopher Clapham, *Transformation and Continuities in Revolutionary Ethiopia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p.38.

needed reduction of its price. The living condition of the army in Ethiopia was the other thing that needed improvement.<sup>157</sup>

Moreover, the opposition against the Emperor repeatedly took place in towns and finally the 1974 revolution overthrew the Emperor and ended the imperial government in Ethiopia.<sup>158</sup>

Measures were taken to force the emperor to leave his position and the military force assumed power. The military officers who were sent to the capital to negotiate with the government of Hailä Sellassié had formally established the *Därg* (committee) on 28 June 1974. As soon as the *Därg* came to power, it established Provisional Military Government in September 1974 which marked the end of Emperor Hailä Sellassié's imperial rule of absolute monarchy in Ethiopia.<sup>159</sup> After assuming power, the *Därg* started to arrest high ranking officials, executing the most detested exponents and replacing the corrupt administration in the rural areas by new political figures.<sup>160</sup>

Moreover, the 1974 revolution and the establishment of Provisional Military Administration were patronized by most of the local people of Wänbära. The deposition of the emperor in September 1974 was regarded by the inhabitants of Wänbära as it would give them ownership right over their land.<sup>161</sup> The deposition of the imperial government brought many reforms for the people of the region in that it ended the political supremacy and dominance of the relatives of the

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<sup>157</sup> Andergachew Tiruneh, *The Ethiopian Revolution, 1974-1987: A Transformation from An Aristocracy to A Totalitarian Autocracy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.38; Shiferaw Bekele, *An Economic History of Modern Ethiopia*---, p.139.

<sup>158</sup> Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1991*, --, pp. 236.

<sup>159</sup> Clapham, p. 40; Solomon Ashagrie, "A History of Farta *Wäräda* , 1935-1991," (MA Thesis, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 2011), p.78.

<sup>160</sup> Clapham, p. 40; Siegford Pausewang, *Peasant, Land and Society: A Social History of Land Reform in Ethiopia*,(London: Verlag,1983), p.105; Negusie Ayele, "The Ethiopian Revolution" *Journal of African Activist Association*,. XII, 3, (1983), pp 38-39.

<sup>161</sup> Informants: Käbädä Deréssa, Kälbässa Oliğira, and Jäläta Gidäda

feudal aristocrats. The relatives of the old regime and officials were immediately victimized by the ascendancy of the *Därg* to power. In some areas, the wealth of *balabats* were expropriated, and the big landlords were forced to be deposed from their former positions.<sup>162</sup>

The year from 1974 and 1991, was the period when the new government, the *Därg* introduced important reforms in the political and the socio economic fields of the country so as to overcome the prevailing discontent of the peasant crisis. Of all demanded changes the need to reform land utilization system was given the first place. It was introduced to the Ethiopian people via the decree of March 1975.<sup>163</sup>

## **Reforms of *Därg***

### **Land Reform**

Land is the primary means of generating income for most of the peasants in rural areas and valuable resources for those who engage in agricultural activities. As an important resource, it contributes to investment, wealth accumulation and inheritance for generations.<sup>164</sup> The feudal land tenure system was practiced in Ethiopia until the 1974 Revolution. The old regime land tenure system was soon changed by the land reform proclamation issued in 1975. Accordingly the first and central goal was to start the process of land distribution and the organization of peasants in to associations.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>163</sup> Steven Davies, "The Political Economy of Land Tenure in Ethiopia,"(PhD Thesis: University of St Andrews, 2008), p.137-138; Siegford Pausewang, *Peasant, Land and society---*, p.105; Dawit Wolde Giorgis, *Red Tears: War, Famine and Revolution in Ethiopia* (Trenton: The Red Sea Press, 1989), pp. 11-13.

<sup>164</sup> Ṭéhay Berhänä Sellassié, "Development in Land Tenure in Härärgé Province (1887-1935),"(June 18, 1975), P.56

<sup>165</sup> Siegford Pausewang, p.105; Marina Ottaway, "The Ethiopian Land Reform: From Political Change to Economic Development," *In Proceedings of the Eight International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, II, (May, 1989), p. 389.

The land reform policy of 1975 was one of the most important measures that was followed by the campaign of land redistribution which opened the venue for land less tenants to get access to land. These changes had direct impact in abolishing the feudal-tenant relationship and gave an opportunity to have access to agricultural land and even other renewable natural resources. The 1975 land reform was based on the slogan of the land to tiller by the students.<sup>166</sup> And in fact, it gained acceptance by the mass of the people of the *Wäräda*. In Wänbära *Wäräda*, the land was under the possession of *balabats*. Despite this, the land reform which was issued by the *Därg* began to dispossess the *balabats*' land in the *Wäräda*.<sup>167</sup> Using the 1975 proclamation, the *Därg* announced that, all rural land to be the collective property of the Ethiopian people. In addition to this the proclamation notes that all privately owned rural land was to be distributed to people who were willing to cultivate their holdings personally.<sup>168</sup>

Concerning the proclamation, a large number of people were in fact in doubt about the implementation of the new land reform. They thought that the proclamation may not achieve its goals and would remain ideal. However, the government was not worried to put into action the statement of the issued land reform effectively. Finally, the government attempted to achieve the proclamation through the campaign of the students in which they were able to, educate peasants, organizing peasant associations, and consolidating political awareness to redistribute land in Wänbära *Wäräda*.<sup>169</sup> The military government attempted to bring changes

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<sup>166</sup> Allan Hoban, "Social Anthropology and Development Planning a Case Study in Ethiopia Land Reform Policy," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, X, 4, 1972, pp.561-82.

<sup>167</sup> Informants: Yäšwas Amänté, Kābādä Deréssa, Abābä Gudāta.

<sup>168</sup> Proclamation No. 31 of 1975, "A Proclamation to Provide for Public Ownership of Rural Lands," *Nägarit Gazäta* 34/26 April, 1975, p. 94.

<sup>169</sup> Informants: Zäläläm Wäreku, Šumété Dābāla, and Subalāw Mälaku.

regarding land in which the state effectively eradicated the traditional institutions of *rest* and *gult*, and was engaged in the activity to distribute the land through peasant associations.<sup>170</sup>

The 1975 land decree made all rural land the collective property of the Ethiopian people. The main features of this proclamation, which was entitled "public ownership of rural land", were: the abolition of individual ownership of land, ended tenancy and introduced rural organizations such as peasant associations.<sup>171</sup>

### **Peasant Associations**

The formation of peasant Associations was one of the most significant typical features of land reform. After the revolution the case of peasants in Ethiopia in general and that of Wänbära *Wäräda* in particular was given due attention by the authorities of the new regime. As a result, the state started to form peasant organizations under peasant associations all over the country.<sup>172</sup>

Based on the decree issued to implement the reorganization of rural areas about 60 peasant associations (PAs) were established in Wänbära *Wäräda* and majority of the peasants were registered to be members of their respective *qäbäle* peasant associations. In most cases, the dividing line among each peasant associations were geographic features such as valleys, rivers, trees on plain lands and mountains.<sup>173</sup> Even though the 1975 land reform proclamation conceived the formation of peasant associations, it was proclamation No. 71 of 1975 that provided a legal recognition for their institution which was strengthened throughout the country.<sup>174</sup> Here, the

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<sup>170</sup> Warriner, D, "A Report on Land Reform in Ethiopia," *Paper Prepared for the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa*, (Addis Ababa, 1970), p. 52.

<sup>171</sup> Proclamation No. 31 of 1975, "A Proclamation to Provide for Public Ownership of Rural Lands," *Nägarit Gazäta* 34/26, April, 1975, pp. 93-100.

<sup>172</sup> Siegfried Pausewang, pp. 87-93.

<sup>173</sup> "Wänbära *Wäräda* Yämastawoqya Şifat Bet" *Yä Wänbära Tarik...*, p. 25; informants: Şumété Däbäla, Yäşwas Amänté, and Tadässä Mäkonän

<sup>174</sup> Proclamation No. 71 of 1975, "A Proclamation to Provide for the Organization and Consolidation of Peasant Association," *Nägarit Gazäta*, 35/15, December, 1975, pp. 108-109.

major goal of the introduction of peasant associations by *Därg* was to monopolize the rural area of the country.<sup>175</sup>

Based on this proclamation, the most important administrative bodies of the PAs were the General Assembly, the Defense Committee and the Executive Committee. Among all these organs, the General Assembly was the main decision making body of the PAs.<sup>176</sup>

In Wänbära *Wäräda*, peasant associations were organized at *qäbälé* level. They were important and well organized societal institutions in the area under study. Accordingly, most of the peasants of the *Wäräda* were interested to involve in the association in their respective areas at the beginning of the *Därg* regime. Despite this, at the same time there were persons who were not attracted by peasant associations and even disliked the attempts of the government at large.<sup>177</sup>

It generally, appreciated that the main objective of the new government was aborting the system of feudalism which eventually endangered some of the beneficiary groups of the society specially the landlords.<sup>178</sup>

The reality reveals that the peasant associations widely patronized and were spread into every *qäbälé* of Wänbära *Wäräda* and large number of peasants became members of the associations in areas they belonged to. As it was stated each peasant associations in *Wäräda* led by an elected chairperson and a committee. They had the responsibility to implement the day-to-day affairs of the associations. Apart from this, since these associations were conferred with the power to

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<sup>175</sup> Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1991*, --, p.243.

<sup>176</sup> Alämneh Mäläsé, *Peasants, Agrarian Socialism and Rural Development in Ethiopia*, (London: West View Press, 1987), p. 54.

<sup>177</sup> Informants: Tadässä Mäkonän, Šumété Däbäla, and Ewunäto Asägé.

<sup>178</sup> Warriner, D, "A Report of Land Reform in Ethiopia---," p.52; Michel Stahl, "Capturing Peasants through Co-operatives: The case of Ethiopia," *Review of African political Economy*, No.44, (1989), pp. 28-29.

deliver administrative services, they were also engaged in judicial activities in their respective areas.<sup>179</sup>

The main objectives of PAs were initially to implement the land reform proclamations and thereby land was redistributed among peasants by PAs. Later on, their responsibilities were extended in scope through continuous proclamations.<sup>180</sup> In relation to this, in 1979, peasants associations in Wänbära were authorized to enforce law and collect tax within their area. Formerly, before the ascendancy of the *Därg* to power, these activities were given to the *qoroos* and *balabats*. The majority of PAs in Wänbära accepted an order from the *Wäräda* governors and *Wäräda* Peasant Association leaders. This was strengthened more through the monthly meeting and discussion of all the PAs conducted at the *Wäräda* level.<sup>181</sup>

Regarding the contribution of peasant associations in Wänbära *Wäräda*, they were playing a pivotal role in providing valuable contribution to the change of the production of peasants' farms. They were actively involved in series of coordinated activities for development. In this manner, the association played a significant role in directing the society in road building, tree planting, and soil conservation programs in the locality. The associations had also facilitated the land redistribution process in the study area. The PAs in Wänbära gave more emphasis to the redistribution of land to all landless without giving much attention to fertility of plots of land. Due to this the agricultural productivity of peasants were decreased.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> *Agrarian Reform in Ethiopia* (Uppsal: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1984), pp. 37-39. Informants: Amsalu Däreśsa, Kābādā Derēśsa, and Oliġira Fāyissa.

<sup>180</sup> A Proclamation No. 130 of 1977, "All Ethiopian Peasant Association Establishment Proclamation," *Nāgarit Gazāta* 37/1, September, 1977, pp. 99-102.

<sup>181</sup> Informants: Tadāśśā Mākonān, Šumētē Dābāla, and Oliġira Fāyissa.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

In fact, distribution of land was an event that was carried out in 1979 and 1980 with the involvement of the Ministry of Agriculture. Initially, the committees were elected from the members of peasant associations in 1979.<sup>183</sup> Consequently, the committee registered the land owners in *Wänbära Wārāda* and peasants who monopolized extra land were made to redistribute it to the landless peasants in the *Wārāda*. However, some committee members of PAs were involved in corruption than respecting law and order in their respective areas.<sup>184</sup>

## **Co-operatives in Wänbära Wārāda**

### **Producers' Co-operatives**

For a long period agricultural production in the country was mainly dependent on the engagement of individual farmer in which they could not provide sufficient products for consumptions and surplus for industries. Besides this, the subsistence farming directs the households into poverty and hunger.<sup>185</sup> The *Därg* after introducing the Land Reform of 1975, adopted strategies and mechanisms that it believed could bring reforms and transformation in life of the rural agricultural population. In so doing, the government wanted to see the changes.<sup>186</sup>

The *Därg* took various steps which were believed to improve the life of the peasants. So to achieve this plan, the *Därg* introduced different types of agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, extension programs and special seeds, anti-weeding, insecticide. Moreover, it attempted to appoint agricultural experts at *Wārāda* level. But all such efforts brought little change in the life

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<sup>183</sup> Dessalegn Rahmato, p. 82; Paul Brietzke, "Land Reform in Revolutionary Ethiopia", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, XIV, 4, Dec. 1976, p. 652.

<sup>184</sup> Informants: Diribé Kābādä, Subalāw Mälaku, and Šumété Dābāla.

<sup>185</sup> Dessalegn Rahmato, "Agrarian Change and Agrarian Crisis: State and Peasantry in Post-Revolution Ethiopia" *Proceedings of the 9th International Congress of Ethiopian Studies*, I, (Moscow, 1986), p. 466.

<sup>186</sup> Kabābw Daka, "The Role of Cooperatives in the Socialist Transformation of Agriculture," *Institute of Development Research Seminar on Strategies for Socialist Rural Transformation* (October, 1978), pp. 4-5.

of rural population.<sup>187</sup> The main goal of new agricultural policy of the *Därg* was improving agricultural productivity by establishing producers' cooperatives (*YäAmračoč YäHebrät Sera Mahbär*). To succeed in this plan the government motivated peasants to involve in collective farming on plots of land as determined by the government. Accordingly the government designed many ways of enforcement to make all peasants under the umbrella of producers' cooperatives. In the first place, it monopolized land of individual farmer and gave it to cooperatives. If an individual did not join the cooperatives it means he loses the land, so without willingness peasants would have to join the cooperatives. Secondly, non members of the cooperatives could not get agricultural inputs and other advantages. Therefore, in order to get these benefits peasants became members of cooperatives. In addition to this the government arranged time for individual farmer to provide free labor service to cooperative. This was also another factor that forced peasants to become members of the cooperatives.<sup>188</sup>

Producers' cooperatives came into existence on basis the issuance of proclamation No. 138 of 1978.<sup>189</sup> Peasant cooperative farming came into being, for reasons that it would bring the rural peasants to join producers' cooperatives and to encourage peasants to work together for their development.<sup>190</sup> Accordingly, the government introduced a program and encouraged the peasants to come together and to bring their farmlands for common use.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> E.N. Vassilyeva, "Legal Basis of Cooperative Farming in Ethiopia" *Proceedings of the 9th International Congress of Ethiopian Studies*, II, (Moscow, 1986), pp.185-189; Bäfekadu Dägefä, "Towards Socialist Transformation of Agriculture," *Institute of Development Research Seminar on Strategies for Socialist Rural Transformation* (October, 1978), p. 6.

<sup>188</sup> Informants: Diribé Kābādā, Ewnātu Asāgē, and Kābādā Deréssa.

<sup>189</sup> "A Proclamation to Provide for the Establishment of Cooperative Societies," *Negarit Gazetta* (Proclamation, No.138, March 3, 1978), p. 41.

<sup>190</sup> Sisay Getachew, "Agricultural Development Policy Making and Practice under the Military Regime," (BA Thesis, Department of Political Science, Addis Ababa University, July 2001), p. 14.

<sup>191</sup> Equar Täka, "Agrarian Reform and Social Change in Ethiopia since 1975," (BA Thesis, Department of Economics, Addis Ababa University, June, 1986), p. 32.

Despite the measures taken by government to enforce peasants to join the associations in Wänbära *Wäräda* the majority of peasants wanted to isolate themselves from the association and were interested to farm individually. Small number of peasants joined and established PCs in the district. In 1986 there was one producer cooperative in Wänbära *Wäräda* which was composed of numerically about 102 members within PCs in the district.<sup>192</sup>

Similar to the land reform policy, the implementation of PCs in Wänbära *Wäräda* faced great challenges. The agricultural producers' cooperatives were not successful in developing productivity of the member of the cooperatives. The first and the most important issue was that the peasants joined the cooperatives without interest because they were pushed by the government to join it. Another reason for its failure was, the product of the cooperative was all came under the monopoly of the government and government shared the product among the peasants on the basis of the interest of their consumption. The anger of the peasants was not only in the product distribution but also in work inequality; there were hard worker peasants and peasant simply engaged as workers. So, peasants opposed equal distribution of products with unequal involvement in harvesting process. Moreover, the government gave more attention to political affairs rather than to the improvement of productivities.<sup>193</sup> For the above and other reasons the peasants left the association and as time went on the peasant cooperatives were disintegrated gradually dissolved.<sup>194</sup> As far as the contribution of the Därg regime was concerned in agricultural producers' cooperatives the decisive one was environmental conservation. In such attempt the societies were organized and carried out forestation in the *Wäräda* this was still

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<sup>192</sup> Wänbära *Wäräda* Agriculture and Rural Development Office (hereafter I use WWARDO), Folder No. 57, File No 101, Wänbära *Wäräda* Geberena Lemat Şehfät, Bét, "Yä Wänbära *Wäräda* Yä Mahibärt Märaja Ĵinçer," *Ginbot* 18, 1980EC.

<sup>193</sup> WWARDO, Folder No.53, File No 87, Wänbära *Wäräda* Geberena Lemat Şehfät, Bét, "Yä Wänbära *Wäräda* Yä Mahibärt Märaja Ĵinçer," *Ginbot* 18, 1980EC; informants: Subalaw Mälaku, Ewnätu Asäğé, and Dässalegn Tässäma.

<sup>194</sup> Informants: Ewnätu Asäğé, Diribé Käbädä, and Käbädä Deressa.

appreciated by the community. Generally, the introduction of agricultural peasant cooperatives in Wänbära *Wäräda* brought great changes in the means of production and rural social institutions.<sup>195</sup>

### **Service Cooperatives**

Service cooperatives were the peasant associations that were established in Wänbära *Wäräda*. Proclamation No. 138 of 1978 provided for the establishment of Cooperative Societies issued by the military government.<sup>196</sup> The major functions of service cooperatives were to provide significant services to the members of cooperatives. Accordingly the SC provides market service, consumer commodities, saving services and others. Hence it aimed at protecting peasants from exploitation by private traders.<sup>197</sup>

The service cooperatives were initially more impressive than producers' cooperatives to the peasants of the district. Consequently, a large number of peasants joined the service cooperatives without any enforcement from the government. It was noted that the service cooperatives in Wänbära *Wäräda* were formed by the combination of three to ten *qäbäle* peasant associations. In the districts there were 10 service cooperatives having the total capital of 55,225 birr.<sup>198</sup>

Similar to other areas the central goal of service cooperatives in Wänbära was to establish shops of the cooperatives where they made distribution of goods to the members using membership cards. The service cooperatives supplied commodities like sugar, oil, salt, match, soap, nail, dry

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<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>196</sup> "A Proclamation to Provide for the Establishment of Cooperative Society," *Negarit Gazetta*, (Proclamation No.138, March 3, 1978), p. 41.

<sup>197</sup> Informants: Šumété Däbäla, Ewnätu Asäğé, and Subaläw Mälaku.

<sup>198</sup> WWARDO, Folder No. 53, File No 87, Wänbära *Wäräda* Geberena Lemat Sefät, Bét, "Yä Wänbära *Wäräda* Yä Mahibärt Märäja Tinqer, *Miyaziya*, 1980EC; informants: Dässaleğni Tässäma, Kälbässa Oliğira, and Subaläw Mälaku.

cell batteries to the members through the shops in *Wäräda*.<sup>199</sup> Moreover, the shops bought the grains from peasants in lower price and sold them with earning some profits to Agricultural Market Corporation (AMC).<sup>200</sup> For example, in Wänbära *Wäräda teff* purchased at the price of 30 birr per quintal and sold to 40 Birr, in which they earned 10 Birr profit per quintal. Initially, the service cooperatives were able to accumulate money for their associations. However; it lacks significance due to a number of reasons. In the first, place the chair persons of service cooperatives were engaged in corruption and embezzled the peasant associations' and service cooperatives' resources. Secondly, most of the service cooperatives failed to supply variety of goods and satisfy the demand of the members due to the transportation problems. Finally, the peasants lacked trust on their associations and began to withdraw their membership from the service cooperatives and it gradually deteriorated towards the end of 1980s.<sup>201</sup> The above factors resulted in the failure of service cooperatives in Wänbära *Wäräda*.<sup>202</sup>

### **Villagization in Wänbära *Wäräda***

The villagization program became one of the issues of the military regime after July 1985. Thus the program attempted to create favorable environment to overcome the prevailing socio-economic and political problems of the era.<sup>203</sup> Therefore, villagization program started in 1985, with the attempt of moving rural population to the newly preferred areas. Initially, this program was not prepared with the involvement of peasants and it did not take into consideration ideas

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<sup>199</sup> Alämayähu Lirénso, "Grain Marketing in the Post 1974 Revolution: Policies Problems and Prospects," *In Proceedings of the eighth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, I (Addis Ababa, 1984), p. 392; informants: Addisu Guruno, Dässaleġni Tässäma.

<sup>200</sup> Girma k, *The State and Development in Ethiopia* (London: Humanities Press International, 1992), p. 20.

<sup>201</sup> Informants: Diribé Kābādä, Subalāw Mälaku, and Eäba Däki.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> Calpham, p. 175.

and demands of the peasants rather the program was run by higher ranking officials in the *Wäräda*.<sup>204</sup>

The major aim of *Mändär Meseräta* (villagization) was to introduce favorable situations in the effective use of resources endowed by nature, closing down the gap between rural-urban via providing social service to the societies nearer to their village; growing the agricultural productivity; and to increase village security and protection.<sup>205</sup> Depending on these, the Military government attempted to gather the scattered settlement in the rural areas. The government introduced instructions that comprised the criteria for the establishment of villages. Thus the program was run by national villagization coordinating committees, and these bodies also set up at the *Wäräda* level to carry out the program. Accordingly, the guidelines gave due attention to the preferred village areas that have nearness to water supply, and fertile land. Moreover, the guideline for selection of new settlements was located close to public services like roads, health centers, schools, markets and religious institutions.<sup>206</sup>

To this end in Wänbära *Wäräda*, the villaization places were selected and the process of implementation begun in 1985. However, masses of peasants strongly resisted the program and refused to leave their former settlement areas where they had inhabited and lived for a long period, but were unable to halt it. Consequently, officials following their failure to convince peasants to evacuate their former places peacefully, they took harsh measures. As it was noted the measures taken were miserable actions; houses were demolished, household materials of peasants become valueless. Besides the objection of peasants to leave their settlement areas, peasant association selected villagization sites without agreement and interest of settlers. Hence,

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<sup>204</sup> Informants: Zälaläm Wäreku, Šumété Däbäla, and Käbädä Deréssa.

<sup>205</sup> Alula Yohannes, “A History of Dämbächa *Wäräda* to 1991,” (MA Thesis, Department History, Addis Ababa University, 2011), p. 117.

<sup>206</sup> Informants: Emiru Aräga, Addisu Guruno, and Kälbässa Oliğira.

it aggravated the peasants to resist the program. Moving people from their former settlement to the new sites had its own effect on their income earnings and agricultural productions. In addition to this, due to the program the villages became crowded; peasants were forced to practice the customs of people where they were settled. Moreover, the community might be affected by transmitted diseases such as cholera, tuberculosis and other due to compactness of villages and also it aggravated the social crimes.<sup>207</sup>

More or less the study done at national level reveals resemblance to the Wänbära *Wäräda*. Thus, the source indicates villagization program failed because of the failure of the government to fulfill its promise of financial resource and experienced persons in the villages.<sup>208</sup> Villagization program gathered people together in which it resulted in decline in agricultural production and gradually aggravated soil degradation. In addition to this, the program intended to force people to live far away from their agricultural land and this exposed their crops to wild animals' destruction. Beyond this, traveling long distance for farming activities with their farming tools and animals was a difficult task to peasants.<sup>209</sup>

In resemblance to this, my informants noted that villagization brought about more serious problems in the prevailing situation of the peasants' economy. Without considering farming habits, peoples which comprised cultivation of crops such as coffee and other crops they forced people to leave their places. Hence, villagization resulted in low production of agriculture in Wänbära *Wäräda*. Despite this, towards the end of the 1980s, peasants started to leave the new

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<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>208</sup> Birru Birmeji, "Villagization and Rural Transformation in Ethiopia," (BA Thesis, Department of Political Science, Addis Ababa University, 1988), pp. 49-50; informants: Emiru Aräga, Käbädä Deréssa.

<sup>209</sup> Calpham, pp. 175-178.

villages in mass, and following the deposition of the *Därg* in 1991, majority of peasants returned to their former homeland.<sup>210</sup>

In general during the *Därg* regime, the *Wäräda* went through different changes, in some cases it was manifested by the emergence of new political and socio-economic program. The introduction of various programs in many areas of the district, the land reform proclamation, the formation of peasant association, producers' and service cooperatives came into being. In the initial year of the new regime's rule, peasants' favor was common. However, peasants of the *Wäräda* did not accept the introduction of producers' and service cooperatives. Particularly, the introduction and implementation of villagization program made the people tired of the regime's serious rule.<sup>211</sup>

### **Opposition and Collapse of the *Därg***

The revolution which overthrew Emperor Haile Selassie from power was unable to bring a democratic government to power. Thus the military government possessed political power and then began many reforms which created opposition among the people<sup>212</sup>. According to various source, resistance from different sections of societies continued in both towns and country side. The most significant challenge to the *Därg* came from the students and the teachers and civilians in the towns. These sections of society were motivated and led by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP).<sup>213</sup> Different political parties fought against the *Därg* in various parts of the country. Among them the EPRP is one of the fighters of the *Därg* in addition to the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and Tigrian People's Liberation Front

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<sup>210</sup> Informants: Yäšwas Amänté, Emiru Aräga, and Zälaläm Wäreku.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>212</sup> Solomon Ashagrie, p. 97.

<sup>213</sup> Andergachew Tiruneh, p.79.

(TPLF).<sup>214</sup> In Mätäkäl in general and in Wänbära *Wäräda* in particular the EPRP was successful in agitating the people against the *Därg* government.<sup>215</sup> Beginning from the introduction of its programs and policies the EPRP started its objection and able to activate the participants the *Därg* program to its sides secretly in addition to the students. They attempted to use different sections of societies. The base of their opposition against the regime was its failure to implement the land policy and others. While the EPRP attempts to control Wänbära was seriously resisted by the *Därg*.<sup>216</sup> The EPRP stands against the *Därg* by making propaganda showing the negative sides of the reforms of regime. For example, agitating forceful recruitment of youngster's intervention of the government in fixing the price of peasant's produce, other measures taken by the *Därg* frustrated to the people of the *Wäräda*.<sup>217</sup>

The EPRP understood the intention of the people of the *Wäräda* on the main issue in which they mobilized the people. In most cases the EPRP supporters were the educated groups, students, teachers and some other civilians who determined to sacrifice their lives to their targets.<sup>218</sup> The anti-*Därg* protest arranged by the EPRP and with their followers to discourage the government in city Addis Ababa in 1977. Thus government implemented clear option in mass execution to break the unity of the EPRP. Conducting this it was evidently intended to oblige the urban population into surrender and into revealing EPRP members; as a result many people lost their lives. Despite this, the EPRP introduced the policy of armed struggle continued in different parts of the country.<sup>219</sup> In Wänbära also the *Därg* murdered many people who were suspected to have

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<sup>214</sup> Solomon, p. 100.

<sup>215</sup> GebruTareke, *Ethiopia, Power and Protest*, p. 219.

<sup>216</sup> Informants: Ayälä Tirunähi, Addisu Guruno, and Eäba Däki.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid*; Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1991*, --, p. 243.

<sup>218</sup> Informants: Ayälä Tirunähi, Eäba Däki, and Addisu Guruno.

<sup>219</sup> Andargachew Tiruneh, pp. 211-213.

relations with EPRP as a result the people detested *Därg* government.<sup>220</sup> Factors that forced the collapse of the *Därg* towards the close of the 1980s were: the failure of its economic policy, violence of human right, extreme autocracy which separated the regime from the community. Regime also faced a surprise plot of coup d'état by many generals and senior officials against the military government in 1989. Besides this, *Därg* officials were corrupt, soldiers and generals sold weapons to any one in including their opponents such as the EPRP. The final years when the war became inevitable multi-ethnic political party came into being formed the EPRDF. Between 1989-1990 the EPRDF controlled large territories in northern Ethiopia and in May 1991 marched to Addis Ababa, forcing Colonel Mengistu HaileMariam to leave the country.<sup>221</sup> After coming of new government to power *Därg* cadres who were in Wänbära *Wäräda* merged into the society. The *Wäräda* became under the newly forming Bénišangul Gumuz regional state.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Informants: Kåbåda Dåréssa, Zålalåm Wåreku.

<sup>221</sup> Andargachew Tiruneh, pp. 345-346.

<sup>222</sup> Tsega Endalew, *Conflict Resolution Through Cultural Tolerance: an Analysis of Mičhu Institution in Måtåkål Region, Ethiopia*, (Social Science Research Series Report, No.25, 2002), p.3.

## CHAPTER IV

### **Socio-Economic Developments in Wänbära Wäräda**

Even if relative reforms were introduced after the 1980s, in the fields of socio-economic and infrastructural developments that would provide public and private services for the society was very low in Mätakäl region in general and Wänbära Wäräda in particular.<sup>223</sup> Lack of these services indicated that the population of the district was unprivileged in the same way as other rural areas from the changes that were carried out. This shows that the successive regimes the two governments were giving more attention to the towns. Under these regimes peasants were more exposed to various taxation burdens.<sup>224</sup>

The main reason for low level of development of public services in the district was the low level of income of the inhabitants individually or in groups people were unable to get social services. Secondly, the annual budget allocated by the Imperial government was more than the annually collected income from the district. These in general brought about low level of infrastructural development in the Wäräda. Despite this, relatively some changes came into being during the *Därg* period.<sup>225</sup>

#### **Educational Service**

Education is one of the means to combat backwardness and traditional outlooks and to spread modernization through the introduction of modern education. It was during the post Adwa period that modern education was introduced and groups of modern intellectuals started to appear in

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<sup>223</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.

<sup>224</sup> Bazäzew Gälaw, p.14.

<sup>225</sup> Informants: Dässaleġni Abära, Gäläta Kitäla, and Gäläta Ayäna.

Ethiopia.<sup>226</sup> The state demanded the establishment of modern education because the expanding bureaucracy needed educated officials for services in diplomatic fields as well as the need for different clerks and accountants. Therefore, schools were established by the state which was to serve in producing civil servants.<sup>227</sup> Initially, the introduction of modern education goes back to the opening of Menelik II's primary school in the year 1908.<sup>228</sup> Following, its introduction the government gave due emphasis for its expansion in a properly organized manner in the post Italian period. Prior to the beginning of formal modern education in Ethiopia, church education was mainly dominant in many parts of the country and it was provided by the clergymen and missionaries.<sup>229</sup>

In the study area Däbrä Zäyt Maryam church played a great role in the propagation and development of education in the *Wäräda*. Moreover, it had contributed religious education in the district and also in the nearby areas. Education was delivered in a small house constructed by inhabitants. The clergymen who were engaged in educating people without pay initially.<sup>230</sup>

Later on, when education was disseminated into the society the students who were attending the church school increased. Following the increment of number of church students it is said that the then ruler, *Fitawrari* Ejäta Biftu of the district built another house for the purpose in the year 1943. The clergymen continued their teaching in a similar way and it was during this time that

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<sup>226</sup> Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1991---*, p.104.

<sup>227</sup> Meaza Bekele, "A Study of Modern Education in Ethiopia: Its Foundation, its Development, its Future with Emphasis on Primary Education," (Ph.D Dissertation, Colombia: Colombia University, 1996), pp.32-35.

<sup>228</sup> Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1991---*, p.108.

<sup>229</sup> Informants: Gäläta Kitäla, Dässaleğni Abära, and Zäläläm Mämo.

<sup>230</sup> Täfäri Wänber, "Yä Däbrä Zääyt Maryam Bétékristian Tark..." p.10; informants: Gäläta Kitäla, Dässaleğni Abära, and Zäläläm Mämo.

they were able to get birr 20 monthly salary and additional birr 10 as an incentive for their services. Formal modern education started in organized manner in Wänbära *Wäräda* in 1946.<sup>231</sup>

Therefore, formal modern education in Wänbära started in 1946. Lack of professionals and shortages of classrooms were problems that forced students to interrupt their education at the fourth grade level.<sup>232</sup> To overcome these problems the community with the initiation of the governor at the time collected money and material and constructed additional classrooms in 1958. In the same year the school was upgraded to grade six and at the same time teachers increased in number. Despite this, owing to the above factor students were forced to interrupt their education after the sixth grade level. Therefore, a minimum number of students had the opportunity to go to other areas such as Däbrä Markos for further education.<sup>233</sup>

Regarding the expansion of infrastructures particularly schools, the Ethiopian government faced financial constraints in the 1960s and 1970s. Thus, the non-governmental bodies like Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) played a significant role in constructing schools specifically elementary schools.<sup>234</sup> As a result of this in Wänbära *Wäräda* in 1972 six classrooms were built by the money donated from Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and in collaboration with the community. In spite of this effort, after grade eight the students quite schooling due to various reasons; that is the distance from school to their home and inadequacy of school facilities as well as other materials. Even if, challenges were there, it is relatively better

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<sup>231</sup> Informants: Dässaleğni Abära, Gäläta Kitäla, and Jäbre Bäki.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>233</sup> Informants: Zämänu Bäläy, Jäbre Bäki, and Kälbässa Oliğira.

<sup>234</sup> Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1991---*, p.221.

than the period prior to the 1970s. Elementary schools began to expand in different parts of the districts such as, to Sänkora, Gäsängäsa, Boläla, Kitar, Gočor and Gawla.<sup>235</sup>

As time went on the government began to interfere in removing the obstacles that forced students to interrupt their education after grade eight. The government established the next grade level, grade nine and with this senior secondary school started giving educational service in 1984.<sup>236</sup> Wänbära *Wäräda* senior secondary school after giving the first Ethiopian school leaving certificate examination in 1988 due to political turmoil that created between the Darg and Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party, schools and other governmental offices were closed at least for two years. During this time the EPRP fighters looted different school facilities and that led to the interruption of normal teaching and learning process in the district.<sup>237</sup>

## **Health Services**

Regarding health institutions there were some improvements after the ascendancy of the Military government to power in the 1970s. It was during the *Därg* regime that health centers were installed in the *Wäräda* and then expanded to the rural areas of the district. Despite this the newly installed health centers were not adequately giving sufficient health services to a large number of peoples.<sup>238</sup>

In Wänbära *Wäräda* until 1950s the health services that were provided to the inhabitant was very low. However, towards the close of the 1950s the first clinic was established in which the traditionally trained people by the Italians began to give service in the clinic to the inhabitants of

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<sup>235</sup> Dabela Alemu, A History of Däbrä Zäyt Town--, pp. 28-29; informants: Gäläta Ayäna, Zämänu Bäläy, and Dässaleğni Abära.

<sup>236</sup> "Wänbära *Wäräda* Yämastawoqya Şifat Bet "Yä Wänbära Tarik...", p. 24.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>238</sup> Informants: Sädi Jirata, Yäşwas Amänté, and Jäbre Bäki.

the district and the surrounding region. It was said that a person named Adimasu Guḡsado began to give service in the clinic. But the number of population was not proportional to be treated in a single clinic hence; this forced the establishment of another health center in 1972.<sup>239</sup>

However, health service was still not sufficient for the population of the town and even to rural inhabitants. The absence of adequate medicine, professional personnel, medical materials and lack of pure water aggravated the health problems of the *Wäräda*. As a result of lack of infrastructural services such as transportation and pure water, health professionals, who were assigned to work in the *Wäräda*, were not interested to give their service for a long period. In addition to this, the health institutions that were found in the district were completely demolished and looted due to the political turmoil that existed towards the end of the 1980s and early 1990s.<sup>240</sup>

The inhabitants of Mätäkäl areas like Guba, Mandura and Dangura, were challenged by the prevalence of malaria diseases due to its tropical hot low land but relatively Wänbära *Wäräda* was free from this problem.<sup>241</sup> Both under the Imperial and *Därg* regimes, the inhabitants of Wänbära failed to get modern health services. However, in the area the wide spread of water borne diseases such as, cholera, diarrhea, amebas and others were observed. When this happened the central government did not give attention to overcome these miserable situations. Due to this there was high rate of increasing incidence of diseases in the *Wäräda*.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>239</sup>Dabela Alemu, A History of Däbrä Zäyt Town ---, p. 29.

<sup>240</sup> Informants: Kälbässa Oliḡira, Sädi Jirata, and Zämänu Bäläy.

<sup>241</sup> Tssega Endalew, *Conflict Resolution Through Cultural Tolerance*---, p.4.

<sup>242</sup> Informants: Sädi Jirata, Amsalu Däreḡssa, and Jäbre Bäki.

## Water Supply

Access to water is one of the prerequisites to human beings to be healthy and productive. However, large numbers of world's population are challenged by shortage of clean water supply. Especially in the developing countries such as Ethiopia the rural as well urban populations suffer from lack of clean drinking water.<sup>243</sup> Water is an essential resource for both living animals as well as human beings to live on earth. The availability of water in general is absolutely necessary not only for the survival of living things but also its potential for the development of any country. In Wänbära *Wäräda* the source of water for home utilization in the rural area is mainly obtained from ponds, rivers, wells while urban inhabitant used tap water.<sup>244</sup>

Water supply in the *Wäräda* during the period under study was insufficient. The district is endowed with the natural source of Alältu, Bäläs, Nägär, Šar and Dura Rivers which are known tributaries of the Abbay River. Inhabitants of the *Wäräda* used these rivers for drinking and other purposes for a long period.<sup>245</sup> Settlers in Sänkorä and Däbra Zäyt towns during the absence of perennial rivers mainly used well water. Moreover, people of the district did not get sufficient water until the downfall of the Military government. But it was after 1991 that some improvements were seen in the supply of clean water, when the government was able to build water pipes in various parts of *qäbäles* in the *Wäräda*.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Meron Mebrahtu, "Assessment of Community Managed Projects Approach in Developing Rural Water supply Schemes: A Case of Pawe and Mandura Woredas, Northeastern part of Benishangul Gumuz Regional State, Ethiopia," ( MA Thesis, Department of Institute of Technology Civil Engineering, Addis Ababa University, 2012), p.1.

<sup>244</sup> Informants: Gäläta Kitäla, Gäläta Ayäna, and Dässaleğni Tässäma.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>246</sup> Informants: Yäšwas Amänté, Sädi Jirata, and Zämänu Bäläy.

## Road Transportation

Mätäkäl region in general and Wänbära *Wäräda* in particular is characterized by inadequacy of well organized infrastructure. Some improvements were observed after 1984 road construction in which the road from Čagni to Bulän was extremely difficult and it only served as dry weather road. There is no modern transportation from Bulän to Wänbära in the rainy season.<sup>247</sup> In the absence of modern transportation and even now a days in some parts of the rural areas of Ethiopia domestic animals such as, mules, horses, donkeys and camels are largely used to transport commodities and people from place to place. In Wänbära *Wäräda* the domestic animals were the major means of transportation because of the difficulty of geographical features. The whole period of both Imperial and *Därg* regimes in the district the vehicle was impossible during the rainy seasons because the roads were neither graveled nor asphalted.<sup>248</sup>

Transportation service in Wänbära *Wäräda* was very poor during the period under study. The *Wäräda qäbäle* were connected with each other by roads constructed by the labor force of the people.<sup>249</sup> However, the construction of dry weather road enhanced the growth of trade in the *Wäräda*. Different kinds of trade commodities like perfume, salt, clothes and other trading items were imported in large amounts from Addis Ababa and in return trading goods like honey, coffee, wax, skins and hides are exported and had great demand in Addis Ababa.<sup>250</sup> Here, in the *Wäräda* coffee cultivation played a significant role for economic growth. During the time of coffee production, roads began to give service in which people were able to get coffee to the

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<sup>247</sup> Tsega Endalew, *Conflict Resolution Through Cultural Tolerance--*, p. 4.

<sup>248</sup> Benishangual Gumuz National Regional State Mätäkäl Administrative Zone Finance and Economic Development Department, Report, Assosa, 2001, pp. 31-33.

<sup>249</sup> Informants: Abära Mäbéyo, Gäläta Ayäna, and Gäläta Kitäla.

<sup>250</sup> Abdussamed H, Ahmed, "Trade and Politics in Gojjam--", pp. 29, 43. Informants: Gäsäsä Ali, Anäné Falaté.

market. Thus, it was also transported to other markets in Gojjam and Addis Ababa by merchants through Čagni and Buré.<sup>251</sup>

### **Communication**

Communication is the most important aspect which played a great role in the country's political, social and economic developments. This service consist postal, telecommunication and media services. Historically, the idea of communication service in Ethiopia was traced back to the reign of Emperor Menilik II. Telecommunication plays a pivotal role in the exchanges of ideas and information in different social, economic and cultural spheres.<sup>252</sup>

The rural inhabitants of the Wänbära *Wäräda* specifically during the Imperial and the *Därg* regimes failed to get communication service. But only the people who settled in the center of the district, Däbär Zäyit benefited in having access to communication. This was because Däbär Zäyit was the seat of the *Wäräda*. Its service was carried out by an operator manually.<sup>253</sup>

Moreover, electricity is the most significant sector for development and transformation of small and big towns. It provides input in the development of modern sectors and creates basis for business sectors, industrial sectors and others. In reality in the period under study, Wänbära *Wäräda* did not experience full time electric light, the maximum time of electricity is only for six hours and the source came from a generator.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Informants: Amsalu Däreśsa, Gäsäsä Ali, and Gäläta Kitäla.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>253</sup> “Yä Wänbära *Wäräda* Gebrena enna Gätär Lemat Şefät Bét” Yä Aksténšn Yä Sera Hidät,” Yä Hebrätäsäb Tinat Report, (Miyaziya, 2002 E.C), pp. 11-12.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*

## **Ethnic Relations and Interactions in Wänbära Wārāda**

The district is inhabited by people of different linguistic, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The main inhabitants of the *Wārāda* include the five ethnic groups such as the Šinaša, the Gumuz, the Oromo, the Amhara and the Agāw. They had socio-cultural and economic interactions among themselves.<sup>255</sup>

Ethnic relations can be considered in various ways in different parts of the world. The relationships could be either positive or negative. The negative aspect of ethnic relations however, could be conflict among them.<sup>256</sup> The Šinaša and the Gumuz had longer period of contact relatively than other ethnic groups in Wänbära *Wārāda*. The Šinaša live in close contact with the Gumuz who inhabited the low land area. They enter into conflict with the Gumuz due to raids and eviction. This was usually because the Šinaša requested them to pay tribute in kind, honey, grain and meat. The Šinaša threaten the Gumuz by telling them that they could bring drought, call locusts and send rats to destroy their crop using their traditional medicine. Therefore, due to these disagreements sometimes conflicts were created between them.<sup>257</sup> There were also constructive relations between the two ethnic groups. They have trade contacts specifically in gold. Since the Gumuz were well known in extracting gold they sold it to the Šinaša and thus trade developed positive relations and interaction among them.<sup>258</sup> During the time of ceremonial celebration of *Mäsqäl* there are also cultural ties among the two ethnic groups. Since the festival was conducted in the new year of September, both the Šinaša and

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<sup>255</sup> Dabela Alemu, "A History of Däbra Zäyt Town---", p. 1.

<sup>256</sup> Tsega Endalew, *Conflict Resolution through Cultural Tolerance--*, p. 14.

<sup>257</sup> Tsega Endalew, *Inter-Ethnic Relations on a Frontier Mätäkäl--*, p. 101.

<sup>258</sup> Däsälégn Rahmato, "Resettlement and Indigenous Population of Matakäl", *In The Proceedings of the Workshop on Famine Experience and Resettlement in Ethiopia*, (Institute of Development Research, Addis Ababa University, 1988), p.62.

Gumuz youngsters sung songs after the sun set in front of the house of each ethnic group separately. Thus, this gives an opportunity to the youngsters to select girls for marriage.<sup>259</sup> In the district also, the Šinaša and Gumuz have practiced similar marriage culture. Thus, both Šinaša and Gumuz practiced marriage of a widow in which she gets married to the brother of her deceased husband. It is known as *Nata* (Šinaša word). The main aim of the *Nata* is to safeguard children and properties of the deceased husband.<sup>260</sup>

There had also been close contact between the Oromo and the Gumuz during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. During the time of the arrival of the Oromo in Wänbära *Wäräda*, the Gumuz people played a great role in providing cooperation which strengthened their settlements. The Oromo were interested to adjust themselves to the new environment and this brought their good relation with the Gumuz of the area. In addition to this, the economic interest of the Oromo people during the initial period of their settlement led to the formation of close relations in which they demanded cotton that was mainly produced by the Gumuz, and on the other hand they did not have weavers and this type of inverse relations were created. The Oromo *mičhu* institution started in the initial period of the Oromo settlement in Wänbära *Wäräda*. It is stated that in the district the *mičhu* institution which was practiced between the Oromo and the Gumuz gradually stretched to the community of the settlers in creating close relations.<sup>261</sup>

From various traditional institutions important inter-ethnic relations emerged in the district. In the area inter-ethnic marriage among the Šinaša, Oromo, Agaw and the Amhara people is practiced. Moreover, there was close contact between the Oromo and the Šinaša that gradually

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<sup>259</sup> Abäbä Anno ena Addisu Adaminé, “*Yä-Boro Šinaša Bahersb AčarTärik ---*”, p. 28.

<sup>260</sup> Tsega Endalew, *Inter-Ethnic Relations on a Frontier Mätäkäl--*, p. 96.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid*, p.102.

directed into integration among them.<sup>262</sup> Since the initial period of their contact, the Oromo had developed various methods to adjust and live with the societies of the *Wäräda*. While they began to live with different communities they made cultural and political rearrangements, among this one is the *Luba baasa* institution. *Luba* means “freed, circumcised” while the suffix *baasa* means “to set or to make” so that *Luba basa* may be translated as “to set free or to make free.” This system was used to assimilate the non-Oromo settlers mainly to incorporate the Šinaša people in the district.<sup>263</sup> In the case of *Luba baasa* it is not mainly applicable to the Gumuz of the district rather they were greatly treated by the *Michu* and *Harma Hodha* institutions.<sup>264</sup>

With the exception of a few rural populations who kept the cultural traditions intact, most of the inhabitants of Šinaša in Wänbära *Wäräda* were assimilated to the Oromo culture through *Mädhicha*.<sup>265</sup> Various types of symbolic rituals were used in the adoption process. “The reprehensive of adopting clan placed *Mädhicha*, a freshly cut off from the limbs of sacrificial bulls, on the wrists of the representatives of adopted clan. Then two representatives cut their respective thighs, took some blood which they mixed together.”<sup>266</sup> This form of adoption mainly depended on the interest of the group to be adopted in which it brought an entire change into the Oromo ethnic identity. After completing this process, food and drinks were provided at the presence of *Abba Bokku* (father of the scepter) who assured the adoption process.<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> Informants: Tälässa Sädi, Gäläta Käba, and Mäkonän Wägäna.

<sup>263</sup> Tsega Endalew, *Inter-Ethnic Relations on a Frontier Mätäkäl--*, pp, 108-110.

<sup>264</sup> Tsega Endalew, *Conflict Resolution Through Cultural Tolerance--*, p.9; Tadesse Tamrat, Nilo-Saharan Interactions With Neighboring Highlands: the case of Gumuz of Gojjam and Wälläga, in *the Proceedings of the Workshop on Famine Experience and Resettlement in Ethiopia*, (Institute of Development Research, Addis Ababa University, 1988), pp.7-12.

<sup>265</sup> Informants: Abära Mäbeyo, Abäbä Gurmessa, and Tälässa Sädi.

<sup>266</sup> Tesema Ta'a, “The Political Economy of Western Central Ethiopia: From the Mid-16<sup>th</sup> to the Early-20<sup>th</sup> Centuries”, (PhD Dissertation, University of Michigan State, 1986), p.52.

<sup>267</sup> TsegaEndalew, *Inter-Ethnic Relations on a Frontier Mätäkäl--*, p. 110.

Through this institution the non-Oromo in Wänbära got equal protection and right with the Oromo. On the other hand, those who opposed adoption were ignored and discriminated in the social interactions. For instance it is impossible for them to sale their grain at the market. Moreover, there was also a pressure from the community to be adopted. In general, intermarriage was allowed between the adopted community and the Oromo which gradually brought complete assimilation because marriage facilitates the assimilation process. In the district almost many of the Šinaša people were assimilated in this manner.<sup>268</sup>

Additional, but not as much incorporative, time-honored disagreement of avoiding methods of adoption by the Oromo is *Harma Hodha*. It ought to be known that the Oromo devised these mechanisms to evade conflicts among the communities with whom they lived. *Harma Hodha* (sucking the breast) is a method that brought a parent-child association. A formal procedure is conducted and the "son" sucks the honey mixed with milk and dabbed on the breast (or in most cases the thumb) of his "father". This ceremony highlights the nurturing aspects of the relationship. The practical aspect is in fact one of client ship where the son expected some material assistance in return for the political and economic support he will give to his father.”<sup>269</sup>

In spite of plans at assimilation and finally at incorporation among the various ethnic groups in Wänbära there were ethnic disagreements and clashes between the Gumuz, on one hand and the better organized highland inhabitants like, the Oromo, the Šinaša and the Amhara on the other.<sup>270</sup> Gumuz people had a tradition of hunting and traditions in killing campaigns; especially their custom is concentrated in killing of non-Nilotic groups.<sup>271</sup> Regarding the institution of *Mičhu* it is used as a means of avoiding disagreement and conflict that takes place among the different

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<sup>268</sup> Informants: Tälässa Sädi, Zämänu Bäläy, and Mäkonän Wägäna.

<sup>269</sup> Tsega Endalew, *Conflict Resolution Through Cultural Tolerance--*, p.26.

<sup>270</sup> Informants: Amsalu Däreessa, Mäkonän Wägäna, and Jäbre Bäki

<sup>271</sup> Fekadu Wamber, “Yä Gumuz Beheräsäb Achir Bahil Zägäba”, (1998), p.5.

ethnic groups that inhabited Wänbära. It is described as the best method to successfully manage ethnic clash and even to create an atmosphere of communal coexistence and moderation.<sup>272</sup>

As it was stated earlier, the arrival of the Oromo in the district of Wänbära was related with their tradition of hunting and killing wild animals. During this time, the Oromo faced the Gumuz who had primarily settled in the lowland area of the district. The Gumuz had a tradition of killing mainly non-Gumuz communities, so many Oromo hunters were killed by them. Hence, the Oromo were determined to make friends with the Gumuz people using the *Mičhu* institution.<sup>273</sup> On the other hand, the Oromo hunter sought guidance in the dense forests to reach Wänbära where the Gumuz were able to provide them. Until they adjusted themselves with the new settlement patterns, the Oromo wanted the mutual aid of the Šinaša and the Gumuz.<sup>274</sup>

As a result of economic factors there were conflicts in Wänbära *Wäräda*. The inhabitants of high land areas, the Šinaša and the Oromo sought to hold the area endowed with resources mostly gold, which was gained from the Gumuz dominated rivers. As compared to the Oromo and the Šinaša, the Gumuz were more experienced and have skills in extracting gold. So, if the Oromo and the Šinaša were interested to get gold they must buy it or loot from the Gumuz. This in general brought common cases of conflict in the *Wäräda*. Therefore, no one could get gold without having *Mičhu* (friends). The highlanders were interested to set up the *Mičhu* to avoid hostility and to create good environment between them. The Gumuz were not opposed to the friendship because they did not have gold smiths.<sup>275</sup> A formal procedure took place while the *Mičhu* was formalized. Animal is slaughtered and the quarreling groups merged their blood to

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<sup>272</sup> Informants: Kälbässa Oliğra, Tälässa Sädi, and Abäbä Gurméssa.

<sup>273</sup> Fekadu Wamber, pp. 4, 6; informants: Kälbässa Oliğra, Tälässa Sädi, and Abäbä Gurméssa.

<sup>274</sup> Informants: Birātu Etäfa, Eäšo Alğa, and GälätaAyäna.

<sup>275</sup> Tsega Endalew, *Conflict Resolution through Cultural Tolerance--*, p. 27-28.

reveal full familiarity. Moreover, they fractured the bone of the dead animal to represent that they have broken their former conflicts.<sup>276</sup>

Prior to the ritual, elders met and talked about the matter honestly. Clan members and conflicting groups including both sexes come together and avoided conflict peacefully. They condemned the clash and embrace a friendly celebration as a sign of sociability. Here, the most significant thing in the traditional method of conflict resolution is those of unconventional issues which are freely heard. The people are organized for negotiations. In Wänbära people met at a place known as *Tullu Arara* (negotiation mountain) to reconcile conflicting groups to praise their God to convey peace and brotherly love among different communities to bless the land.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Informants: Gäläta Ayäna, Tälässa Sädi, and Gäläta Käba.

<sup>277</sup> Tsega Endalew, *Inter-Ethnic Relations on a Frontier Mätäkäl--*, p. 143; informants: Gäläta Ayäna, Tälässa Sädi, and Gäläta Käba.

## Conclusion

The study gave due attention to examine the history of Wänbära *Wäräda* beginning from 1941 to 1991. It attempted to reconstruct the history of the district giving more emphasis to local developments depending on the oral sources and a few archival materials. In the post 1941 the imperial regime made major changes in the fields of administration issue, economic spheres of lives of common people and the elites of the district. The major aim of re-establishing strong centralized political power and confirming the government's economic foundation was to attend dynamic tasks of existing administrative as well as land related issues. Regarding administration the Imperial government, brings consecutive administrative reorganization that attempted at controlling the administrative system in centralized manner. This made to make easy the realization of the existing taxation method in a better organized and simple ways. These attempted administrative changes had observed in the study area.

The study investigated the prevalence of administrative prejudice during the imperial regime. The Wänbära *Wäräda* administrators did not appropriately put into action the principles and orders forwarded from the central government and exploited the residents. In addition to this, there was taxation burden on the local inhabitants during the imperial regime. The taxation burden brought various problem in the *Wäräda* for example uprising of Gumuz people, result in the prevalence of banditry in failure of paying tribute to the the government. All people of the Wararda expressed their grievance through successive petition to the responsible bodies; *Taqalay Gezat* and *Awraja* in order to reduce tax but their effort remain fruitless.

The study looked into the overthrow of Emperor *Hailä Selasié I* and the emergence of succeeding regime, *Därg* in 1974. The *Därg* government started to strengthen of authority by

brining various programs which are linked with economically, politically and socially related problems in national level in general and in Wänbära *Wäräda* specifically. Among the programs of *Därg* land reform, which was the main question that brought revolution and down fall of the imperial government. Therefore, the *Därg* responded to the peasant requests by introducing the land reforms, peasant association, cooperatives like, producers cooperatives and service cooperatives. Nevertheless, the inhabitants of the *Wäräda* were antagonized these by policies. While in the implementation of these programs, the government faced objection from local residents, consequently it accounted to the collapse of the *Därg* regime. In general in both regimes the socio-economic development in the Wänbära *Wäräda* did not show progress. Relatively the education sector in Wänbära, which started in the post libration period, reveal better improvements even during the military regime but other sectors show no improvements in both regimes.

## Glossary

<i>Abba Bokku</i>	Father of the scepter
<i>Amole</i>	Salt bar used as currency during 19 <sup>th</sup> century
<i>Aser-allaqa</i>	A military title equal to commander of ten
<i>Atbyia- daññas</i>	Local during the imperial period
<i>Ato</i>	A civil title given to ordinary people
<i>Awrajja</i>	Administrative sub-province
<i>Balabat</i>	Individual with the hereditary owner of rest land
<i>Blatta</i>	A title which was given to learned individual
<i>Ĉeqašum</i>	Village chief
<i>Däga</i>	Zone with cold climatic condition
<i>Däjjazmač</i>	A military title step below <i>Ras</i>
<i>Fitäwrari</i>	A military title below <i>Däjjazmač</i>
<i>Gaša</i>	A unit to measure land which is equivalent to 40 hectares
<i>Grazmač</i>	A commander of left military title
<i>Gult</i>	Non hereditary right to collect tribute from the rest land owners
<i>Harma Hodha</i>	Sucking the breast
<i>Lubaa bassa</i>	To set or to make free
<i>Medhicha</i>	Adoption of a clan into an Oromo ethnic group
<i>Meketel</i>	Administrative unit next to <i>Mesläné</i>
<i>Mesläné</i>	Administrative unit under the <i>Wäräda</i>

<i>Mičhu</i>	Friends
<i>Nač labbaš</i>	Local militia
<i>Näğdras</i>	Head of merchants
<i>Nata</i>	A tradition in which widow married to the brother of her decade husband
<i>Qäbälé</i>	Lowest administrative unit
<i>Qännazmač</i>	Commander of the right, a politico-military title above <i>Grazmač</i>
<i>Qes</i>	Priest
<i>Qés Mändär</i>	Local name for village of priests
<i>Qolla</i>	Hot climatic zone
<i>Qomoo Gida</i>	Gida Oromo tribes
<i>Qoroo</i>	Political title equivalent to <i>Ĉeqasum</i>
<i>Rest</i>	Usufruct right over land
<i>Šifta</i>	Robber (bandit)
<i>Ṭäqelay Gezat</i>	Province
<i>Wäyena däga</i>	Temperate zone (moderate climatic zone)
<i>Wäräda</i>	Administrative unit below <i>awrajja</i>

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### Lists of Oral informants

No	Name of informants	Sex	Age	Place of interview	Date of interview	Remarks
1	Abäbä Gudäta(Ato)	M	68	DäbräZäyt	December, 8, 2015	He is native to the region. He is a well informed oral informant on the general history of Wänbära <i>Wäräda</i>
2	Abäbä Gurméssa (Ato)	M	65	Gäsängäsa	January, 22, 2015	He was the family of <i>qoroos</i> in Gäsängäsa. He gives a good information about the social and administrative history of Wänbära <i>Wäräda</i>
3	Abära Mäbéyo(Ato)	M	60	Gäsängäsa	December, 9, 2015	He lived in Gäsängäsa since his childhood. His information on the political and social development of the area is very significant
4	Adämu Yäwdhu (Ato)	M	78	Kitar	February, 25, 2016	He lived in Kitar, served as administrator of <i>qabale</i> and his knowledge on political and socio-economic history of the <i>Wäräda</i> is crucial.
5	Addisu Guruno(Ato)	M	72	Sänkora	February, 3, 2016	He has been in Sänkora as civil servant. His knowledge on the history of the <i>Wäräda</i> during the Imperial and <i>Därg</i> period is very significant
6	Alämitu Fufa (W/ro)	F	77	Däbrä Zäyt	December, 12, 2015	She serves as government employer and her knowledge on the administrative history of the <i>Wäräda</i> during the Imperial period was crucial.
7	Alämu Käbbädä(Ato)	M	74	Sänkora	January, 27, 2016	He is employee in the <i>Wäräda</i> information and communication office. He gives relevant information on the historical background and socio-economic development.
8	Amsalu Däreéssa (Ato)	M	71	Däbrä Zäyt	December, 15, 2015	He has been family member of <i>Çeqasum</i> . He provides informant on the general history regarding the administrative and social-economic history of the <i>Wäräda</i> .

9	Anäné Fälaté(W/ro)	F	65	Gäsängäsa	December,18, 2015	She is a woman merchant and gives information on the Italian period and trade in the area.
10	Ayälä Tirunähi(Ato)	M	69	Däbrä Zäyt	February, 15, 2016	He is well known anti- <i>Därg</i> groups. Gives information on the EPRP and social development during the military regime
11	Atomssa Qänati (Aser-alläqa)	M	90	Däbrä Zäyt	December, 17, 2015	He was patriot during the Italo-Ethiopian war. His information on the Italian period and people of the <i>Wäräda</i> was significant.
12	Birätu Etäfä(Ato)	M	77	Däbrä Zäyt	February, 21, 2016	He has lived for long period of time in the <i>Wäräda</i> . He is oral informant on the history of the <i>Wäräda</i> in relation to the people.
13	Däréssa Yädässa(Ato)	M	74	Sänkora	January, 13, 2016	He is a family of <i>qoroos</i> and has remarkable information on the <i>Wäräda</i> . He has a good memory on the Italian period.
14	Direba Kumässa(Ato)	M	79	Däbrä Zäyt	February, 7, 2016	He served as a <i>Wäräda</i> secretary and latter a deputy administrator. His information is crucial on political and administrative history of the <i>Wäräda</i> .
15	Diribé Käbädä (W/ro)	F	63	Gäsängäsa	January, 15, 2016	She is native to the region. She is well informed oral informant on the administrative and peasant cooperatives' of the <i>Wäräda</i>
16	Dässalegni Abära (Ato)	M	48	Däbrä Zäyt	January, 19, 2016	Educated in Däbrä Zäyt primary school and head of education sector. He has information on the modern education and its expansion in the region.
17	Dässalegni Tässäma (Ato)	M	60	Däbrä Zäyt	January, 4, 2016	He is a family member of elder <i>balabat</i> . He is a well informed oral informant on the general history of <i>Wänbära Wäräda</i>
18	Eäba Däki (Ato)	M	56	Däbrä Zäyt	December,23, 2015	He is the mayor of the <i>Wäräda</i> and has very well information on service cooperative& EPRP period
19	Eäšo Alğa (Ato)	M	75	Sänkora	December,25, 2015	He is one of the settlers in the <i>Wäräda</i> . He has remarkable knowledge about the history of the <i>Wäräda</i> in relation to the people

20	Emiru Aräga (Qees)	M	77	Däbrä Zäyt	February, 18, 2016	He was priest his knowledge on the establishment of church, villagization and the Italian period
21	Ewnätu Asägé (Ato)	M	57	Gäsängäsa	February, 8, 2016	He was the chief of the Tumina Qäčäma producer's cooperatives. Gives information on the peasant producer's co-operatives in Wänbära.
22	Gäläta Ayäna (Ato)	M	64	Däbrä Zäyt	January, 21, 2016	He was in the <i>Wäräda</i> for many years serving as government employers. He is a good informant on the <i>Wäräda</i> socio-economic development.
23	Gäläta Käba(Ato)	M	76	Däbrä Zäyt	December, 27, 2015	He is elder oral informant on the Šnaša-Gumuz people's interaction and <i>Michu</i> institution in the <i>Wäräda</i>
24	Gäläta Kitäla(Ato)	M	84	Kitar	February,22, 2016	He is well knowledgeable informant on the administrative and socio-economic development of the <i>Wäräda</i> .
25	Gäläta Oliğira(Ato)	M	60	Sänkora	January,6, 2016	He is a head of finance bureau of the <i>Wäräda</i> . His information on taxation and tax collection system in the <i>Wäräda</i> during the Imperial and <i>Därg</i> regime is crucial.
26	Gäsäsä Ali (Ato)	M	65	Däbrä Zäyt	February, 28, 2016	He is a merchant in the town and remarkable information on the trade, trade items and taxation system in the <i>Wäräda</i>
27	Jäbre Bäki (Ato)	M	60	Däbrä Zäyt	January, 8, 2016	His knowledge on the Oromo settlement, socio-economic and administrative history of the <i>Wäräda</i> is crucial.
28	Jäläta Gidäda(Ato)	M	83	Däbrä Zäyt	February,19, 2016	He was administrator of Wänbära in the <i>Därg</i> period and provides information on the history of

						imperial regime and Italian period.
29	Käbädä Deréssa(Ato)	M	76	Sänkora	February, 14, 2016	He lived in the <i>Wäräda</i> as a civil servant. He is good oral informant on the history of the <i>Wänbära</i> during the imperial and <i>Därg</i> regime
30	Kälbässa Oliğira(Ato)	M	51	Däbrä Zäyt	January, 10, 2016	He is a governor <i>Wänbära</i> . His information on administrative, socio-economic development of the <i>Wäräda</i> is significant.
31	Kibitu Märäga(W/ro)	M	65	Däbrä Zäyt	December, 29, 2015	She a native to <i>Wänbära</i> . Good oral informant on the Oromo expansion and general history of the <i>Wäräda</i>
32	Mäkonän Wägäna(Ato)	M	68	Gäsängäsa	December,13, 2015	He was local <i>qabale</i> leader. His knowledge on the area especially on the people of the district and ethnic interaction important.
33	Marämé Jirata(W/ro)	F	57	Kitar	January, 20, 2016	She is the wife of the chief of Kitar. She is well known oral informant on the duties and rights of <i>qoroos</i> and <i>balabat</i> in the area.
34	Oliğira Däbäba(Ato)	M	89	Däbrä Zäyt	February, 16, 2016	He is one of elder resident in the <i>Wäräda</i> . His knowledge about the history of the <i>Wäräda</i> and its administrative structure crucial.
35	Oliğira Fäyissa(Ato)	M	78	Däbrä Zäyt	February, 5, 2016	He was tax assessor in the <i>Wäräda</i> . His information on the administrative, taxation in the <i>Wäräda</i> during the Imperial and <i>Darg</i> is significant.

36	Sädi Jirata (Ato)	M	74	Sänkora	December, 4, 2015	He served as health officer in the <i>Wäräda</i> . He is an oral informant on kinds of diseases & health services in the <i>Wäräda</i> .
37	Subalaw Mälaku (Ato)	M	56	Sänkora	December, 6, 2015	He is a family member of <i>balabat</i> . He is an oral informant on the establishment of peasant association and co-operatives in the <i>Wäräda</i>
38	Šumété Däbäla(W/ro)	F	62	Däbrä Zäyt	January, 25, 2016	She is wife of <i>balabat</i> and native to the district. Her relevant knowledge administrative history of Wänbära and peasant association is significant.
39	Tadässä Mäkonän(Ato)	M	78	Gäsängäsa	February, 27, 2016	He works as a teacher and school principal in parts of the <i>Wäräda</i> . His knowledge on historical development of the <i>Wäräda</i> , education and peasant association was relevant.
40	Tälässa Sädi (Ato)	M	85	Däbrä Zäyt	February, 9, 2016	He is native to the <i>Wäräda</i> . He is good oral informant on inter-ethnic relation and settlement and administrative history of the district.
41	Wägira Jaläta(Ato)	M	50	Sänkora	December, 3, 2015	He was student during the Därg regime in Wänbära. He provides information on the political and economic history of the Wänbära.

42	Yäšwas Amänté(Ato)	M	65	Däbrä Zäyt	December,21 , 2015	He a government employer in the <i>Wäräda</i> . He is known oral informant on the history of Wänbära <i>Wäräda</i> grass root level.
43	Zäläläm Mämo( <i>Merigeta</i> )	M	75	Däbrä Zäyt	January, 11, 2016	He is a priest in Maryam church of Däbrä Zäyt for many years. He has good knowledge on the establishment of the church and the <i>Wäräda</i> .
44	Zäläläm Wäreku (Ato)	M	76	Däbrä Zäyt	December, 20, 2015	He involved in <i>Qäbälé</i> Peasant Association stage during the <i>Därg</i> regime. His information on the <i>Därg</i> period was significant.
45	Zämänu Bäläy(Ato)	M	61	Kitar	February,28, 2016	He has been in Kitar starting from his childhood. His remarkable information on the political and socio-economic history of the <i>Wäräda</i> is quite crucial.

## **Declaration**

I, the undersigned declare that the thesis is my own work, has not been presented for a degree in any other University and that all the sources for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_