

**THE EVOLUTION OF LAND-OWNERSHIP AND
TENANCY IN HIGHLAND BALE
A CASE STUDY OF GOBA, SINANA
AND DODOLA TO 1974**

**BY
KETEMA MESKELA**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF
GRADUATE STUDIES OF ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTERS OF ARTS IN HISTORY**

**JUNE 2001
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Key to the transliteration system used.

I. The seven sound of the Ethiopic Alphabet are represented as follows.

1st ቤ = Bā

2nd ቤ• = Bu

3rd ቤ. = Bi

4th ቤ፡ = Ba

5th ቤ፡፡ = Bē

6th ቤ፡፡፡ = Be

7th ቤ፡፡፡፡ = Bo

II. Regarding the sixth form in the above list, it must be noted that the “i” will be suffixed to the letter only if the letter is vocalized or stressed, otherwise it won't be required at all. As a general rule the “i” is not required when the sixth form is the last letter of word.

Examples:-

መምህር = Mämher

ብርብር = Berber

III. Palatalized Sounds are represented as follows:

ሸ = sh

ቸ = ch

ኸ = ñ

ሠ = zh

ጸ = j

IV. Glottalized sounds are represented as follows:

ϕ	=	q
ṁ	=	ṭ
ṁb	=	cḥ
θ	=	ts
ʀ	=	d
ʀ	=	dh
ʂ	=	p̣

V. Gemination should always be indicated by doubling:

Oborra

Gämmojji

Bädda

Mädda Walabu

Vi. General Examples:

Chakkē

Nuh Dadhi

Fäqi Hassāno

Wäyb

Mälkāña

ABSTRACT

The evolution of land-ownership patterns in the peripheral regions had attracted little attention until recently. My study attempts to examine the extent to which local demographic and economic conditions in highland Bale interacted with political conditions in the aftermath of the conquest to determine access to agricultural land by local and newly arriving groups of people, and the extent to which peasant well-being was affected by these forms of access as they evolved over a period of nearly one century.

The thesis starts by highlighting the pre-conquest socio-economic features in the region. The institutions that mediated the land regimes and the changes that were introduced to determine access to resources in the first half of the twentieth century are explored. The paper then shows how the previously prevailing lineage land-ownership patterns gradually gave way to private tenure.

The discussion of the post-1941 history of land tenure in highland Bale focuses on the effects of the system of revenue extraction on the local people. The centralization of the fiscal system was attended by repeated land measurements that in many cases resulted in confiscation of land. Factors which threatened peasant property rights and reactions from the peasantry, therefore, occupies a great deal of space in this work.

Finally, the work deals with one of the features of the imperial land tenure system in southern Ethiopia: the expansion of tenancy. The paper explores the evolution of tenancy and tenant insecurity in the region all the way to the 1974 Revolution when the entire system was abolished.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The success of this study owes itself to contributions made by a number of individuals and institutions. My informants, who have shared with me their experiences and knowledge, deserve my heartfelt thanks. With the shortage of written material on the area of my work, it was the willingness of these informants that enabled me to complete the thesis.

The work, however, benefited a lot from the support rendered by my advisor Dr. Tekalign Walde-Mariam. He suggested many ideas in the thesis and gave me valuable comments and encouragement. I am grateful to him.

During my field work, I obtained an amicable hospitality from different governmental and non-governmental organizations. They made me at ease and indicated available materials at their disposal. I want, especially, to thank the workers of Bale High Court, Provincial Agricultural Development Office, and the Provincial Administrative Office.

But, most of all I am very much indebted to members of my family and colleagues all of whom who had given me support and encouragement. My special thanks goes to my friend and partner Mäskäräm, whose constant and enduring encouragement has been invaluable throughout this work. Bearing the loneliness she felt but with courage she has managed to bring up our kid who should have been with her father as well.

My appreciation also goes to my friend Mäbratu Däffärä who sacrificed his precious time in word processing the final manuscript.

Finally, I acknowledge with gratitude the financial support I received from the Addis Ababa University, which was used to cover, at least partly, the expenses incurred in my field work and research.

PREFACE

Initially, I had planned to write on tenancy. But, based on preliminary investigations and advises from friends and instructors I have modified it to a history of ownership of land. Hence, in this study I have investigated the evolution of land-ownership and tenancy in highland Bale and the extent of influences met by the local people in their access to land after conquest.

Due to the paucity of written material on the subject of the area under study, the work bases itself mainly on archival and oral sources. I have attempted, therefore, to combine archival research with field work.

Archival sources, however, have many problems. Woefully many of them, especially those belonging to the provincial and *wäräda* administrative offices were damaged before and during the fall of the Derg regime. Specifically, documents which were thought to have political implications, I was told, were discarded knowingly.

Be that as it may, documents that were spared physical damage are also kept in the most haphazard manner; files piled up, uncatalogued and exposed to dust and rats in storage without any mechanism for their relocation and retrieval. Hence it was so tedious and time consuming to obtain access to any related material. Above all, periodic changes in locations of offices, which necessitated shifting of the documents from storage to storage with little care, had resulted in such a problem. Archives at *awraja* and *wäräda* levels were, particularly, susceptible to such complication and disorganization. But also assignment of untrained employees to the department has also to do with the prevalence of the problem. I have examined and tried to consult records in different offices of Goba, Sinana and Dodola. All

have almost similar drawbacks, excepting slightly that of *warada* courts. They are kept, relatively in good manner and are invaluable on land disputes in the region.

For periods before the Italian invasion and during its occupation we could not find records kept even at the provincial level. Only few documents, copies from their original sources are kept in some offices like that of the Bale High Court. But these themselves are not complete. They only provide hints from where to begin.

For the postwar period, records of the former *Rest* and *Wul* department of the Ministry of Interior, which were later transferred to the newly established Ministry of Land Reform and Administration are the most valuable and crucial material. Now they are deposited at the Wäldä-Mäsqäl Tariku Memorial Research Center in Addis Ababa of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies under the Addis Ababa University. They are helpful documents on the process of land measurement and taxation, and problems arising on land. Letters of petitions and appeals by the peasantry against confiscation of lands are available in the archive. Not only this, they also contain material on state policy and government initiatives on land.

But the archives of the Ministry of Interior have also problems. More often than not, both qualitative and quantitative data were documented comprehensively. Thus it appeared difficult to extract information on every event. To substantiate some of my qualitative data, I used to counter-check them with oral information and vice-versa.

It is on the basis of these material that I have reconstructed the thesis. The work is divided into five chapter. While the first and the second chapter are a general background and an overview of the land-holding patterns before the conquest of the region the remaining three chapters deal with the major theme, the dialectics of property ownership. Chapter three documents the land regime that prevailed in highland Bale from the period of incorporation to

the time of the invasion of the country by Italy. Chapter four assesses and investigates relationships between taxation and land measurement, as well as their concomitant effects. In chapter five, I have reviewed the extent and features of tenancy in the region.

To avoid unnecessary inaccuracies in translations, I have decided to give quotations first in their original script and then their translation in English at the endnotes. This, I hope, would help to solve problems arising in translating idiomatic and nuance of expressions.

The history of land-ownership is too vast and complicated to be fully reconstructed in so a narrow scope. I hope that this thesis will be one break (or step) in the reconstruction of a complete history on the subject.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The later part of the nineteenth century was a period during which the conquest and incorporation of the southern regions into the Ethiopian Empire was undertaken by Menilek II (r. 1889-1913). Though the incorporation was carried out on different pretexts, there is no doubt that the motives of Menilek were, mainly, economic. Existing literature contends that the conquest resulted in the confiscation of land from southerners for apportionment among the conquerors. The argument is that after conquest land was assessed and divided into three parts, to be apportioned among the state, the Church and the local owners or, in some cases, local "chiefs". The local people, according to this literature, are said to have in many places become tenants of the northerners, losing their traditional rights to land.¹ Many scholars argue also that in those regions where there was little or no resistance, local leaders were sustained in positions of authority (with the new title of *balabbat*) and were, by way of reward for their "collaboration", given up to a third (Amharic: *siso*) as their private property.²

There is no doubt that the conquest of the south was followed by the alteration of previously existing property regimes. There is also some degree of truth in some of the specific claims made in the literature. However, this should not lead us to lose sight of developments that did not conform to the standard view. Evidence from some primary sources indicates that, for the first few decades following the conquest of the south, the majority of the southern peasantry continued to hold their lands and were paying taxes to the state or to its local agents. Mahtämä-Sellasé, who was very knowledgeable on the imperial land tenure system, for instance, shows that a considerable number of the tax paying land owners were found in "non-*qäläd* regions" (areas where land measurement and subsequent reallocation did not take place).³ According to him, indigenous land owners in these

provinces were confirmed in their previous holdings and thus were not expropriated. What is more, even in some of the regions where fierce resistance was offered against Menilek's conquest, like Walayta for instance, no land measurement had taken place for more than a decade and thus no redistribution of land among different claimants.⁴

Investigation into the history of highland Bale, a sub-region on which this paper focuses, also indicates that a wholesale, outright expropriation of the population did not take place at any point. The allocation of the theoretical one-third of land to the *balabbats* was not also carried out. For the first five decades following the conquest, alienation of land that did take place was minimal and systematic. It occurred mainly by way of punishment for rebellion or under the metaphor of "gifts" from the peasantry.

Thus in highland Bale, what the state distributed to its military, civil and ecclesiastical personnel was not land but the right to extract tribute (in the form of both goods and services) from the land owning peasantry. As will be explained in some detail in chapter three, the local people were assigned as *gäbbars* (tribute paying peasants) to the governors and their retainers (who together came to be known as *näftäña*).

By and large, both in those areas, where individual tenure evolved and where communal ownership prevailed before conquest, local chiefs remained in administrative positions but at the lower level. Similarly, following the incorporation of Bale many of the Arssi⁵ *gossa* or clan leaders known as *Bähira* were maintained in their positions, also as *balabbats*. But, contrary to practices common elsewhere in the South, they were not rewarded with land. They retained control only over lands that were left behind for them by their ancestors. Of course, they were given *gäbbars* to work for them.⁶

As I have alluded to above, payment of salary to military or civil officials of the state was unusual in the history of Ethiopia. Instead they were provided with grants of

land either on permanent basis (*rest*) or temporarily as *madärya* (also known as *mätkäya-mänqäya*).⁷ In those regions, where land was not measured and distributed, peasants were allotted to individuals for tribute purposes. The number of *gäbbar* that each official or retainer received depended on his rank and on his standing with the governor. It was this system that came to be known as *quter gäbbar* (the distribution by “counting” the *gäbbar* for tribute).⁸ The tribute, which the *gäbbar* paid to the soldiery and other members of the northern establishment, varied from place to place but also included arbitrary labour services. As I will explain in detail later in the paper, I argue that the peasantry who were adscripted for tribute purpose had retained their lands after incorporation.

Although agriculture was practiced in highland Bale starting from very early times, the main economic activity of the peasantry was livestock-keeping. It might be due to this that the amount of tribute that each *gäbbar* was expected to pay to his overlord depended mainly on the size of his livestock. But it is apparent that the state allocated the peasantry to the northerners as *gäbbar* on the assumption that they retained control of the land on which they settled. Thus, at least immediately, the conquest was felt not in terms of loss of land, but in terms of extraction of tribute. The *näftäña* made multiple and onerous demands on the *gäbbar*, both in terms of material goods and labour services. In addition to these, the *gäbbar* was also required to pay *asrat* (a tenth of his produce) to the government. In this study, I will present material that supports the argument that the difference between the *rest*-owning peasant of the north and the *gäbbar* of the south was not so much in terms of institutions governing land tenure, but mainly in the forms of extraction that they were exposed to.

The claim that it was Menilek's confiscation and redistribution of lands after the conquest that led to the evolution of private land ownership in the South requires re-

examination. Minilek's land-related decrees and subsequent proclamations by his successors (including the 1931 constitution by Emperor Haylä-Sellasé, r.1930-1974), were applications of the principles of the land tenure laws that prevailed in the north to the new imperial subjects in the South. The decrees simply adjusted the land tenure system in the south to that of the north step by step, and facilitated the development from group tenure and temporary tenure to private and permanent tenure. This happened both for local peasants and northerners who had come to settle in the South.⁹

It was as of the early decades of the twentieth century that the new property regime started to take shape in highland Bale. However, the process was slow and gradual. On the one hand, some of the local people began to claim a certain amount of *gossa* land as their individual property. They claimed such lands as their private property with the rights of transfer to an outsider either by sale, *wurs* or gift. Similarly, those northerners, who were given land by the state or by the local people also held it as their individual property. On the other hand, *gossa* or lineage ownership of land continued to be adhered to by the larger proportion of the peasantry. Hence the traditional pattern of landholding militated against the development of private property in the strict sense of the term. At the same time, though the state did not officially outlaw rights to collective ancestral lands, it seems to have sanctioned the property claims of each peasant together with his relatives. The granting, by the state, of tributary right to the *näftäñas* over the peasantry had by itself started the process of individualization, for each *gäbbar* was primarily recognized by the state as a landowning taxpayer.¹⁰

As stated above, animal husbandry was practiced in Bale side by side with agriculture. The latter was practiced on small homestead farms. There are some indications that the incorporation into the Ethiopian Empire speeded up the conversion of

the population from cattle keepers to predominantly cereal producing cultivators. Animal husbandry, however, was never abandoned. The literature on the issue underscores that the expansion of individual holdings resulted in the reduction of grazing land, thus forcing the pastoralists to turn to agriculture. However, evidence from local sources attributes such development mainly to the evolving system of taxation. The dominant form of tribute that the *mälkäña* (local officials) and the *shalaqa* (governors, commanders) required from the peasantry was cereals. To obtain these products the *gäbbar* had to expand his farmlands.¹¹ This was true especially in the highland areas of the province with the relatively high population density, like the districts of Dodola, Goba and Sinana.

An equally important development in the first few decades of the twentieth century was the efforts made by the government to lighten the burden of the *gäbbar*. In its decree of November 1928, for instance, the government promulgated a law that would prohibit landlords from requiring "extra works" from their *gäbbars*. Specifically for Bale, an attempt was made in 1932 to introduce reforms in tax payments along with the abolition of forced labour. While taxes were to be paid under four categories, ranging from ten Ethiopian *birr* to forty, payment of *asrat* was also commuted to cash. Instead of granting rights of tribute collection, arrangements were also made to pay salaries for civil and military officials.¹² However, for a variety of reasons, and also because of the Italian invasion that came shortly afterwards, it was impossible to implement the reforms in full.

Following the short period of Italian occupation the state did not, contrary to common claims, introduce a new law governing ownership of land and transfer of property. To a large extent, it simply refined the already existing laws of control and extraction. Land, of course, came to be increasingly employed for the reinforcement of the monarchy's power, through a system of grants and gifts that favored its civil and

military followers, but the essentials of the system were not changed. The conversion of *madärya* lands into permanent holdings which some scholars identify as the chief characteristic of the post-liberation period, as well as the dispossession of the local people, which many associate with this process,¹³ thus requires further investigation. Evidence from local sources, as will be dealt with later, shows that the amount of land held as *madärya* was small, its conversion to permanent tenure did not result in the dispossession of the local *gäbbars*. The new land grants were made from what was known as “government land”, mostly lands that were supposedly not settled.

Hence there was necessarily no direct relationship between the granting of land to new beneficiaries or the conversion of previously temporary tenures to permanent tenures and the dispossession of the local *gabbar*.¹⁴ For instance, according to one of the documents that I have come across in the archives of the Ministry of Interior (deposited in the Wäldä-Mäsqäl Tariku Memorial Research Center), the size of *madärya* lands registered in the pre-war period in Goba *wäräda* was found to be only about eight *gashas* of land as against 6,945 *gashas* of *gabbar* lands.¹⁵

There is no doubt that land grants in the post-liberation period were made extensively by the state. The grants, though an extension of previous principles, provided for access to land by a wide range of groups in the society, from patriots and exiles down to “landless Ethiopians”.¹⁶ And a considerable number of these grants were made in the province of Bale. Out of nearly five million hectares of land which is said to have been granted throughout the country,¹⁷ about 30 percent was located in Bale.¹⁸ Still, possession of land on individual basis, however, did not presuppose the expansion of what is called “privatization” in the Western sense of the term. As I will explain further in chapter four of this thesis, traditional inheritance laws constrained the power of land -owners to dispose

of their properties, as they wanted. Both my informants and archival sources indicate that an individual owner could not transfer the land to an outsider without the consent of relatives and co-heirs.¹⁹ But such inheritance law was, mainly, introduced from the north.

As I have stated earlier, allocation of lands was not carried out through a direct expropriation of the peasantry, but from lands designated as government lands. However, there was also what came to be known as *gebrätäl* lands, lands that were made to revert to the state due to the failure of the owner to pay taxes). In addition to this there was widespread corruption and fraud on the part of government officials involved in the business of measuring and assessing land both for size and quality. Hence, I will argue that it was not the land grant policy per se that brought about landlessness in highland Bale, but the burden of taxation and frauds by officials during land measurement. The building of a modern state through centralization and bureaucratization of its machinery was accompanied by the conversion of all taxes from payments in kind to payments in cash. The centralized and standardized system of revenue collection had become one of the major burdens on the peasantry and facilitated the process of dispossession in the province.

Equally important in the story of land tenure under the imperial rule was measurement of lands to which I have already alluded. Land measurement, of course, had a long history. In some of the sources it is said to have begun in the seventeenth century.²⁰ The tradition was introduced to the south by Menilek. What is important for me is the views behind the purpose of the measurement itself. One group of scholars argues that Ethiopian rulers adopted land measurement in the south to retrieve tracts of land that they sought to grant to their functionaries or to sale to the local people. The second group

contends that the main motive was the generation of taxable lands. My findings support the conclusions of the latter group.

As I will show in chapter four of this study, land measurement was introduced to Bale in the post-liberation period. It was carried out three times in the province, the first being in 1937 E.C. (1944/45). This initial measurement was actually visual assessment.²¹ It came after the proclamation that abolished the *näftäña-gäbbar* system, a measure that was followed by the centralization of the system of revenue collection.²² The measurement and remeasurement of lands was an attempt to generate taxable resources by converting collective owners into individual holders. That is, it was a drive to increase revenue from lands by being more and more precise about amounts held by individuals and through a determination of “fertility”. Archival sources that I discovered strongly support this conclusion. Many of the letters sent to the province of Bale and its different districts from the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Finance indicate that the major purpose behind land measurement was facilitating the collection of taxes. Thus, for instance, the Ministry of Finance urged the governor of Bale *Fitawrari* Taddäsä Nägash in August 1953 to strictly supervise the ongoing measurement of land in the *awraja* for the amount of taxes that would be due to the state depended on how much land actually existed.²³

Be that as it may, it is apparent that the process of land measurement was attended by substantial abuse ranging from official fraud to intimidation of the peasantry by officials who were in pursuit of their own material benefit. There are also indications that the determination of taxes on the basis of land measurement imposed heavy burdens on the peasantry, burdens that many were simply not able to bear. In the province of Bale default on taxes thus appears to have become one of the principal factors behind the loss

of land by the local people. One of the sources from the provincial administrative archives claims that something like 27 percent of lands were taken over by the state on the pretext that their owners had failed to pay taxes.²⁴ This loss of land had contributed to the expansion of tenancy in the province. Those peasants who lost their lands were forced to enter into tenancy terms with landlords.

The 1950s and 1960s also saw growing transaction in land in highland Bale. The value of land increased due to the expansion of the market for food items as well as for cash crops like coffee. The increasing commercial value of land encouraged the sale of land by the local peasantry. It is also suggested in some sources that land ownership by a good number of Shoan settlers in highland Bale owes itself to this phenomenon, the Shoans having purchased the lands from local owners.²⁵ Transfer of land through the agency of the market is sometimes attributed by scholars to the privatization of property which gave owners rights to dispose of their holdings without restriction. Proponents of this argument claim that peasants had lost control over their property because the financial strength of the rich had meant that the latter could make attractive offers to the peasantry, making the sale of land irresistible. It was privatization, according to this group, that opened up rural Ethiopia to the subversion of capital. As to the feature of what is termed as private tenure and the freedom of the owners on such lands, I have already made an allusion in the preceding descriptions: besides the constraints from the traditional inheritance principles, the state had also endorsed the tradition that gave kins and co-heir the right of first purchase.²⁶

There were, however, a number of reasons for which peasants resorted to the sale of land. These included, among others, the need to obtain cash to pay taxes and buy consumer goods the pledges made to the *täbäqa* (lawyer) during disputes on land between

previous owners and new claimants, and the role of *wälläd-aged* (mortgage). *Wallad-aged* referred to a practice of giving land as security against a loan to the creditor. The latter would hold and use the land until the debt was paid. If the debtor failed to pay back on the prescribed time, his land would be appropriated by the lender.²⁷

While a number of initiatives taken by the government of Haylä-Sellasé in the post-liberation period increased the amount of land that it could redistribute to its clients and supporters, it is apparent that the already landless peasantry were not able to benefit from those redistributions. Despite the 1952 proclamation that promised a grant of half a gasha of land to every unemployed and landless Ethiopian, the petitions in many of the southern provinces by peasants for land grants were not seriously entertained. In Arssi, for instance, Bizuwork found that many of the peasants who appealed for a grant of half a gasha were refused either outrightly or due to the bureaucratic red-tape.²⁸ Under the circumstances, even their petitions against illegal eviction and confiscation were to no avail. I have documented below the struggle of the peasants of Goba and Dodola, in particular, against such loss of land.

Documenting the initiatives and efforts of landless peasants to achieve control over land or small landholders to defend themselves against external pressures and subversions is one of the most important objectives of my research. Bale has been associated with the most famous and probably the only major peasant uprising against the imperial order in southern Ethiopia. Among the major factors for the rebellion is said to have been the confiscation of land by the agents of the imperial government under all kinds of pretexts, even though mal-administration and Somali agitation are also said to have been important contributing factors.²⁹ The duration of the rebellion (it lasted from 1963 to 1970), the involvement of both the ordinary peasantry and the local elite in it, as well as the severity

of the repressive measures that were taken by the state combine to make the rebellion a truly significant development in the history of southern Ethiopia, especially of the Oromo people. However, it is not within the scope of this study to deal with the whole process of the rebellion. But I have examined the extent of involvement of the highland population in the rebellion, and assessed the degree to which the land issue in the highlands had to do with the struggle. For even though the center of the rebellion was largely in the lowland districts of the province, the highlanders had also participated mainly in the form of material and moral support to the rebels.

However, it appears that the very scale of the Bale rebellion, which made it figure prominently in the literature, appears to have caused a number of other local and less-organized forms of resistance to be overlooked. The study of peasant resistance should not be limited to the study of open and large-scale rebellions only. Equally important are the efforts made by individuals as well as the ways they went about fighting the forces that were beyond their power or means to stop. Local primary sources, both written and oral, that I have come across in the study area and here in Addis Ababa attest that there was substantial disaffection in the province. This was largely manifested through petitions but also through small-scale, subterranean acts of sabotage like physical threats and tax evasion. In my work I have assessed the case of peasants of Dodola as an example of such a movement and examined the degree to which the government accommodated local reactions.

If half the narrative on the political economy of land in highland Bale is the gradual and expanding dispossession of the local land-owning peasantry, the other half of the narrative was the shifting and increasingly tightening conditions of tenancy for the peasantry who had to live and work on lands owned by others. Tenancy took many forms

in Bale: from long-term rentals of land to adhoc arrangements of sharecropping.³⁰ There were local tenants and immigrant tenants. Yet the major trajectory of change in the story of tenancy in Bale seems to have been the tightening of tenancy terms and the increasing degree of insecurity of tenure, leading to greater and greater poverty and widespread eviction.

Expansion of tenancy and increasing tenant insecurity was observed in the last two-and-a-half decades of the imperial era. According to a survey conducted in the early 1970s, about 38 percent of the peasants in the three highland districts of Dodola, Sinana (Robe) and Adaba were found to be tenant farmers.³¹ But I argue that large proportion of tenants held their own small plot of lands in addition. In this study I have devoted some space to the evolution of tenancy, to the shifting and changing conditions under which land and labour were brought together, to the role of both local and central government institutions in the history of tenancy as well as to the initiatives of tenant farmers to protect themselves from the increasingly harsh conditions of access to land.

Chapter II

A History of Highland Bale to the 1890s, An Overview: Social Formation and Lineage Ownership of Land

2.1. Geographical Setting

The province of Bale is located in southeastern Ethiopia neatly bounded by the Rivers of Wabe Shabalé to the north and east, and Ganalé to the south and west. The Somali Regional State borders on Bale in the south. Before its partition in 1987 into the separate administrative regions of Bale proper and the autonomous region of Ogadén, the province covered an area of 124,600 square kilometers, the second largest in Ethiopia next to Harargé. Administratively, Bale was divided into five *awrajas*, namely Mandoyu (previously known as Fassil), Ganale, Wabe, Dallo and El Keré. It had altogether about 25 *wärädas*.¹ At present, under the new government, established in 1991, the province (zone) of Bale, comprises about 17 *wärädas* with a total area of 71,208 square kilometers.²

The province of Bale is divided into three major altitudinal zones. These are *bädda* (highland), *bäddä-däré* (intermediate or midland) and *gämmoji* (lowland). The *bädda* zone which embraces those lands which are conducive for agricultural activity includes the Dodola and Adaba *waradas* of Ganalé *awraja*, the whole of Mandoyu *awraja* excluding only the southern parts of Goro *wäräda*; some parts of Wabé, especially Gololcha and Ginnir *wärädas*. The topography of these *wärädas* is, largely, plain with an average elevation of above 2,200 meters. In these areas, the land rises to as high as 4,307 meters at Mount Battu. This climatic zone has a mean annual rainfall of 800 to 1000 millimeters. The rest of the *wärädas* of the region are in the intermediate and lowland zones with their populations clinging to animal husbandry.³

Bale is endowed with considerable amount of water resources. Natural spring waters emanate from the high plateau. While the rivers of Wabé Shabalé and Ganalé are the major ones, Manna, Wäyb and Wälmäl are also notable rivers of the province. Besides these natural resources, one of the national parks, the Bale Mountain National Park, is also found in the province. The park has varieties of mammals and birds, which are endemic to Ethiopia. The Mountain Nyala (*Tragelaphae Buxton*) and Menilek's Bush Buck are the major attractions.⁴

The altitudinal and climatic variations largely determined the pattern of settlement and occupation of the people of Bale. Out of the 1,271,864 inhabitants (according to the 1994 census), the overwhelming majority live in the highland areas with a population density of about 20 persons per square kilometer.⁵ Hence, the highest percentage of the population inhabited the *awrajas* of Ganalé, Wabé and Mandoyu where the climate is suitable and the soil is also congenial to cultivation. The 1984 statistical report indicates that the three highland *wärädas* of Goba, Sinana and Dodola are the most densely populated districts with a total population of more than 200,000. In these *wärädas* and many of the other highland areas cultivation of various crops like barley, wheat and *téf* is widely practiced.⁶

2.2. Pre-Conquest Socio-Economic Organization

Prior to the incorporation of the southern regions into the Ethiopian Empire, Bale was settled by pastoral and semi-pastoral Arssi Oromo people. Culturally, they shared many of the social, economic and political characteristics of the other Oromo groups.⁷ The most important feature of the society was the centrality of the lineage (*gossa*) in both

its political and socio-economic organization. Leadership of each *gossa* was based on membership and seniority but functioned on the basis of the *gada* system. The *gada* system was a complex form of organization that provided rules and regulations of social interaction. It was a system complete with legislative, executive and judicial branches.

Among the Arssi, land was owned by the *gossa* and it was regarded as the common property of all lineage members. While there was little stratification within each lineage group, intermittent *gossa* conflicts over the custodianship of lands prevailed in the region.

Though the *gada* institution was the basis of cultural homogeneity, as Gebru states:

Kinship was the principal idiom of social interaction mediating economic, political, and cultural activities. Production and distribution, communal solidarity and conflict, ritual and ceremonial activities, jural and political obligations and peoples' relationship to the environment were all closely tied to kinship organization.⁸

Such kinship structure had many classifications that originated through continuous segmentation of the society.

According to Arssi genealogical tradition, a man called Arsse, whose descent was from one of the Oromo moieties of Baréntu, had two sons named Mando and Siko. These two, in turn, are said to have fathered seven and five sons respectively. In a number of generations, these twelve sons developed into *gossas*. A loose confederation of *gossas* constituted a "tribal" cluster. These Arssi *gossas* had through time expanded into different regions including Arssi proper, southern Shoa, Sidamo and Bale.⁹

We do not know when the two principal *gossas* of the Arssi, the Mando and the Siko, had emerged or when the Arssi as a "tribal" cluster had come to occupy their current territorial positions. What we know is that, while the other Oromo groups had moved north, south, east and west during the sixteenth century expansion, the Arssi remained in their original homeland. There is a general consensus among many scholars that the south and southeastern part of Ethiopia is the ancient homeland of the Oromo.¹⁰ Bale, of course, is part of this ancient region. My informants also say that the western part of Bale at Mädda Wälabu is their ancestral homeland and that the home of the *Abba Mūda* in Dallo *awraja* has been a place for their annual pilgrimage.¹¹ It is not within the scope of this study to deal with the question of the origin of the Oromo. But, it is important to note that Bale was one of the original settlements of the Oromo people, and especially of the Arssi.

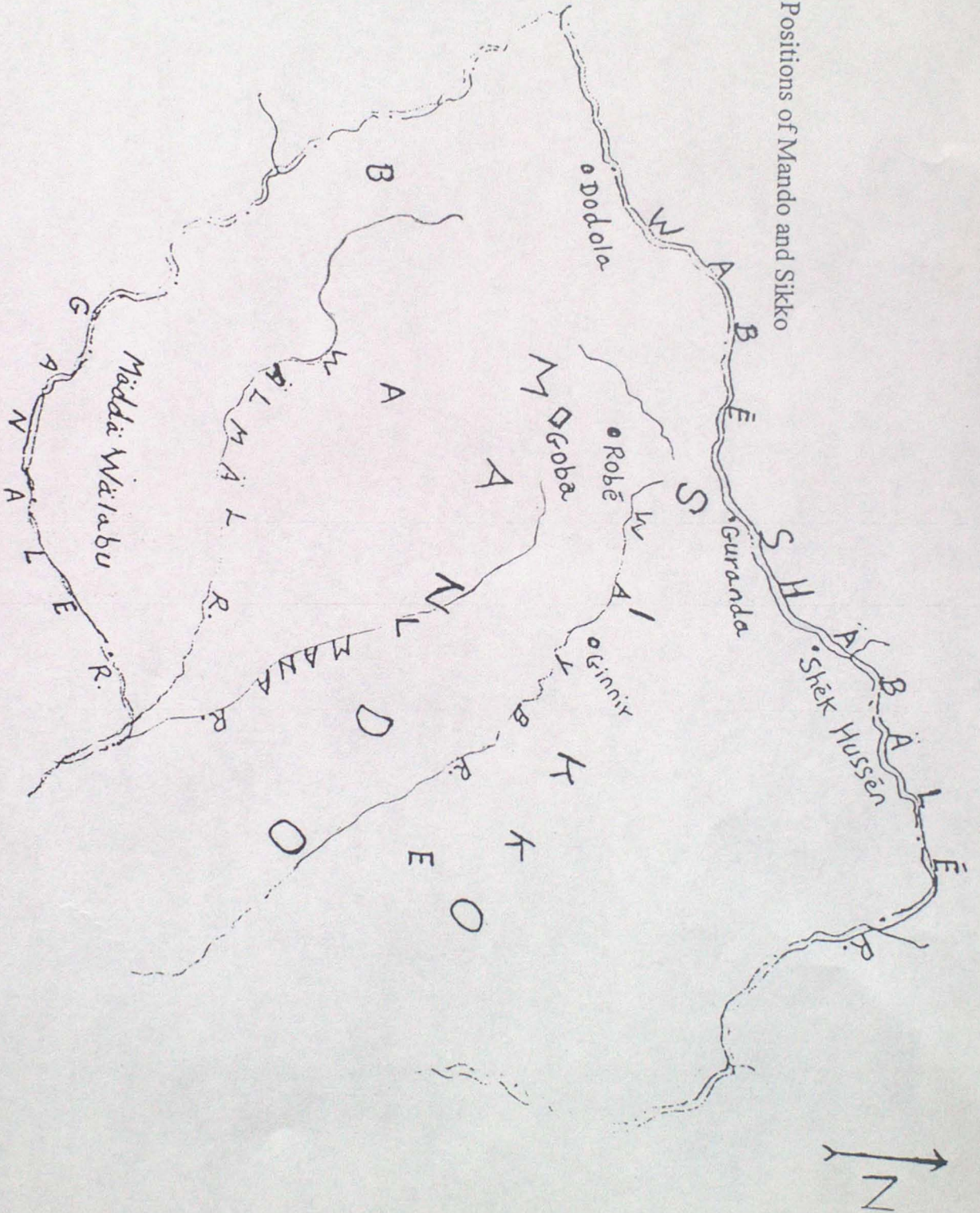
Bale is also heir to the medieval Muslim state of Bali, which is said to have been overrun and occupied by the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia several times in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Sometime between these events and the population movement of the Oromo in the sixteenth century, the area of present-day Bale appears to have come under the full control of the Arssi-Oromo.¹²

As to the pattern of their settlement, there are some indications that the Mando for the most part came to occupy parts of the region to the west of the Wayb river, while the Siko occupied areas to the east and north of this river. The Wäyb actually divides Bale roughly in to two halves.¹³

In the kinship organization, the smallest unit was the *wärra* (family). Above the *wärra* were the *balbala* (a minimal lineage group). A number of *bälbäla* together formed the *gossa*. However, there is lack of clarity in the use of the term *gossa* among the Arssi. The term referred to the whole of Arsii or the sub-divisions or even the minimal lineage. It

Map 1

Relative Positions of Mando and Sikko



is thus important to be specific about which level of a lineage we are referring to. For the purpose of this study, with the agreement of many of my informants, I will use Arssi to refer to a "tribal" cluster; the Mando and Siko as the moieties, and their branches as *gossa* and the minimal lineage as *bälbäla*.

Among the Arssi-Oromo, the *gada* organization functioned at the level of the *gossa* and not at the level of the whole society. Each *gossa* had its own *gada* assembly known as *sädéta* (an assembly of eight men). The *Abba Bokku*, (possessor of the scepter) was an overall leader in the *gada* political institution. He was elected every eight years from among the five-*gada* cycles of *Birmäji*, *Bultuma*, *Horäta*, *Bähara* and *Robälé*. In the previous periods, it seems that the *Abba Bokku* had a deputy known as *Bähira* or *Hokka*. While the office of the *Abba Bokku* was elective, that of *Bähira* was hereditary.¹⁴

May be due to the Islamization of the people and for reasons which are not entirely clear to us, the importance of the *gada* system and the role of the *Abba Bokku* had come to be undermined among the highland communities of the Arssi. In fact, the *Abba Bokku's* position seems to have been submerged by that of the *Bähira*. The *Bähira*, a hereditary official mostly chosen from the *angafa* lineage group (genealogically elder) had assumed a leading role in the *gossa*. He became the one who had to decide on major issues such as arbitrating and mediating *gossa* conflicts, punishment of criminals by death including hanging (*toga hidhu*) as well as the introduction and amendment of laws.¹⁵ This does not mean that the *gada* practice was dropped entirely, but while the highlanders had integrated it into the Islamic religion, the lowlanders had continued to adhere to it to the present. The kinship group among the Arssi is patrilineal. It was formed by groups of families whose members possessed cattle, goats, sheep and rudimentary tools individually, but had

theoretically equal access to *gossa* land. It was such a "classless" society that cultural homogeneity and egalitarianism were its dominant characteristics.

Each *gossa* appears to have owned lands with identifiable limits. Informants claim that every *gossa* possessed lands transmitted to it by the founding fathers. It is believed that since the Oromo were pastoral, those forefathers preferred lands that they found to be suitable for their herds. To mark the colonization of the areas, they would lay leaves known in *Afan Oromo* as *balä bufäta* (symbolic leaves of occupation). Every *gossa* that sought new lands followed the same tradition.¹⁶ Ketebo, who has recently carried out historical research in Arssi proper has also noted the same phenomenon. He states that, 'According to Arssi tradition, land was occupied by laying leaves (*Balä Bufäta*) to establish precedence, which was similar to *Qabiyé* (land holding right) among the Wallaga Oromo'.¹⁷ Unlike that of the Western Oromo groups, possession of land through *balä bufäta*, however, did not lead to the rise of private ownership of land. Since all members of each *gossa* belonged to the lineage group, there was no basis for denying access to land to all members. Not only this, the abundance of land compared to the smaller size of populations must have also discouraged the evolution of individual ownership of land.¹⁸

Land, owned by a *gossa*, basically remained to be a group property. Nevertheless, after series of generations and the beginning of settled life among some of the highlanders, claims to first use rights resulted in hierarchies of rights on lands. Accordingly, three categories of possession rights on land appeared to have developed. On the one hand, individual *wärra* or households claim first-hand use rights on lands around their homesteads. On the other hand, members of a *balbala* would claim a first use right in their domain. On the third level, there existed *gossa* ownership of land whereby all members maintained usufructuary rights over the whole domain. Of course, all the

balbalas and the *wärras* under them held land under the supreme *gossa* land right. Hence the categories were largely overlapping and must not be seen exclusively. Lands, which were originally owned by the *gossa*, might have been through time divided into ownerships by the *bälbäla*. Similarly that of the *bälbäla* might have gotten reduced to those of the *warra*.¹⁹ Despite all these internal classifications, *gossa* ownership of land appeared to be the dominant feature of the land holding system in highland areas of Bale.

Membership in a *gossa* unit could not be claimed by marriage or any other means except by birth. And, it would be recognized only through the father's line. An Arssi Oromo could not get married to a woman from his own *gossa*, either. Besides, married women could not claim membership in their fathers' *gossa* and thus could not claim land rights in those lineages. A woman would be recognized as a member of her husband's *gossa* for as long as her marriage lasted. Similarly, children would not be regarded as members of their mother's *gossa*, and thus could not claim lands in their mothers' lineage groups. They are regarded as members of their father's *gossa* in which they would claim inheritance and use-rights on the lineage land. Slightly different inheritance rights in particular seem to have been applicable to the small homestead farms in the highland areas of the province.²⁰

At times, of course, an outsider could join a lineage land owning group through *gosomsu* or *moggasa*, traditional institutions of associating strangers into the community. The stranger would be sworn in as member in a ceremony. In general, the system bestowed usufructuary rights on land either for pasture or agriculture, to individuals as members of groups. Transfer by sale, gift or mortgage were unknown.²¹ Land use rights were generally heritable but subject to some control.

Traditional inheritance laws among the Oromo of Bale discriminated against women. Widows could not claim arable lands that belonged to their deceased husbands. The property would pass only to the children. Or the widow would be married to one of the brothers of her deceased husband. Levirate, known locally as *dhala*, was practiced to avoid the bringing up of the children without fathers. Some of my informants, however, argued that such limits on women's property right were introduced with the adoption of Islam. Islamic law of inheritance, which calls for the apportionment of property among male members of a family on an equal basis had, in fact also limited the privilege of the elder son to take the largest portion of his father's property.²² Hence there was no way of developing exclusive individual ownership of property that could lead to the rise of classes within the society. Group ownership of land and the cooperation of the *gossa* members apparently reinforced each other. The lineage system was the basis for the feeling of oneness and mutual cooperation.

That ownership of land was invested in the group does not entail the absence of private property. As I pointed out above, moveable properties of the household including cattle, goats, sheep and household implements belonged to the individual peasant. In fact it was the size of herds that individuals owned that determined their poorness or richness.²³

Though they were predominantly dependent on animal husbandry, the highlanders, especially those who inhabited the present day *wärädas* of Dodola, Adaba, Sinana, Agarfa and Gololcha were not alien to agricultural activity. They also practiced sedentary agriculture. Hoe cultivation was practiced on a very limited scale on farms around patriarchal homesteads. In this highland area of the province, some literature claims the prevalence of agricultural activity even prior to the sixteenth century.

Haberland, for instance, argues that the Oromo in this region used the hoe, "but there was not manuring and only one type of plant was grown, barley."²⁴ These small farms were worked by human labour using sticks and hoes. But we have no information as to the use of the plow or oxen. Neither were my informants able to establish this. Many say that the iron plow was a recent phenomenon, having been introduced to the region following the incorporation of Bale by Emperor Menilek.²⁵

Lineage (i.e group) ownership of land gave the peasants a feeling of security. They could cultivate land in the amount that their labour endowment permitted. But a number of factors inhibited the expansion of agricultural activities. Besides the rudimentary nature of agricultural implements, the absence of trade in cereals seem to have discouraged production beyond family needs. Thus agricultural activity was limited to a subsistence level and was supplemented by animal products. Moreover, there was no external demand or pressure that would force the peasant to produce more. Local chiefs, for instance, did not require tribute or tax from the peasantry since they themselves were producers. Hence, the largest household farms were said to be not more than three or four *middç* (half to two-third of a hectare).²⁶

I have already alluded to conflicts between the different *gossas* of the Arssi in Bale. Accordingly, since effective occupation was achieved through conquest, water and grazing lands seem to have been the sources of intermittent inter-*gossa* strife, with the strongest *gossa* intending to establish dominance over vast stretches of land. Particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the growing number of human and animal population might have resulted in frequent conflicts. Thus, conflicts are said to have taken place between the *gossas* of Kärnamida, in Goba, and Walashe, in Sinana. Similarly, conflicts are said to have existed between the Garora and the Hamida in Sinana *wäräda*.

The Hamida whose territory was separated from that of the Garora by a hill, recite a folk memory of Garora attack across the hill in the form of the following triplet.

*Gara taté Garora nārra hin dhowiné,
Läfä taté Garora natti hin mul'ifné,
Mali ati kan hundaf hin tané.*²⁷

Despite such clan conflicts, there was no colonization and domination of one by the other. Even if total defeat occurred, the defeated *gossa* were integrated into the dominant *gossa* on an equal basis. Neither had this led to the rise of strong men as rulers of *gossas*.

On the whole, unlike the other Oromo groups such as the Gibe Oromo and that of Wallaga who had developed monarchical forms,²⁸ the Arssi Oromo of the highland regions had neither states nor even strong *gada* practices in the late nineteenth century. They seem to have had a loose confederation of *gossas*, particularly between the two groups of Mando and Siko. The *angafa gossas* of these moieties, namely the Walashé and Sabro, respectively, are said to have had occasional meetings to make and adjudicate rules.²⁹ At any rate, the strength and the degree of the cohesiveness of their relation and the reasons for the absence of state in the region requires further investigation. For the purposes of this study, it suffices to state that on the eve of the coming of the Shoans, the Oromo of Bale practiced group ownership of land but the political and military organization at the level of the *gossa* as well as among the *gossas* was rather loose and incoherent. It might be safe to conclude that the Oromo of Bale seem to have been in a kind of transition from *gossa* based political life to a confederation of *gossas* in the late nineteenth century.

Chapter III

Incorporation and the Emergence of a New Land Regime to 1941

The incorporation of Bale into the Ethiopian Empire resulted in the establishment of a property regime in which the local people were adscripted to northern settlers, consisting of governors and their retainers. The peasantry became tribute paying, forwarding such tributes as would have gone to the state to its local representatives. The local chiefs, who were incorporated into the new administration, facilitated the process of attaching the northerners to the local peasantry, literally person to person. Thus, initially, the effect of the conquest was felt not in the expropriation of land, but in the form of tribute and extra exaction.

To have a clear understanding of the property regime that evolved in the province, it is important to look into the process of incorporation itself. It was the form of incorporation that determined the demographic size of the conquerors and thus the tenure system in the highland areas.

3.1. Incorporation of Bale

The conquest of Bale was achieved through diplomatic persuasion, political subversion and military activity facilitated by a spread of disease, allegedly introduced by *Ras Darge*. *Ras Darge Sahlä-Sellase*, paternal uncle of Menilek II, was an architect of Bale's incorporation into the Ethiopian Empire. The incorporation of Arssi, also, was a task entrusted to *Ras Darge*. The conquest of Arssi was accomplished in 1886.¹ It was, however, between 1891 and 1892 that the incorporation of Bale was achieved. Bairu

writes that "between 1887, when he returned from Harar, and 1900, the year of his death, *Ras Darge* ventured out only once, when he led an expedition to Bale from October 1891 to July 1892."²

Before he crossed into Bale, *Ras Darge* is said to have sent his spies, one of whom was a man called Sheikh Busari, under the cover of being a preacher of Islam. He was sent to gather intelligence information on the general conditions in the province. The Oromo of Bale were not unaware of the resistance offered by Arssi and the persecution that they had suffered. Conscious of his inferior military power and armaments, and hoping to preserve his position as a clan leader and his lands, one of the local chiefs in highland Bale, Kabir Hubba, is said to have made the first peaceful submission to *Ras Dargé*.³

Initially, both the Mando and the Sikko were requested by Darge to send their representatives to negotiate the terms of submission. Accordingly, Wätte Debu of the Mando from the *gossa* of Kadu and Kabir Huba of the Sikko from the *gossa* of Koloba were sent to Koloba, an area on the edge of Wabe Shabale gorge in Bale. Most probably through the persuasion of Sheikh Busari, as claimed by my informants, Kabir Huba recognized *Ras Darge* as his overlord. This he did without asking the consent of his people. Wätte Debu returned to his locality to "discuss the issue" with his people. Terms of peaceful submission for Kabir-Huba are said to have included the retention of power by him and of land by the peasantry, with of course, tribute obligations.⁴ The submission of Kabir Huba must have something to do with his knowledge of the occupation of Arssi, the killing of a large number of people and confiscation of the lands of those who tried to resist. He also knew that those who did not revolt against the Amharas were treated mildly. All of these he knew because his clan territory bordered on those of the Arssi.

Following the submission of Kabir Hubba, Darge's force crossed Wabe Shabale and encamped at Luka-Wale. There, the Shoan General established the first fortification in highland Bale known as Guranda.⁵

The Oromo of Mando met at a market place called Hambaré, to the east of today's Goba town and discussed Dargé's threat. They decided to resist rather than submit. Darge repeatedly requested them to send their chiefs and elders to Guranda for submission. However, the Mandos are said to have refrained from negotiation and many of the *gossas*, through their *Bahira*, marched to prevent the enemy from crossing Wayb, a river that separates their territory from that of the Sikko. Facing each other on the two sides of the river, the forces are said to have stayed in position for few weeks. Finally, it was Dargé's forces that opened fire. The death of some of the most valiant warriors of the Mando, like Kusha Obsa, in the fighting is said to have demoralized the warriors.

Dargé's superior firearms played a role, of course, and eventually forced the Oromo to retreat. Dargé's army was equipped with modern arms like rifles and cannons. On the contrary the Oromo were equipped with few muskets, spears and *wanté* (shield). Thus, following its relatively easy victory the army set about "pacifying" the unorganized and poorly equipped *gossas*. *Ras Dargé*, however, returned to Addis Ababa, leaving behind some of his lower officials to do the "pacification". These included men like *Dajazmach Asfaw Darge* and *Dajazmach Walda-Gabriel*, the latter better known by his horse name of *Abba Säytan*.⁶

Despite their victory at Wayb, however, the Shoans faced further resistance. Following their defeat at the Battle of Wayb in 1892, the Oromo of Mando sent their representatives, led by Arabo Konso of the *Kärmamida gossa*, with loads of tribute to confirm their submission. To ensure the complete allegiance of the Mando, *Däjjazmach*

Asfaw Darge sent some of his soldiers to Kärnamida, accompanied by Arabo. Immediately following their arrival at Karmamida in Goba, the soldiers were attacked by groups from the *bälbälas* of Emary and Abarossa. Six of the soldiers were killed, with only one survivor being sent back to Guranda by Arabo. The incident angered *Däjjazmach* Asfaw, who dispatched one of his contingents, led by a certain *Ras* (?) Layäh, to avenge the death of his soldiers. The army faced no resistance in its campaign from Guranda to Karmamida through present day Sinana *wäräda*. Arriving at the locality where the soldiers are said to have been killed, the army is said to have killed many members of the Emary and Abarossa sub clans and burnt their houses. Their cattle were also confiscated.⁷ Sintayehu states that “the army devastated the area, massacred people and burnt houses.”⁸

Informants Mamma Ebu and Hassan Saddo, who are descendants of the survivors, attest that it was a horrible massacre. Families of these informants escaped into forests and remained in hiding until things were pacified. It was, as we shall see later on, the lands belonging to these *balbalas* that was brought under the direct control of the army.⁹

Following the campaign in Kärnamida *Däjjazmach* Asfaw decamped from Guranda and established a new garrison at Goba, in the heart of the Kärnamida territory.¹⁰ It was there that the *gossa* leaders from both Goba and Sinana, the *wärädas* on which this study focuses, negotiated and declared their allegiance to the governor. Subsequently, *Däjjazmach* Asfaw extended his campaign into Dallo and further towards Borana.

While the conquest of the *awrajas* of Mandoyu, Gannale and Dallo was achieved by *Ras* Darge and his son, *Däjjazmach* Asfaw, the eastern and southern parts of the

province, that is, the later *awrajas* of Wabe and Elkere were subdued by *Däjjazmach* Walda-Gabriel. Walda-Gabriel entered Bale from Harar in the east. It is said that when Darge's army was halted at Mandoyu, he sent a message to *Ras* Makonnen of Hararge, asking the latter to dispatch a battalion to overrun the eastern parts of Bale through Sheikh Hussen. The shrine of Sheikh Hussen, to which the people of Bale make religious pilgrimage, was expected by the Shoans to be the centre of Oromo resistance. Hence *Däjjazmach* Wäldä-Gabriel was interested in the pacification of this region. Despite the attempted resistance of the *gossas* of Hawaṭu and Rayitu, Wäldä-Gabriel faced no major problem. His diplomatic maneuver had brought the submission of the chiefs of these *gossas*, Shuti Elemo and Dadhi Tarre, respectively. Among others, the *Däjjazmach* is said to have promised the chiefs that they would retain their position.¹¹ The lowland areas of the province, including Elkere, were also incorporated and pacified by the army, sent by Wäldä-Gabriel from his new centre of Ginnir.¹²

The incorporation of Bale is said to have been facilitated by a smallpox outbreak, allegedly introduced by *Ras* Darge. My Oromo informants unanimously agree that many of their men died due to the spread of the disease, which they claimed to have been introduced by a certain Sheikh Busari, Darge's spy. Besides massive death that it is said to have caused, the disease weakened the population and discouraged attempts for resistance.¹³ Sintayehu writes that Busari is said to have "distributed *bana* and abujedid clothes contaminated with small pox pus to the people, particularly to the people of Elassa Kobo village [a *gossa* found around Goba]." ¹⁴ The disease caught on quickly and spread, killing a large number of people.

A group organized by the provincial administration to study the history of Bale in 1983 has also recorded this tradition about the disease, its effect on the local people and its relationship with the incorporation. It reads as follows:

ራስ ዳርጌ ከልጃቸው ከደጃዝማች አስፋው ዳርጌ ጋር አርሲን ሲያቀኑ ከቆዩ በኋላ፣ ወደ ባሌ ለመሻገር ሲያስቡ የባሌ ህዝብ ሊወጋቸው እንደተዘጋጀ ስለ ሰሙ፣ አብሮአቸው ይዘምት የነበረ ተወላጅነቱ ወሎ ክፍለ ሀገር የሆነ ቡሰሪ የተባለ ሰው የፈንጣጣ ክትባት በአቡጅዲድ ጣቃ ይዞ ብቻውን ወደ ባሌ በመሻገር ህዝቡ በሚገናኝበት ቦታ ሁሉ በፈንጣጣ መግል የተነከረውን ጨርቅ እየሰነጠቀ በመስጠቱ ያንን ጣቃ የለበሰ ሁሉ በፈንጣጣ በሽታ እንደተያዘና በሽታው ከሰው ወደ ሰው በመዛመቱ ህዝቡ በዚህ በሽታ በመጠቃቱና...[ከዚህ ጋር] ... መዋጋት እንችልም እንገብር ብሎ የባሌ ህዝብ ሽማግሌዎችን ልኮ ራስ ዳርጌ ወደ ባሌ እንዲገቡ ... ፈቀደ።¹⁵

Whether or not one accepts the tradition that the Shoans introduced the disease deliberately, there is little doubt that there was a spread of the disease at the time of the conquest and that it resulted in the death of a large number of people. We have actually an independent confirmation of the fact.

In 1916 Arnold Hodson, a British consul to Southern Ethiopia, made an extensive journey from Addis Ababa to Mega, in Borana. On his way, he had visited Bale and observed the sparsity of the population, which on the basis of information from the governor of Bale [probably *Ras Nadaw*, ca. 1909-1917] he attributed to three things. "... First of all a smallpox ravaged the country, then came the war with the Abyssinians in which the Gallas [Oromos] suffered heavily, and finally there was a severe famine."¹⁶ This order of events suggests, of course, that the disease had preceded the conquest. But

it does not disprove the point that it had contributed to the weakness of the population and thus to their relatively easy submission.

Thus, on the whole, the pacification of Bale could be said to have been achieved relatively peacefully. Immediately after the occupation leaders of the occupying army were assigned over the four districts of the province: Goba, Dodola, Dallo and Ginnir. We cannot tell the number of these first arrivals in Bale. But owing to the easy submission of the population and to the transfer of some of the contingents to Borana and Ogaden, the size of the soldiery at that early point seems to have been relatively small.

3.2. The Immediate Aftermath of Conquest

In an attempt to “effectively control” the territory and help the provisioning of his soldiers, *Däjjazmach* Asfaw is said to have appointed the *Bāhiras* of each *gossa* as *balabbats*. Subsequently leaders of the various *bālbālas* known as *Haṭis* were appointed as *burqas* or as local chiefs below the *balabbat*.¹⁷ Hence many of the hereditary chiefs were retained in power albeit at a subordinate level to district governors who were all Shoans.

In the appointment of the *balabbats* the case of two individuals Chakké Entale of Dallo and Bu’i Falama of Dodola, stands out for its unusual nature. Initially, the two individuals were sent to *Ras Darge* and *Däjjazmach* Asfaw as messengers by their respective *Bāhiras*. In other words, they had no official leadership positions in their respective communities. It is said, however, that they both presented themselves as representatives of their respective people and were appointed as *balabbats*. Both Chakké and Bu’i were appointed over large territories which developed into the *awrajas* of Dallo and Ganale respectively. Their heirs, Gäbrä-Sellasé Chakké and Wäldä-Mikael Bu’i, who

were also *balabbats* and *Fitawraris* were baptized as Christians. While these two had come to power outside of hereditary positions, other *gossas* forwarded only their traditional *Bahiras*. Informants claim that in an attempt not to disrupt local tradition (*halangé*), they upheld their former leaders.¹⁸

Government documents from the 1940's that refer to the early times also support the views of my informants. In his 1944 letter to the Ministry of Interior, the then governor of Bale, *Däjjazmach* Mäkurya Bantirgu stated that:

የባላባቶቹ ሹመት ቀድሞ በጋላ [አሮሞ] ዘመን ቦኩ ወይም በሐረር
የተባለ የነገድ አለቃ ሆኖ የሚያስር የሚቀጣ ነበር ይባላል። በኋላ
ግን ራስ ዳርጌ ሀገሩን በጦር ኃይል ሲያቀነት ያው ቦኩ የሚባለው
የነገድ ወይም የጎሳ አለቃ የነበረው በሰላም ተቀብሎ እርዳታ
ያደረገላቸው ሹመቱ ጸንቶለት ለትውልዱ እየተላለፈ ይኸው
እስከአሁን ከዘሩ አልወጣም።¹⁹

The appointment of the *balabbat* and the *burqa*, however, was not a step towards the creation of a class of local landlords, but it was a means of attaching already existing structures of local government to the new system. The state retained local authorities in power partly because it could not manage to administer the whole province by itself (it was also busy pacifying the whole south) and partly because it wanted to integrate local leadership to the general Ethiopian system. It can also be said to have been a measure taken to prevent a nationalist reaction to the removal of traditional leaders.

I will discuss the role of local authorities later in this chapter, but it is important to point out here that the institution of the *balabbat* was at the very bottom of changes introduced into highland Bale in relation to land. The *balabbats* facilitated access by new officials, the soldiery and the clergy to the resources of the region. They also supervised the *gäbbar* to make sure that the latter fulfilled the obligations imposed upon them.

Due to the scanty nature of the information we have, it is difficult to compose a full list of early *balabbats*. But we know that there were about fifty-four areas of appointment (see appendix I). Out of these, seven were found in Goba, one in Dodola and seven in Sinana *wärädas*.²⁰

Table I. Units of *Balabbatnnat* in Highland Bale

Goba <i>wäräda</i>	Sinana <i>wäräda</i>	Dodola <i>wäräda</i>
1. Kärmamida	Walashe	Dodola
2. Shedama	Dawadina	
3. Kadu	Garora	
4. Fassila	Oborra	
5. Wacho	Sinana	
6. Elassa	Kabira	
7. Arana	Hamida	

There has been a long - standing claim in the general literature that after the conquest of the southern regions, Menilek confiscated two-thirds of the lands of the local people and left the remaining to the *balabbat*.²¹ In actual practice there was a great deal of regional variation. In the province of Bale what happened was neither outright expropriation of the population nor the allotment of the theoretical *siso* (one-third) of land to the *balabbat*. The local people, the *balabbats*, the *burqas* as well as the ordinary peasants, largely retained the land that was passed down to them through inheritance. As it was later attested by one of the governors of Bale, the *balabbats* of Bale came to have little or nothing more than what they had inherited from their own forefathers:

... በኋላ ባላባት የተባለውም በውስጡ የጦር ማቆሚያ ቡርቅነት አለው። በቡርቅነቱም ውስጥ ተወላጆች መላው እርስት ያላቸው ስለሆኑ ከባላባቱም ከቡርቅነቱም ቢሆን ካባቱ ከተላለፈለት ከራሱ ርስት በስተቀር ባላባት ነኝ ቡርቃ ነኝ እያለ ምርጥ ወይም ሲሶ ለማንሳት አይችልም። ስለምን በውስጡ የሚታዘዙ ቡርቃም ገባርም ሁሉም ካባት የመጣ ርስት ያላቸው ስለሆኑ ነው። ቡርቃም

ሲሶ እንዲያነሳ የርስት አለቃ ከመሆኑ በስተቀር ለራሱም ካያቱና ካባቱ ያገኘው እርስት አለው።²²

The quote above holds two major points. First, the *balabbats* and the *burqas* served the state because they were traditional leaders, not because they were given lands by the state for which they have to provide services. The *balabbats* of Bale did not receive *siso* lands. Rather, they retained lands they inherited as members of their lineages. Second, the *gabbar* had also retained land transmitted to him from his fathers and forefathers. No one can claim ownership of land privately, although individuals possessed lands on which they lived and which they cultivated. The conquest did not deprive them of these lands. The peasantry was adscripted to the officials and the soldiery, known by the generic names of *malkañä* and *naftañä*. *Malkañä* referred to officials who were part of the system of administration and who were assigned a number of *gabbars*, for their upkeep. *Naftañä* referred to soldier settlers. The two terms were sometimes used interchangeably in the region. Ownership of land remained in the hands of the lineage and possession in the hands of the *gabbar*. It was such land that was later referred to as *rest*. The reference to such lands as *rest* is not actually wrong, given the fact that in the northern half of the country also the term referred to land owned by lineages but actually possessed by individuals. Land in northern Ethiopia was communal only in the sense that the possessor could not transfer it to persons outside of his lineage. Possession remained individual. The same situation existed in Bale except that land sale, actually, did not exist.

The effect of the conquest of Bale was thus felt not in terms of loss of land, but in the form of tribute exaction. As stated above, the local people were confirmed on their previous holdings but were assigned as *gäbbars* to the officials and the soldiery from the north. This system was known as *quter gäbbar*. The number of *gäbbar* that each grantee

obtained depended on his rank and on his standing with the governor. In highland Bale, ordinary soldiers normally received about three to five *gäbbars*, while higher officials got forty to fifty.²³ My information is more or less similar with what C.F.Rey observed in the country in the period under discussion. He notes that while a governor might have 200 to 300 *gäbbar* (which of course, was much greater than what the governors in Bale obtained), the soldier obtained "two or three *gäbbar* as his share."²⁴

The low population density of highland Bale and the pastoralist way of life of many of the inhabitants must have limited the number of *gäbbars* available for allocation to each *mälkäña* or *näftäña*. Informants agree that it was only those peasants who were practicing mixed farming that were ascribed to the northerners. The nomads were required only to render a certain amount of annual tribute to the governor.²⁵ Gebru Tareke also argues that unlike the highland population, the lowland people were not directly affected much by the incorporation. Owing to the cultural and geographical imperatives, they remained relatively free from state penetration in their daily lives. It was only tribute that was imposed by the central government, which was to be collected by clan leaders.²⁶

The tribute which the *gäbbar* paid to the *mälkäña* and to other members of the northern establishment varied from place to place but also included labour services. Tribute in kind included payment of grains, honey, and *gesho* (*rhamnus prinoides*), and gifts of goats and oxen during Christian holidays of *Mäsqäl*, Easter, Epiphany and Christmas. Gabra- Wald Ingida-Warq states that in such *quter gäbbar* areas like highland Bale, the *gäbbar* paid additional three *birr* as "grazing fee", two Maria Theresa thalers each during annual holidays, *Mäsqäl*, Christmas and Easter, altogether three times annually.²⁷

The most important form of labour services was working on the *mälkäña's* or the *shaläqa's hudad* (land set aside for the supply of the official and his household). He was expected to work on *hudad* lands three days a week.²⁸ Labour services were, however, more onerous because the *gäbbar* was called upon to provide free labour above and beyond what was required of him. He was also required to grind flour, pound cereals, fetch water and firewood, build houses and fences, and herd his overlord's cattle.

If the *gäbbar* failed to accomplish these obligations, he would be punished. For instance, in one of the court cases in Goba, a certain *Qäñazmach* Bitaw accused his *gäbbar*, a certain Summa Butte, for failure to deliver his tribute in cash as agreed upon mutually. Summa was unable to pay a fixed monthly tribute of forty birr. Hence he was taken to court which was presided over by the governor, *Däjjazmach* Näsibu Zamanuel. The governor decided that since Summa had failed to pay the monthly tribute to his patron, he has to perform labour services in the amount and form that the other *gäbbar* paid, including working on the farms and the provision of fire wood, *gesho* and other necessities. As to the arrears, though the *Qäñazmach* was told that he had the legal right to detain Summa, the latter, however, decided to set him free, against a promise that Summa's sons would pay.²⁹

As of the second decade of the twentieth century, an increasing number of the *mälkäñas* in Bale began to extract tributes in cash. The payment was made on the basis of the standing of the *gabbar* in light of the four categories of *gäbbar*.³⁰ The "richest" *gäbbar* were known as *abba afuri (arat awchi)* used to pay forty birr; next came the *abba sadi (sost awchi)* who used to pay thirty birr. They were followed by the *abba lama (hulat awchi)* who paid twenty birr. Finally, there were the *abba tokko (and awchi)* who paid ten birr.

The economic criterion used in this classification was mainly the size of herds that an individual *gäbbar* owned. Those who possessed the required level of wealth were classified as *wanna gäbbar* (main *gäbbar*) not to be confused with *mulu geber* (full *geber*) which refers to a totality of tribute (cash, kind, labour) required of a peasant. The *wanna gäbbar* were those who were believed to be able to pay the highest tribute.

It was based upon the above classification that Summa (above) was designated as *wanna gäbbar* and was required to pay forty Ethiopian *birr* to his overlord. He failed to do so and the amount was reduced to thirty-five, which he still could not afford. It was because of this that the regime of labour and tribute was re-imposed on him.

As I have noted above, the classification and the size of the tribute was determined not on the basis of wealth in land but mainly on the basis of the size of herds that one possessed. In the words of a one-time governor of Bale, Captain Dämissie Ambärber:

የዚህ አውራጃ ግዛት ህዝብ ከ 28 ዓ.ም በፊት ገባር ተብሎ የተቆጠረውና ግብር የሚከፍለውም የከብቱ ማነስና መብዛት እየታየ 4 አውጪ 3 አውጪ ወ.ዘ.ተ. እየተባለ ነው እንጂ እንደቀረው አገር ህዝብ የመሬቱ መብዛትና ማነስ በቆጣሪዎች ታይቶ ተገምቶ አይደለም።³¹

The population of the highland was not, of course, totally pastoralist. The highlanders were dependent on mixed farming. Nevertheless, it is apparent that cattle were their chief economic resource for which reason they became the basis of taxation. Such practice of imposing tribute on the size of livestock was also carried out in other regions where land was not measured. Gäbrä-Wäld tells us that in *quter gäbbar* regions, the *gäbbar* was counted and assigned to the governors and the *näftäña* not only on the basis of his land but also on the basis of the size of his wealth (*tedar*) and livestock.³²

Gäbbar obligation was not limited to tribute required by his patron. He was also expected to pay *asrat* (a tenth of his produce) to the state, in this case to the local *shaläqa*. The payment was made mainly in grains, but sometimes in honey. These supplies were used to support soldiers who did not have *gäbbars* of their own. Such soldiers were locally known as *qita-bäl* (literally, bread-eaters). About eight to ten *qunnas* (24 to 30 kilos) of grain from the collected *asrat* and an annual salary of five *birr* is said to have been paid to each *qita-bäl* soldier.³³ This payment appears to have been equivalent to payments made in other parts of the country.³⁴

We do not know precisely when *asrat* payment was started in highland Bale. We know that the system was introduced in 1892 by Menilek to substitute for the billeting of soldiers on the peasantry. A reform in the way of its collection and the amount of the *asrat* was made in 1921. The amount in those regions, where land measurement was undertaken, depended on the size and quality of the land. Quality in this case referred to whether or not the land is developed or not.³⁵ In high land Bale as well some of the settler landowners had their lands assessed visually in terms of *gasha*. Accordingly, the amount of *asrat* on such lands was determined to be ten *dawulla* (1 *dawulla* = 70 to 90 kilograms) per *gasha* of developed land (*läm*) five *dawulla* per *gasha* of semi-developed land (*läm-täf*), and two *dawulla* per *gasha* of uncultivated, (*täf*) land.³⁶ However, since *gäbbar* land in highland Bale was not measured, the size of *asrat* was assessed by a group of men organized at a *meslane* level with the participation of local elders. The collection was supervised by the *meslane* (representative of the governor), the *balabbat* and the *burqa*.

It was not the *mälkäñias* and the *näftäñias* who obtained *gäbbar* for their upkeep. It was also the local gentry. Depending on the size of his domain and his relationship with the government, a *balabbat* might get up to twenty *gäbbars* and the *burqa* up to ten

gäbbars. Those local peasants who joined and helped the Shoans during the initial pacification of the province are also said to have obtained two to five *gäbbars*. These local elites thus got tribute rights over those *gäbbar* who may be members of their own *gossa*. The *burqa* who had less than ten *gäbbar* was paid an additional ten *birr*. But they had no right to claim *gossa* land either as *rest* or in temporary tenure. The relationship between the *burqa* and the *gäbbar* residing in their respective domains was related only to the tribute obligations of the peasantry and the implimentation of the orders of the government:

ቡርቃ የሚባለው ሹመቱ የእርስት አለቃ ስለሆነ ለራሱም እርስት አለው። ለተወላጁም አለቃ ሆኖ ያዛል። አስር ገባር የሚያዝ ቡርቃ እራሱ ከማዘዝ በስተቀር ግብር አይገብርም ነበር። ነገር ግን የሚአዝዛቸው ገባሮች ካስር በታች ሲሆኑ የማርና የደሞዝ አስር ብር ብቻ እይተከፈለው ግብር ግን አይጠየቅም ነበር።³⁷

Because he had administrative obligations, the *burqa* was exempted from payments of *geber* (tribute). It was the *burqa* who executes orders and comands introduced by the state at the grassroots level; it was the *burqa* who enforces payment of *asrat* through orders transmitted to him by the *balabbat* and the *warada* governor (*meslane*). Jointly with the *balabbat* the *burqa* also would assign *gäbbars* who would work on *hudad* lands.

However, the *burqa* were not directly under the command of the *mälkäña*. If he desired, each *mälkäña* could appoint his own *shum* (appointee) to collect tributes and other things from his *gabbars*. About four to six *mälkäñas* could be superimposed on a number of *gabbars* in one *burqinnat*³⁸. There were about 59 *burqas* in the *wäräda* of Goba and 98 in Sinana.³⁹

The question now is why did the state allocate the Bale peasantry as *quter gäbbar* instead of, say, taking over their lands and reducing them to tenancy? First, as I have pointed out in the preceding chapter, lands in highland Bale belonged to the *gossa*. Individual ownership was not known. Of course, homestead farms were claimed as “private property” but in actual sense even that was conditional. Hence, following the conquest, with the absence of privately owned land and the limited nature of agricultural activity, the state could not impose obligations on land. Rather obligation was attached to individual peasants. Second, conquest was not followed by wholesale confiscation of land in which case the northerners would have been given tribute rights on lands that came under the control of the state or granted to individuals. The land predominantly remained in the hands of the local people. Neither did the state undertake measurement and redistribution of land. This came much later, starting from the 1940s.⁴⁰ Thus it was not the land but the number of the *gäbbar* and their wealth that the state took in to account to provision its officials and the soldiery. However, there is no direct evidence that the state officially sanctioned the property rights of the peasantry. But it can be assumed that it did so tacitly.

In the traditional political economy of Ethiopia, the elite and the soldiery were superimposed on the land-owning peasantry. They were entitled to appropriate tribute and taxes from the *gäbbar* in lieu of salary. One or another kind of obligation had always been attached to land.⁴¹ It seems, like wise, that the Bale peasantry was designated *gäbbar* and required to provide tributes by way of introducing the principles of the north to the south.

Nevertheless, these obligations were rather arbitrary in highland Bale. If the *gäbbar* failed to meet his tribute and labour obligations the overlord could confiscate or seize his livestock and land. Above all, the *mälkäña* was often at liberty to whip or flog,

chain or detain his subjects even for relatively minor violations of his rights by them.⁴² This might in part be related to the transitory nature of the tributary system. The *mälkäña* and the soldiery who were imposed on the *gäbbar*, were transitory in a sense that as soon as their leaders were transferred or left the region they would also leave. Hence they had only temporary rights to the tribute. For this reason, patrons would try to extract as much surplus from their *gäbbar* as they possibly could.

Changes in state policy and increases in the number of northerners in highland Bale brought about a gradual change in the forms of land ownership. The state, of course, did not confiscate individually held lands and distribute them to new claimants, but it did so on what the local people regarded as communal ancestral lands. The state also permitted the transfer of lineage lands either by sale or by gift to outsiders albeit with the consent of relatives or heirs. Those northerners who had acquired lands in one way or another, as we shall see shortly, also held it as "private property". These and similar processes had encouraged local peasants to claim part of the *gossa* land on which they settled as their private property.⁴³ The forms of surplus extraction to which the *gäbbar* was subjected had also stimulated changes of ownership from group to individual (private) and from temporary to permanent tenure.

The fact that the *mälkäñas* required the *gäbbar* to pay tributes in grains and cash also had some thing to do with the shift to private tenure. In an attempt to meet these obligations, peasants were forced to undertake relatively extensive agricultural activity. Expansion of agriculture was also stimulated by the introduction of the plow to highland Bale. Informants claim that plow agriculture, which seems to have been strengthened following the incorporation, enabled many of the peasants to cultivate relatively large plots of land. This, in turn, contributed to the gradual conversion of many of the

population of highland Bale from cattle keepers to cereal-producing cultivators. Increase in the value of arable land in turn encouraged peasants to claim the lands around their settlements as their private property.⁴⁴ The expansion of farming in highland Bale in the period under discussion was also witnessed by travelers. For instance, early in the twentieth century, Hodson observed that agriculture was widely practiced in Bale, barley being the most commonly grown crop.⁴⁵

Although it is apparent that confiscation of individually held land did not take place in highland Bale, this does not mean that no kind of appropriation of land by the northerners took place. Northerners had acquired lands through different mechanisms. One of these was through the confiscation of lands whose owners were regarded as "rebels" or "criminals". Such a measure was taken, for instance, against the *bälbälas* of Emary and Abarossa who had killed *Däjjazmach* Asfaw's soldiers in 1892. Their lands located around the present-day town of Goba were confiscated and put under the disposal of the *shaläqa*.

The second way of acquiring land was through a supposed "gift" (*wurs*) from the various *balabbats*. The *balabbats* were asked to relinquish some of the lands of their *gossa* to provide for the upkeep of the governor's court. Accordingly, many of the *balabbats* presented their *gossa* land in the form of "gift". A case in point, for instance, was, that of the *balabbat* of Seymana-Socho, who gave up about 36 *gashas* of land to *Ras* Leulsagad (governor of Bale from ca.1897-1907). Leulsagad kept part of this land as *hudad* and granted the remaining to his followers, most probably on permanent tenure.⁴⁶ This was so because the information we have on this period indicates that *madärya* or temporary holding of land did not exist.

The *balabbats* would "bequeath" their *gossa* lands to northerners on two grounds. As indicated earlier, they could be directly requested or ordered by the governor to make some land available.⁴⁷ Sometimes, however, some of the *balabbats* "bequeathed" part of their *gossa* lands to gain favours with the northerners and to obtain titles. This was what happened in Sinana when a *balabbat* by the name of *Grazmach* Bonsho Aynage "bequeathed" about twenty nine *gashas* of his *gossa* land to *Ato* Rade, governor of Sinana *mektel-meslane*. Rade is, said to have taken over the land as his *rest*.⁴⁸

There were also people who acquired lands as *rest* through agreements with the *balabbat*, sometimes with payments of only nominal fees. The *balabbat* would help the claimant locate "unsettled" land and the latter would apply to the governor to grant him ownership of the land as private property. Availability of land and the ill-defined rights of the peasantry on lineage lands made it easier for the *balabbat* to declare certain lands "unsettled". Notable men, like *Fitawrari* Tägäñ (an official in Sinana *mektel-meslane*, *Fitawrari* Täsämma Abba Talas (a *täbäqa* or para-legal in Goba *meslane*) were said to have received lands at Qasso in this way.⁴⁹ My informants confirm the transfer of large amounts of land to the northerners on this basis.

"Bequeathing" land in favour of northern settlers was not limited to the *balabbat*. At times, *gabbars* also used to "give" part of their lands to gain favours and protection from arbitrary obligations either by their overlords or by the *balabbat* and the *burqa*. Some *gabbar* are thus said to have "bequeathed" almost all of their lands, keeping for themselves only small patches "as place for perching the spear", *ya-tor maqomiya*. The overlord who acquired land in this manner benefits in two ways because his rights to the labour of the peasant would still apply. In effect, the peasant would become a tenant of his overlord.

In one of the documents that I discovered in the archives of Bale Regional High Court, a landowner (*gäbbar*) by the name of Junda had "bequeathed" his land to Emperor Hayla-Sellase himself, in return for a title (*yä-ma'aräg lebs*). Junda and his sons were required to pay rents on the land. After the death of his father, the elder son, Haji Salis, appealed for exemption from rent payment by stating that:

አባቴ ጁንዳ ሳለ በህይወቴ የበርበሬውን እርስታችንን ለግርማዊ
 ጁንሆይ አውርስን ነበር። አሁን እንደ ደንቡ መጠሪያ የለን።
 አባቴም ሳለ የጁ እራሽ የነበረውን አሁንም ከሞተ ወዲህ
 ግራዝማች ወልደማሪያም [የመሬቱ ጠባቂ] እርቦ ይቀበሉናል...⁵⁰

The appeal by Haji Salis succeeded only partly. The *chilot* approved that Salis should be exempted from payments of *erbo* on that part of the land that he cultivated for his own upkeep (*yä-Ij irrash*). But his brothers, Aliy Junda, Abubakar Junda and Mahmud Junda were given the choice of working the land as tenants or leaving the land.

Numerically weak *bälbälas* or *bälbälas* who felt one or another kind of threat are also said to have "bequeathed" lands to their respective *mälkäñas*. For instance, the *balbala* of Hansawe in Goba is said to have "bequeathed" its land to a certain *balambaras* Darse and a *Wayzaro* Wälätäyesus Haylä-Sellase (daughter of *däjjazmach* Haylä-Sellase Abaynah, governor of Bale (ca.1918-1930). Members of the *bälbäla* of Hansawe thus became *chisanya* of these two former *mälkäñas*.⁵¹ Besides protecting their clients from arbitrary obligations, the *mälkäñas* would help the *gäbbar* pay lighter tribute.

It is apparent that none of these "gifts" were really gifts. In all the above cases there was disguised intimidation and force that the local people could not resist. It was a measure forced on the peasantry if they were to continue to survive as subjects. It was to get protected from further threats that the peasant was forced to give up rights of

ownership in favour of the *mälkäña*. Thus, hand in hand with the transfer of land to northern settlers, we also observe the rise or introduction of tenancy in highland Bale.

One of the beneficiaries of the introduction of the *gäbbar* system in highland Bale was the Church. The earliest Churches that were built in the province are said to have acquired about one *gasha* each as *rest*. In addition to this, about three *gäbbars* were provided for the support of every clergyman in the churches. Through time, however, a larger size of land and a number of *gäbbars* were set aside for the Church. There were many varieties of these Church lands, like *yä-qes märet* (priestly land), *yä-däbtära märet* for *däbtära* service, *diyaqon märet*, *yä-gäbäz märet*, etc. These are known by the generic name of *sämon*. By and large, the lands belonged to individual landowners. But, as *gäbbars* they were required to provide tribute to the Church.⁵²

On the eve of the Italian invasion there existed about 26 Churches in highland Bale and they collected tribute on about 330 *gashas* of land. Out of these 26 Churches, six were located in the *meslane* of Goba with 146 *gashas* of land and five churches in Dodola with 97 *gashas* of land.⁵³

Table 2: Churches in highland Bale and the amounts of land under their disposal, Ca.1935.

Church	Location	Size of land (<i>gashas</i>)
1. Qidus Gabri'el	Qasso (Goba)	6
2. Qidus Amanu'el	Lolla-Qasso(Goba)	18
3. Qidiste Mariyam	Goba	35
4. Madhane-Alam	Goba	37
5. Qidus Giyorgis	Goba	25
6. Qidus Mika'el	Goba	25
7. Abuna- Taklahaymanot	Oborra (Sinana)	15
8. Qidus Mika'el	Sinana	12
9. Gabra-Krestos	Dodola	20
10. Qidiste Mariyam	Lenqo (Dodola)	15
11. Qidus Giyorgis	Haqo (Dodola)	15
12. Qidus Mika'el	Ebeno (Dodola)	15
13. Abuna- Taklahaymanot	Gata (Dodola)	12
14. Kidane Mihret	Dodola	20

Source: N.Malizia, "La Regione del Bale," *Rivista delle Colonie* (1938)

There was also some degree of sale of land in highland Bale. Some local landowners sold their lands to the settlers, but by way of overcoming the opposition from lineage members pretended that the land was "leased" out in tenancy to the buyer. A very small amount of "rent" would be agreed upon, of course, nominally. For instance, in a document which one of my informants, *Ato Tägäñ Ayälä* made available to me, his father *Ayälä Abägaz* had bought land from a certain *Kalisu Däwano* for ten *birr*. The purchaser was, however required to pay a rent of one *birr* a year. Thus, he was "theoretically" a *Chisaña* of *Kalisu*. The agreement reads as follows:

On *Mäskäräm* [September] 4/1920 E C. I, Kalisu Dawano have sold a quarter of my land at *Chale* ... to Ayala Abagaz, but [I] have reserved my *ya-tor maqomiya*. I have sold the land to him for ten *birr* and he would also pay me an annual *geber* [rent] of one *birr*. Excepting this, I would not allow any *shum* (official) to interfere and I personally pledge not to ask for another thing...⁵⁴

Ato Tagaň says that the land belonged to his father but that the tenancy term was added for protection against the complaints of the *gossa* of Kalisu who would not agree to the transfer of their land to an outsider. Hence, it was in some cases under the cover of *chisañinmat* that transaction of land began in highland Bale.

Hand in hand with this, undisguised transaction in land also began in the early period of the twentieth century. Settlers who came to the region either as fortune seekers or following one of their relatives acquired land through purchase. Commoditization of land, in turn, increased the value of land and helped the rise of privatization in highland Bale. Land was gradually “transferred” from lineage property to private property, thus becoming readily disposable albeit under some control by the *gossa*.

Outsiders, who had no land as well as or *gäbbar* who did not have enough land, are also said to have entered into tenancy arrangements involving payments of fixed rent. The rent depended on the size and cultivability of the land. For instance, a man by the name of Musiye Dasta was a *chisaña* of Nuro Qacho in Goba. Musiye used to pay an annual rent of five *birr* on about one *gasha* of land.⁵⁵ However, my informants agree that tenancy was not a widespread phenomenon in highland Bale in the early period of the twentieth century. It was an exception rather than the rule.⁵⁶

Generally in the few decades following the conquest, the forms of surplus appropriation imposed on the *gäbbar* tightened from time to time. The growing number of

the officials and their retainers in the region increased the requirements for their upkeep. Thus until the 1930s, no measure was taken either to change the *näftäña-gäbbar* relationship nor to lighten the burden of the peasant.

In 1932, shortly after his coronation as Emperor, Haylä-Sellase appointed *Däjjazmach* Nasibu Zamanuel as the governor of Bale. Nasibu is remembered for his efforts to introduce some reforms, both administrative and fiscal.

His efforts are also attested to by one of the British "advisors" to Ethiopia, F. de Halpert, who was himself requested by the Emperor to plan the reorganization of Bale in the spheres of taxation, police, the judiciary and finances, including the abolition of forced labour. De Halpert was impressed by the seriousness with which *Däjjazmach* Nasibu in the short period of his tenure had tried to implement his recommendations. The governor is said to have pledged to send all tax receipts to the central treasury, in return for which he and his officials would receive a monthly fixed salary, ranging from 300 *birr* for the governor to 10 *birr* for a common soldier.⁵⁷ It was during the governorship of Nasibu (ca.1932-1935) that the first dry-weather motor road was cleared (constructed) from Dodola to Goba and further up to Sof Umar. The peasantry, of course, were conscripted for labour on such public works. The first attempt to have trained soldiers in the province is also said to have been started by Nasibu. These soldiers were locally known as *Beljig wättadär* (soldiers trained by Belgian officers). In place of the practice of allocating *gäbbar* or paying in kind, these soldiers were salaried and received cash.⁵⁸ In fact, the *quter gäbbar* system started to phase out during the tenure of Nasibu because he started paying soldiers and other government workers in cash.

The major reform effort that was carried out by *Däjjazmach* Nasibu was, however, the standardization of tribute which included the abolition of forced labour. He is said to

have declared payments of fixed tribute in cash to individual *mälkäña* by their respective *gäbbar*. The payment ranged from ten *birr* for the poorer *gäbbar* to forty *birr* for the better ones. But the responsibility to determine the economic standing of the *gäbbar* was left to the *mälkäña* himself with the help of the *balabbat* and the *burqa*.⁵⁹ This, inevitably, gave room for imposing heavy burdens on the *gäbbar* beyond their capacity. Hence many *gäbbar* are said to have negotiated to supplement the payment with the provision of labour services.

Payment of fixed tribute was difficult for the *gäbbar* in part because it was due irrespective of the level of his harvest or income. A *gäbbar* whose harvest fell due to bad weather and whose livestock were depleted as a result of draught or other reasons could not afford to pay. Many of the *mälkäñas* are known to have brought their delinquent *gäbbars* to court or to have forced them to negotiate terms of recompense.⁶⁰

On the whole, the reform efforts of *Däjjazmach* Nasibu also brought about little change in the conditions of *gäbbar* and their relations with the *mälkäña*. The *mälkäña* continued to extract cash tribute as well as labour from the *gäbbar*. The burden of fixed tribute and absence of institutions to enforce the orders seems to have weakened the attempted changes. Even if the reforms were enforced they were at variance with the economic capacity of the *gäbbar*. Another reason which might have contributed to the failure of the reform had to do with the absence of land-measurement in highland Bale.⁶¹ Nasibu tried to introduce the fixed tribute without undertaking land measurement or abolishing the *quter gäbbar* system. Hence the system could be said to have remained intact in the pre-war period.

To sum up, in the period following the conquest and up to the Italian occupation, the *gäbbar* retained the land. Nevertheless ownership right was conditional, based on the

fulfillment of capricious obligations. If the *gäbbar* failed to meet these obligations, the overlord could confiscate the land under the pretext of punishment. In highland Bale, unlike most parts of northern Ethiopia, the state retained the right of reclaiming lands which it had given or acknowledged as the property of its subjects.⁶² The *mälkäña*, thus, used this residual right of the state to control the *gäbbar*. Hence the scale of exploitation to which the Bale peasantry was exposed and the arbitrary measures taken by the *mälkäña* differentiate him from the *rest* owning *gäbbar* of the north. The distinction was not only in the scale of extraction but also in the legal and institutional context of land ownership.

While the foregoing refers to the relationship of the peasant with the state, tenure rights and obligations as perceived among the peasantry looked different. Private property, as such, was not acknowledged by the local people. Lineage members regarded lands as their collective or communal property and hence they were against its transfer to outsiders. Informants assert *gäbbar* rights were only usufructuary rights. Children and close relatives inherited land relinquished by individuals upon death. Yet all members had the right to use the lands in the *gossa* domain. An individual member had no right to transfer the land to a stranger (outside of the *gossa*) neither by sale nor by gift. Lands, according to the *gossa* tradition, would change hands only among members.⁶³

Ownership rights of the *gäbbar* were, thus, conditional not only *vis-a-vis* state but also *vis-a-vis* the *gossa*. It is important to note, however, that communal claims on ancestral lands were not sanctioned by the state. Through time, the decline in *gossa* cohesion and the inability of local institutions to enforce local decisions, coupled with the tendency to look upon land possessed as land owned, would gradually weaken communal property regimes in highland Bale. The state, of course, had sanctioned inheritance rights

and first purchase among near relatives or co-heirs. But customary tenure, as such, declined only gradually through about half a century.

The Shoan conquest had resulted in a great deal of change in both the social and economic relations of the people of highland Bale. Due to the decline in kinship relations, the traditional roles of the local chiefs in regulating *gossa* and community affairs through mediation and arbitration had also waned. The position of local chiefs who, as *balabbats*, were appointed to enforce laws and orders introduced by the state, and who, in the process, came to force the *gäbbar* to pay tribute and tax declined gradually. Many lost respect with their compatriots being regarded as saleouts. Hence a new social hierarchy had emerged almost directly from the conquest.

3.3. Italian Occupation and the Politics of Land

The province of Bale was occupied by the Italian forces in 1937 after the collapse of the resistance put up in southern Ethiopia under *Ras Dasta Damtaw*, governor of Sidamo province, and *Däjjazmach Bäyyänä Märed*, governor of Bale.⁶⁴ Following the occupation, Bale was divided into two *commissariati* (provinces) and six *residenzi* (districts). These were the *commissariato* of Goba including the *residenza* of Goba, Dodola and Sacchegillo (Dallo); and the *commissariato* of Ginnir including Ginnir itself, Magalo and Sheikh Hussen.⁶⁵

In an attempt to gain support, Italian land policy "favoured" the peasants of the South. It made a great deal out of their loss of land to northerners. The Italians promised the Oromo population that safeguarding their rights and interests over land would be foremost in their administrative policy.⁶⁶ Among other things, local people were allowed

to retake lands that were formerly designated as “government land” as well as lands previously owned by northerners who had fled.

Evidence from both written and oral information indicates that the Oromo of highland Bale reclaimed these lands both in groups and individually. As groups it was *bälbäla* who had suffered expropriation by the northerners who re-established control. Sometimes, however, it was small groups of people who reoccupied lands in the name of their *bälbäla*, so that it is not clear if it was a re-establishment of previous rights or establishment of new rights. For instance, at a place called Karmamida, in Goba, where *Qäñzmach* Fato Danboba was *balabbat*, twelve men claimed three *gashas* of land which they claimed was previously taken away from their *bälbäla* in the pre-war period. Their argument was that: ቀድሞ ከርስታችን ላይ ተቆርሶ ለሻለቃ ሁዳድ የተወሰደ በመሆኑ ሊመለስልን ይገባል።⁶⁷ [Literally “since the land was previously taken from our *rest* and given over to the *Shaläqa hudad* it has to be returned to us.”] These men did reoccupy the land jointly, but we have no information as to the specific property rights of each individual in the pre-war period. All we know is that their *bälbäla* had controlled the land collectively.

In some cases individual peasants as well as the *balabbat* reoccupied lands abandoned by the *näftäñas*. The *balabbat* reclaimed the lands arguing that they were forced to “bequeath” or give up the lands to the *shaläqa* and the *mälkäña*. For instance, in a locality known as Tamamo, in Gololcha *wäräda*, about eleven *gashas* of land was controlled by a *shaläqa* by the name of *Qäñzmach* Balachaw Bushy. The land was registered as *shaläqa hudad* in 1917. However, when the Italians came, the *shaläqa*, who had about 300 men under him, was removed from Tamamo and a certain *Grazmach* Umär Samma reoccupied the land. The latter claimed that it was previously taken from his

holdings (*yezota*) and was given to the *näftäñoch*. He sold the land immediately after the defeat of the Italians. But the former grantees appealed to Bale *awraja* governorate office for the restoration of the land. Their petition was that the land was granted to them in 1917 as *madärya* and that they had the right to the land legally.⁶⁸

From this we can infer that the Italian period did not introduce any fundamentally new form of tenure in highland Bale. As was the case prior to their arrival, the Italians did not specifically sanction private property. Thus, peasants who claimed to own land collectively were not interfered with. However, neither did they receive certification of such holdings. What the Italians did was thus to "recompense" the locals with lands that they had lost to the northerners without asking too many questions about the legality or veracity of their claims.

The most important achievement of the Italian period was, however, the abolition of the *gäbbar* system. The peasantry was freed from tribute obligations. It was this measure that served the Italians as the single most important element to establish their credentials as liberators.⁶⁹

The policy, above all, had gained the invaders support from the *Imam* of the sanctuary of Sheikh Hussen, *Imam* Sayd Muhammad, and from the *balabbat* of Raytu *Fitawrari* Nuh Dadhi. Nuh Dadhi was appointed by the Italians as the chief of the district of Ginnir.⁷⁰

It is apparent that the local elite and the *gäbbar* sided with the Italians not in support of Fascism but as a means of liberation from the tributary system imposed on them. They did not prefer to be ruled by the Italians. Many of the Oromo were suspicious of Italy's long-term objectives. Besides, not all the Oromo were against the settlers. Some of them had given protection to the Amhara, some of whom, incidentally, disguised

themselves as Muslims. They were given local Oromo customary clothes, *gufta* (Arssi women's head dress) for the women and *amama* (turban) for the men to help them escape capture by the Italians. Those settlers who had good relations with the local people were not threatened. These did not, in fact, lose their lands.⁷¹

Initially Italy suspended even payments of *asrat*. This, however, did not last long. The requisition resumed after a while. The suspension owed itself, in fact, to the lack of government machinery for collection and to problems of security. Once the Italians felt secure in controlling the country, collection of *asrat* began to be carried out through the *balabbat* and the newly appointed tax collectors locally known as *capos* (boss).⁷² While the highlanders were required to pay *asrat* on the basis of their produce, the pastoralists and the nomads were obliged to pay livestock tax. For instance, the chief of Ginnir *Fitawrari* Nuh Dadhi was required to collect an annual livestock tax of 80,000 Lire from his subjects.⁷³

As did elsewhere in the country, Italian colonialism also targeted lands belonging, particularly, to the royal family and the patriots in Bale. Besides, it had declared "uncultivated or unoccupied" lands as public domain.⁷⁴ To meet its food shortages, part of these lands were put to cultivation by the colonial government. One of such projects was undertaken in highland Bale. About 200 to 300 hectares of land was cultivated in an area known as Shallo, in Sinana *wäräda*. Though it was worked by the Italians themselves, local people are also said to have helped during weeding and harvesting for nominal fees.⁷⁵

Generally, despite the abolition of the *gäbbar* system and the return of some lands to the local people, the politics of land did not have sufficient time to play itself out in

highland Bale. The brief period of occupation and resistance by the patriots seems to have limited the degree of intervention by the Italians in land matters.

Chapter IV: Postwar Landholding Patterns: The Reworking of the Land Tenure System

The postwar period was characterized largely by the centralization of land administration and of the fiscal system. In highland Bale the period saw the conversion of the peasantry from collective owners of land to individual owners. Despite the rise of private property rights, collective claims, to what the local people called ancestral lands, seemed to have persisted through the early 1940s. However, this was completely discouraged with redistribution of lands undertaken a little after the restoration of the monarchy.

As elsewhere, land measurement was carried out in Bale mainly to identify and determine the size and quality of taxable lands. This went along with the centralization and standardization of the fiscal system. The government had introduced policies that would avoid intermediary elements in the extraction of revenue from the rural economy. Peasants, in other words, were required to pay taxes directly to the state treasury. Taxes were also converted from payments in kind to payments in cash. Hence, to augment its revenue, the government had carried out repeated and successive land measurements in highland Bale.

Part of the strategy of opening up lands for utilization was the practice of granting land on permanent tenure. The state distributed lands which were supposed to have been "unsettled" by the local people and lands forfeited for tax default. Information as to the location and size of lands available for grant was thus sought and pursued by the state seriously.

If one feature of the land tenure system in the post-liberation period was the growing permanency of tenure, the other feature was the increasing vulnerability of

peasant property rights. In highland Bale, fraud and deception by officials of government, and the unsalutary effect of standardized cash taxation on peasant agriculture had resulted in the confiscation and thus alienation of large tracts of land. The officials and the gentry used all kinds of excuses to appropriate lands. The invariability or inflexibility of taxes, which meant that it did not take into account the periodic yields of the peasantry, brought about defaults on taxes and subsequent loss of land by landowners. In this chapter, I will argue that while the primary purpose of land measurements was the identification of taxable lands, one of its major effects was the conversion of the peasantry from tribute payers to individual landowning taxpayers. But the high-handed administration and intimidation by the officials, coupled with the onerous taxation, had resulted in the expropriation of many of the peasantry. Land measurement and taxation, thus, had somewhat contradictory effects on tenure in highland Bale, that of enhancing individualization of tenure and of undermining security of tenure.

4.1. Land Measurement and Taxation in Highland Bale

In the post-liberation period, taxation and land measurements were interlinked phenomena in highland Bale. Fresh remeasurements were carried out following every decision to augment revenues from land. In 1941, the government had proclaimed a new tax policy whereby a modest amount of tax was to be levied from individual landowners. The tax was limited to half the pre-war amount. At the same time, the state prohibited payment of all kinds of dues and labor services to individuals, thus abolishing the predatory *nāftāna-gābbar* system. A year later, in 1942, a new tax law was promulgated,

announcing fixed taxes on the basis of cultivability of lands. Accordingly, a tax of 15 *birr*, 10 *birr* and 5 *birr* was fixed for *läm*, *läm-täf* and *täf* lands respectively.¹ Nevertheless there was no distinction made between measured and unmeasured lands.

The process of centralizing the fiscal system and steps towards the abolition of the *quter gäbbar* system had already begun in highland Bale, before it was interrupted during the Italian invasion. In 1942, Bale was chosen as one of the trial cases for the centralization of taxes².

The restoration of the monarchy in general and the implementation of the new orders in particular, however, faced same resistance from the peasants of Bale. The main resistance came from the traditional *qallu* (religious leaders under the *gada* system), like Muhammad Gada in Dallo. In 1942 Muhammad led a rebellion that opposed the re-establishment of the government in the region. *Däjazmach* Mäkurya Bantirgu, governor of Bale in 1941-1944, was thus charged with the pacification of the province as well³. The campaign to suppress the movement was led by *Shambäl* Dämissē Ambärber, who was then the Director of Bale. The insurgents, who seemed to have involved many of the peasantry, staged a resistance that lasted for more than eight months. In his letter that he sent to Goba, in May 1943, Dämissē argued against the removal of military units under his command to some place else by stating that "the people of Dallo were continuing with their subversion, with no fear of the governor and the huge army [in the area],... before the surrender or destruction of the leaders, I do not understand reason why the army should be transferred."⁴ Muhammad was finally captured in 1943 after attacks on him by the army. He was sentenced to life imprisonment in Goba and died there in 1961.

After the suppression of the movement in Dallo, Makurya is said to have summoned the *balabbats* of Bale and explained the displeasure of the government with those who collaborated with the invaders during the Italian occupation. But no *balabbat* was forced to relinquish his position. Rather the governor urged them all to support the restoration of the monarchy and carry out the orders transmitted to them.⁵ One of the duties of the *balabbats* was the collection of taxes.

In the first two or three years, however, collection of taxes was not carried out effectively. Besides the instability and lack of strong control of the province, variations in the amount of taxes to be collected had made the implementation difficult. While peasants in some of the highland areas were required to pay twenty *birr*, others were submitting only about ten *birr*. Such variation is said to have depended on the vagueness of the provision about cultivated and uncultivated lands and the reluctance of the peasantry.⁶

Proclamation no.70 of 1944 fixed and increased the amount of tax to be levied on both measured and unmeasured lands. For *qälad* regions the rate for a *gasha* of land was 50, 40 and 15 *birr* on *läm*, *läm-täf* and *täf* lands respectively. For unmeasured lands a comprehensive tax of twenty *birr* was imposed on lands owned by individuals.⁷ The proclamation, however, was not clear as to the criterion for classifying lands as *läm*, *läm-täf* and *täf*.

To help the identification of those peasants who claimed property ownership, the first registration of land was carried out in highland Bale in 1937 E.C (1944/45). Through visual assessment, peasants were directly attached to the lands which they had claimed as members of their lineages. Payment of taxes did not, therefore, depend on the

size of lands. Nor did it take into account the quality of land. Whether an individual held fifty *gasha* of *gäbbar* land or just one, both were required to pay twenty *birr*.⁸

The visual "measurement" of land was carried out by groups organized at the *meketel-wäräda* level. These consisted of officials, the *balabbat*, the *burqa* and local elders. In the process, local people were required to point out lands which they claimed to have settled or owned as members of the *gossa* and *bälbäla*. Confirmation of claims were sought from other members before registration was made. The size registered under individuals is said to have depended on their wealth, strength and seniority in each sub-clan. Genealogically senior and wealthy peasants appropriated relatively large amounts of land, while the poor and junior peasants were registered as owners of smaller amounts of land.⁹

Despite the registration of lands on individual basis, for the majority of the local people land continued to be owned collectively. It was in part for this reason that elders and leaders of many *bälbälas* were registered as owners of the lands in the name of "their people". This was attributed to three major factors. First, since many of the peasants of highland Bale were still semi-pastoralist, they hoped that holding lands collectively would enable them to graze their herds on extensive tracts of land. Second, many of the peasants were not used to the idea of individual ownership of land. Close relatives thought that it would be unwise to limit their chances of access to land by making premature agreements on who owned what. Hence, they insisted on getting their lands measured collectively. The *angafa* of the lineage group would be registered as representative of the community. Third, the amount of tax levied was not dependent on the size of lands, but on the number of *gäbbar* lands. In other words it depended on the

number of landowners registered in the tax book. Therefore, peasants chose to hold lands collectively partly to avoid payment of tax on a small size of land.¹⁰

This step towards the creation of individual ownership of land through registration of previous clan lands as property of the *gäbbar* was known as *meddäba* (allocation). The *meddäba*, however, was not a process of standardization or redistribution of land; it was simply a measure carried out to facilitate payment of taxes. The registration largely depended on the information provided by local claimants. As one of the letters sent from Bale to the Ministry of Interior in 1946 stated: “[Registration was made] depending on the information provided to the assessors (*gämachoch*) by the *gäbbars*, [and] lands of fifty, sixty and even ninety *gashas* were regarded as one [*gäbbar*]...and *gabbars* were required to pay only twenty *birr*. Similarly those who had two or three *masa* were also required to pay twenty.”¹¹

The government did not therefore, attempt to take-over lands in “excess” of what was claimed to be the possession of individuals. As long as there was no opposition from *gossa* members, ordinary peasants could get registered as owners of large sizes of land. This seems to have been due to the fact that in addition to its limited productive value, land was abundant in the region relative to the size of the population. Of course, outsiders who did not belong to any of the *gossas* in the area, except those who were granted lands by the state or by the local people before the war, were not eligible for a share of land from the *gossa* property. They were forced to live as dependents or tenants of the landowners. Unlike practices in some other regions of the country, the first “measurement” of land in highland Bale neither resulted in a wholesale dispossession nor in the division of land between the State, the Church and the *balabbats*. While the state had claimed only those lands, which were believed to have been “unsettled” by the local

people, the *balabbat* received lands only as senior members of their lineages. In addition to those “unsettled” lands, the government had, of course, reclaimed the prewar *hudad* lands for itself.¹²

In 1947, in order to increase state revenue, the tax required from each *gäbbar* land was raised to 26 *birr*. Peasants who were registered as owners of *gäbbar* lands were requested to pay at the new rate. Again, the amount of tax did not depend on the size or the quality of lands. Every landowner had to produce 26 *birr* annually irrespective of size or quality of land.¹³

Thus, both the previous and the new tax rates were not fair to those peasants with smaller size of land. The small holders were forced to pay at levels equivalent to the big landowners. Those peasants with poor lands were also required to pay the same amount of tax paid by those who had well-developed lands. On the other hand, the state also lost a great amount of income that it could have collected from land had it determined taxes on the basis of the size and quality of lands.

Local governors, of course, repeatedly advised the introduction of the *qalad* system which they said would provide for the collection of taxes on the basis of size and quality of lands. In the words of *Däjjazmach* Mäkuriya Batirgu, for instance, besides the generation of substantial income for the state the *qälad* would help retrieve extra lands that the government could grant to new land-seekers. It was expected that if the actual size of lands were known, peasants would also give up part of their lands for fear of heavy taxes.¹⁴ As we shall see later, it was such “extra” lands that were later allocated to grantees.

Peasants of highland Bale were, however, against the move to measure lands with the *qalad*. Opposition against remeasurement was related to their way of life and to

nature of the tax orders as stated above. They petitioned the government against determination and division of land among landowners which they argued would jeopardize cattle breeding by limiting the use of communal grazing lands. If every one possessed his individual holding in the form of private tenure, others would be prohibited from grazing their herds.¹⁵

But the main reason for the resistance against the *qäläd* system revolved around confiscation. As forerunners of the movement against *qalad*, the *balabbats* of the province and the *Imam* of Sheikh Hussen (a religious sanctuary in Bale) in particular repeatedly impressed upon their people the serious problem that would arise with remeasurement. As captain Dämisse, governor of Bale in the late 1940s, noted in his *secret* letter to the Ministry of Interior in 1949, the Bale peasantry were also well-informed of expropriations that had followed the *qaläd* elsewhere in Southern Ethiopia.

በእውነቱ በኩል ቀላድ የሚጠሉበትን ምክንያት ስመረምረው 1ኛ/
 በአርሲ ላይ ቀላድ ቢጣል መንግሥት ትርፋን መሬት ወስዶ ለነፍጠኛ
 ማደሪያና ርስት አድርጎ ሰጠው። በዚህ ምክንያት አማራው ርስተኛ
 ሆኖ ከመተክሉም በቀር ከዚህ የባሰው ክርስቲያን የሆነው የሸዋ ኦሮሞ
 መጥቶ የቀድሞውን ባለርስት አሩሲውን አጥፍቶ እርስተኛ ሆኖ ቀርቷል...
 ስለዚህ የዚህ እድል ደርሶብን ሃይማኖታችን ከመድከሙ በፊት ምናልባት
 ቀላድ እንዲጣል የምትፈቅዱ ሰዎች ብትኖሩ ዋና የአገራችን የባሌ ጠላቶች
 ናችሁና ከዚህ ነገር ውጡ እያሉ...ሕዝቡን በመሃላ አጥብቀው
 አስገንዝበውታል።¹⁶

The people, thus, had an idea of the impending danger and decided to resist the move in an “organized” manner. The representatives of the state also knew that some work of propaganda has to be done before the idea was accepted. Hence the governor undertook to convince the *Imam* of Dire Sheikh Hussen, Mahmud Mahammad Sayd, and

the *Qadi*, Ahmad Imama Abdulqadir. He promised to them that if they supported the measurement of land, the sanctuary would be allowed to retain the surrounding holdings as its domain.¹⁷

It is not clear how much effect the work of propagandas had. Our sources are not explicit. But what was feared came in 1951. Three groups of surveyors (*qäläd tay*) were entrusted with the task of measuring land on the ground. The first group was assigned to measure lands in Dallo and Goba, the second was assigned to Dodola (or Gadab) and the third to Ginnir. The surveyors were supported by the *wäräda* officials, the *balabbats* and the *burqas*. The work was completed in 1953.¹⁸

Even after the measurement had started, oppositions against it are said to have been carried out sporadically. In Dodola peasants threatened to attack the surveyors.¹⁹ At one time in 1951, they had snatched away the devise from the surveyors and cut it into pieces. The surveyors were thus forced to work under the protection of the police. In other cases, peasants refrained from appearing on their supposed lands to show the boundaries. For instance, in the Agarfa and Dodola *wärädas* the surveyors had faced such a problem and appealed to the *awraja* Governor and the Ministry of Interior to warn the peasants that they might lose their lands if the period of measurement expired. The people also appealed to the government for the assessment of their lands to take place only visually. This latter request was accepted in some places and measurement was thus carried out depending on the form preferred by the peasants. While some got their lands measured by the use of the chain, others had their properties surveyed visually.²⁰

The measured lands were classified into four tenure types. These were the *gäbbar* (private) lands, *sämon* (lands taxed by the Church) *madärya* holdings (lands held by

officials and soldiers temporarily) and *māngest märet* (government land). The size of each of the tenure types is shown in the table below.

Table 4.1: Distribution of Measured Lands by Tenure Types (in *Gasha*)²¹

No	<i>Wäräda</i>	<i>Gäbbar/Rest</i>	<i>Sämon</i>	<i>Madärya</i>	Total
1	Goba	6,946	300	8	7,254
2	Ginnir	12,734	201	-	12,935
3	Gädäb/Dodola	11,884	216	4	12,104
4	Agarfa	7,099	136	1	7,236
5	Goro	3,518	111	-	3,629
6	Dallo	9,658	2	-	9,660
Total		51,839	966	13	52,818

Source: MIA, “Lands held by the people and the Government” (1948 E.C.)

My sources do not specify the amount of government lands in each *wäräda*. A total of some 2,416 *gashas* of measured lands were found to be under this tenure. From the table above, we find that more than 90 percent of lands in the province were designated as *gäbbar* tenure. However, it is not clear as to what proportion of these lands derived from lands previously held by northerners in temporary (*madärya*) tenure. What we know is that the government had allowed the conversion of all or part of *madärya* lands to *gäbbar* in the post-liberation period. Whatever the internal differentiation, *gäbbar* was the most common form of tenure in highland Bale. “Government lands”, during this time consisted of only about five percent of the lands.

In the final, analysis what land measurement achieved was convert the previous system of lineage ownership to permanent private ownership. Even though there was opposition to this process continuously, it is important to note that for a substantial number of peasants the *qalad* was regarded as a welcome relief from some of the problems they faced since the first visual "measurement" and registration of land. There had been disputes with the *alaqa* who were registered as representatives of groups or families. The problem was that the *alaqa*, as in other parts of the country, "represented the group in all its relationship with the government, being responsible primarily for the collection of taxes due to the state from his or her co-heirs."²² In reality, however, they had started to present themselves as sole owners of the lands and had started to treat the co-owners as subordinates. As far as the government was concerned, the *alaqa* was the possessor of the land. Besides, some *alaqoch* were accused of withholding tax contributions that they collected from co-owners. The co-owners, therefore, were trying to overcome these problems when they chose to be registered as individual owners in 1951.²³

However, this does not mean that all peasants were registered individually. There were still relatives who continued with collective ownership of land. But, this time the co-owners were also entered into the tax register as *menzer* (co-owners). The names of both the *alaqa* and the *menzer* (pl. *menzeroch*) were written in the register and on the tax receipts.²⁴ Nevertheless, the amount of lands that belonged to each co-owner was not mentioned. It only indicated the total size of the land on which tax would be paid.

The *qalad* measurement was also attended by the classification of land for tax purposes. Land was classified into three, namely *läm*, *läm-täf* and *täf*. The amount of tax to be levied also depended on this classification. By then, however, land tax had already

been increased to 45, 40 and 15 *birr* for *läm*, *läm-täf* and *täf* lands respectively.²⁵ In the light of the sizable amount of land that was registered as private property of the local people and considering the overall economic status of the population, the governor of Bale had appealed to the Emperor for a reconsideration of the tax rate. Above all, Taddäsä Nägash, the then governor of Bale *awraja* commented that, until the adoption of the *qälad*, peasants of Bale used to pay only twenty six *birr*; irrespective of the size and cultivability of their lands; hence, if they were required to pay according to the rate determined for the whole country many peasants might simply forfeit their lands for failure to pay taxes. He argued that transport and market infrastructure had to develop first before the peasantry were asked to pay taxes at that rate.²⁶ The building of such an infrastructure, according to the governor, would encourage a sense of belonging among the people in addition to facilitating development and collection of taxes. His suggestions, however, were not accepted among the upper echelons. The Ministry of Interior warned Taddäsä that he would be responsible for uncollected taxes.

Taddäsä's recommendations, however, emanated from practical problems he was facing. Problems of infrastructure had made it difficult for peasants to sell their produce and pay taxes on time. Annual taxes were collected from the month of December to June. However, peasants could not find markets for their limited agricultural produce. Thus they could not generate enough cash on time to pay taxes let alone to finance their other expenses. Moreover, absence of transportation in the province as well as poor linkage among the major towns had made it difficult for tax collectors to appear on time and collect the required taxes.

Bureaucratic red tape and fraud during assessment of the quality of lands and collection of taxes had made the peasants susceptible to tax defaults and thus to

expropriation. Unless peasants paid their arrears, tax collectors would not accept current payments and small landowners could not afford to pay both at the same time. Moreover, landowners had to pay taxes on all their lands together, even though they might own different units of land in different places. A peasant who wanted to pay tax on some of his property would thus be refused unless he was prepared to pay taxes on all of it. Through a registration of each *gasha* of land in different tax books, the *indärases* had tried a lot to solve the problem. But they were resisted by the Ministry of Interior, which prohibited registration of an individual owner on different documents.²⁷

An even more damaging aspect of standardized taxes was their rigidity and inflexibility. There was no compromise from the government at times of failures of harvest and drought. Appeals from local governors and *balabbats* for periodic reduction and exemption from taxes were to no avail. As a case in point, there was a drought and crop failure in highland Bale in 1954. The problem was severe in Goba and Agarfa *wärädas*. The *balabbats* and the landowners had reported the case to the *awraja* and asked for tax exemption. The governor, on his own, had agreed that the payment of *asrat* be suspended and that only land tax be paid. However, the governor was rebuked for this by the Ministry of Interior. He was warned that he would bear responsibility for delaying the collection of taxes as well as for encouraging tax evasion. The power to reduce or excuse taxes, according to the official of the Ministry of Finance, was vested only in the Emperor.²⁸ Thus peasants who sought to retain their holdings were forced to pay both income and real taxes.

Despite the fact that *qäläd* measurement was meant to bring about a precise definition of property in terms of amount and boundaries, there was a great deal of guess work even in 1951. The *qäläd* officials actually did a good deal of the work through

visual estimates thus perpetuating the problems of the previous assessment exercise.²⁹ Besides deception by the officials for their own material benefit, landowners also tried to hide the actual amount of their lands. They would thus, if possible, try to buy the favours of the officials. But the most common problem was over-estimation of property size or quality. This had resulted in discrepancies between the size of holdings and the amount of taxes demanded. Inevitably, many peasants complained about these over-assessments and over-taxation. Even if landowners won the favours of the officials and the surveyors for remeasurement, it was achieved through bribes. In addition to its effect on the economic condition of the peasant, this had a negative outcome on the income of the government as well. As *Fitawrari* Abäbä Gäbre, previously Director of *Rest* Department of the Ministry of Interior and *Indärase* of Bale between 1960-1963 commented in his twenty pages of analysis on the process of land measurement in Bale:

ቀላድ ጣዮች እኔ እንደማውቀውና እንዳዘጋጀሁት... በመሬቱ ወሰን ላይ ድንጋይ ወይም የወሰን ምልክት የሚሆን ከፍ ያለ እንጨት እየተተከለ እንዳይሠራ በባለርስቱ አቤት ባይነት በሥፍር ግምትና በአይን ግምት እንዲሠራ በመፈቀዱ የገበያው ዋጋ ሚዛኑ እባለርስቱና አቀላድ ጣዮቹ እጅ ወደቀ፤ ቀላድ ጣይ ፍላጎቱን ለመፈጸም የሚከለክለውና የሚያግደው መቆጣጠሪያ የሚሆን ደንብ ስላልተሰጠ ሁሉም እንዳቀደው የእያንዳንዱን ባለርስት ይዞታ ይህን ያህል ጋሻ ይሆናል እያለ ሲናገር ባለርስቱ ቁጥሩን አታብዛብኝ መሬቱ ይህን ያህል ጋሻ አይሆንም እያለ ሲስማማ የቀላዱ ሥራ ዋጋ እሁለት ባለጥቅሞች እጅ ገባ።³⁰

Fitawrari Abäbä requested for a third-round of land measurement in the province. Unless remeasurement is undertaken, he argued, the government would not be able to collect taxes and peasants would not be able to know the actual size and quality of their lands.

By the early 1960's, the problem of taxation in highland Bale had reached a level so serious that there was a near breakdown. By 1963, defaults stood at 8,012,226 *birr*.³¹ Many of the peasants refrained from making payments on the pretext of over-taxation.

Administrative efforts to prevent the breakdown meant that the governor of the province took severe measures against recalcitrant peasants as well as lower-level officials. While the peasants were punished by imprisonment and confiscation of their lands, *wäräda* officials were punished with fines and dismissals. Both the treasurers of Dodola and Goba were dismissed and a secretary of Goba *wäräda* was punished financially in 1961. *Wäräda* governors were served repeated warnings.³²

Defaults on taxes had led to the imprisonment of many peasants and to the confiscation of their lands. In 1963 lands confiscated due to failure to pay tax (called *gebrätäl*) stood at about 22,523 *gashas*.³³ Out of these, 677 *gashas* of *gebrätäl* lands was found in Goba and 237 *gashas* in Sinana, while about 1061 *gashas* were located in Dodola.³⁴

It was in an attempt to augment its revenue and to reverse the course of declining income from land that the government decided to remeasure lands in the province in 1963. The measurement was carried out uniformly by using a yardstick made out of wire. Simultaneously with the measurement, tax rates were also raised to 73.50, 64 and 24 *birr* for developed, partly-developed and undeveloped lands respectively.³⁵ Besides increasing the number of taxable lands, the measurement had further enabled the state to identify and retrieve lands that it could grant to functionaries and loyal servants.

Table 4.2 Distribution of Measured Land in Bale by Type of Tenure and Classification, 1969.

Type of Tenure	Classification				
	Area in <i>Gasha</i>				
	Fertile	Semi-Fertile	Poor	Total	Percentage
<i>Gäbbar</i>	4330.24	5312.72	15438.53	25081.49	47.8
<i>Sämon</i>	464.39	368.39	447.66	1280.44	2.4
<i>Madärya</i>	4.35	11.23	32.53	48.11	0.1
<i>Mängest</i>	66.36	350.38	11575.75	11992.49	22.9
<i>Gebrätäl</i>	24.06	19.47	14021.34	14064.87	26.8
Total	4889.40	6062.19	41515.81	52,467.40	100.00
Percentage	9.3	11.6	79.1		100.00

Source: MLRA, *Report on Land Tenure Survey of Bale Province, 1969*

We do not have the record of measurement and classification made in 1963. But if the survey undertaken by the MLRA in 1968 is any indication lands held in private tenure were reduced to about 47.8 percent while *gebrätäl* lands were increased to about 26.8 percent. When compared to other provinces, Bale had by far the largest number of lands taken on the basis of *gebrätäl*, followed by Sidamo with only 2.9 percent.³⁶ But what is surprising is that the government did not exercise effective control over these lands. Local squatters continued to use them mainly for pasture. Of course, the state demanded rents from these squatters. It is also important to note that most *gebrätäl* lands were found in the lowland areas. Lands in the highland areas, mostly remained in the hands of individual owners. For instance *gabbar* lands in the two highland *awrajas* of Ganale and Fassil amount to 77 percent and 66.9 percent of all lands, respectively.³⁷

In the postwar period, the Ethiopian government had issued and continued to enforce successive land grant orders made by the Emperor. The proclamations and decrees entitled the grantees to possess land either on *madärya* or freehold basis. The most prevalent pattern of land grant, however, was the latter form, that is provision on

private tenure. By and large, the grant emphasized the political rather than the economic use of the land. Most of the beneficiaries were its functionaries. The government used this to broaden its base of power. The grant was made from lands designated as government land and *gebrätäl* land. Imperial proclamations of July 1942 and 1944 entitled patriots, exiles, families of patriots, soldiers and civil servants to one *gasha* of land grant. While those who had previous *madärya* lands were empowered to convert part or all into freehold, those who had no previous holdings were “given” from the “government reserve”.³⁸

The 1952 order widened the terms of eligibility to include landless and unemployed Ethiopians to a grant of half a *gasha* of land each. Under this provision, landless peasants as well as higher government officials could apply for grant.³⁹

Beneficiaries from the imperial grant orders increased further when the decrees of the 1950s and 1960s entitled members of the army, the police and the civil service to possess land in freehold.⁴⁰ Above all, for Bale, probably for other provinces as well, a letter sent in 1954 from *Taddäsä Nägash* (governor) to the *wärädas* of Bale entitled members of the local militia (*näch läbasha*) to varying amounts of land. The *näch läbasha* were conscripted, largely from northern settlers in the province and the provision was made in lieu of salary. The amount of land that each grantee received depended on his rank. A *shambäl*, commanding three hundred men, got four *gashas*, a *mäto aläqa* (lieutenant) received three *gashas*, a *hamsa aläqa* (head of fifty men) was allowed two *gasha*, an *aser aläqa* (chief of ten men) had one and a half *gasha* and an ordinary militia was allowed one *gasha* of land.⁴¹

In highland Bale, there were, relatively, few northern settlers who possessed previous *madärya* lands. They, of course, were allowed to convert part of these holdings

into private tenure. The beneficiaries of the imperial orders were thus, largely, new grantees who were given grants from lands which had come under the jurisdiction of the government in the period under discussion. On the whole, in the post-liberation period, all through to 1972, information collected from government records indicates that about 306,390 hectares (7,659.75 *gashas*) of lands were distributed to grantees in Bale.⁴² Since the grantees did not want to take lands in the lowland areas, which are not suitable for agricultural purpose, the larger part of the allocation must have been concentrated in the highland areas.

A significant amount of these lands were given to the army and northern settlers. Out of the above figure, about 2,300 *gashas* were allocated to the settler militias,⁴³ and 500 *gasha* of lands were reserved for the members of the Second Army Division in Asmara. The lands for the latter were specifically found in Goro *wäräda* and those going to the militias were found in different highland *wärädas* of the province.⁴⁴ In addition to these, the period under consideration also saw the encouragement by the state of settlements of northerners in Southern Ethiopia. Under this scheme about four settlement projects were initiated in highland Bale. One of these was the Wärqa settlement scheme found in Nansabo *wäräda*. In 1965, about 600 settlers were brought there and provided with land in the amount of some 300 *gashas*. The settlers were made up of landless peasants and retired members of the army from Shoa, Wallo and Arssi.⁴⁵ Similarly, a settlement project initiated in a locality, known as Wacho in Goba *wäräda*, brought a large number of northerners to Bale. This process continued until 1974. The remaining two settlement areas, which were implemented only partly, were located in Dallo and Ginnir *wärädas*.⁴⁶

Despite the decrees and provisions for grants, the state did not want to dispose of those lands which were already under production or suitable for forestry, *sämon* and *hudad* lands and those which were settled by small landowners. Hence the allocations were made from undeveloped and “unoccupied” lands.⁴⁷ Many of those who requested to get developed (cultivated) lands were not successful although those elite who had the power to influence judicial and administrative authorities could occupy land already claimed by powerless local people.

Actually obtaining land, as opposed to a “grant” of land, was very difficult and complex. It was even more difficult for the local landless peasants, for which reason they seldom succeeded. The first stage was to gain a certificate of grant. Receiving a certificate was easier for the military and the civil servants because they would be given confirmation of eligibility from their respective government agencies, ministries, military or police headquarters. The military in particular had special offices or committees in order to help applicants throughout the whole process.⁴⁸ But under the 1952 order, the applicant must prove in the provincial governor’s office, with witnesses, that he/she was landless and unemployed. After registering and processing the letter, the provincial office issued a grant certificate also ordering the *wäräda* governor to provide land. This would finally be followed by field identification and registration procedures. But as has been remarked by Tekalign for Shoa, in Bale also: “More often than not, a land seeker would go into a case only after carefully assessing his chances of winning, and this would have included feeling out and winning the support of local officialdom, from the *balabbat* [and the *burqa*] all the way upto the provincial governor.”⁴⁹ Over and above the confirmation of eligibility, a land seeker would get access to information about the existence of

unoccupied lands from these local officials or elites. It was after securing such information that an individual land hunter would apply for grant.

In the postwar period the government maintained and nurtured the old tradition of providing land to the Church as well. More precisely, the Church was entitled to income collected from lands put under its jurisdiction. In highland Bale, the Church claimed to have the right of tax collection on about 1612 *gashas* of land. Whether the owner of the land was a Muslim or Christian, he was required to pay land tax to the Church. Out of these lands about 279 *gashas* were found in Goba, 269 *gashas* in Sinana, and 164 *gashas* in Dodola *wärädas*.⁵⁰

A peasant, who possessed land under the jurisdiction of the Church could transfer it either by sale or inheritance. But he could not change the tenure type. It is interesting that in 1957 the Bale *awraja Hagärä-Sebkät* (Diocese) asked the Emperor to ban the sale of Church lands to Muslims. The officials argued that if the Muslims continued to hold lands, over which Church had jurisdiction they might not pay taxes. The Emperor, however, resisted the appeal and promulgated the right of all his subjects to buy lands, irrespective of religion as far as they obeyed the law.⁵¹

Imperial land grants in private tenure went side by side with the expansion of a market for land. Grantees were free to dispose of their lands. Of course, some members of the elite went into the accumulation and sale of lands as a business activity. Having amassed substantial property through "inheritance", many landowners disposed of it freely. Land sales by grantees in highland Bale had reached a peak on the eve of the Revolution.

There is some evidence for the fact that the increasing commercial value of land encouraged the sale of land by the local peasantry also. Price of land in the 1950s and

1960s in some areas of highland Bale increased from 40 *birr* to 12,000 *birr* per *gasha*. Such a radical change in price was, mostly, attributed to the growing number of land seeking population. Land ownership by a good number of Christian Oromo in highland Bale was largely, achieved through purchase. The Oromo who came directly from Shoa province or from Arssi, probably due to shortage of land, undertook purchases of land from the local people. Peasants disposed of their lands to raise money for a variety of reasons including payment of taxes.⁵²

Although it was in part the attractiveness of the price for land that drove some of the peasants to transfer their holdings, the main force that mobilized land for the market in the province was the formal and informal pressure that were put on landowners, pressures that they could not resist. More often than not the sale of land by the local peasantry would be related to either heavy taxation or to disputes between previous landowners and new claimants. As the amount of tax increased from time to time, peasants were unable to pay. Hence many were forced to sell their lands or at least portions thereof in order to pay tax on the remainder. Peasants would be forced to sell often just before forfeiting their land for tax defaults.⁵³

As it has been indicated earlier, measurement and remeasurment of land had converted the peasantry from an occupant of lineage land to tax-paying landowner. Nevertheless, traditional laws of inheritance often mitigated against the power of landowners to dispose of their lands. Although the land was claimed to be private, co-heirs had the right to decide on its disposal. Landowners could not transfer ownership to an outsider without the approval of the co-heir (*täwäla*j). Even if a co-owner wanted to transfer his share of the land to others, the *täwäla*j had the right of first purchase. Hence, besides its role in limiting the privateness of land, inheritance law had served as a check

against unlimited commercialization of land. More often than not purchasers were forced to pay additional money (more than the actual price of the land) known locally as *säbbät-mari* to the co-heirs either to silence them or to get their approval of the transfer.⁵⁴

But the other face of the principles of inheritance was their role in breeding disputes and litigation between co-owners, which in turn mobilized land for the market. The most common cause of disputes on agricultural land in highland Bale was found to be inheritance. It accounted for some 85 percent of all disputes.⁵⁵ Many disputes among relatives ended up in court. To fight the cases disputants would often hire lawyers (*täbäqa*). Most of the time, instead of payments of money, the *täbäqas* would end up selling the land that they obtained in such a way.

Transaction in land expanded in highland Bale also due to disputes that often arose between the *alaqa* and the *minzir*. Although the names of the *alaqa* and the *minzir* would be entered into the *tax* book, it would not be clear as to how much of the land each person owned. This created room for many of the *aläqoch* to claim large portions of land or act as the main owner and treat the *minzir* as a subordinate. Some times, they even declare that the *menzer* had no right on the land and thus should work as a tenant. They used to register the land in their own names thus omitting the *minzir*. Hence, the *menzer* would be forced to ask for his right and share through a court. As a case in point in Sinana two men, Hisu Waytē and Hamu Shēka had about five *gashas* of land jointly. While Hisu was an *aläqa* Hamu was a *menzer*. However, in 1951 Hisu had registered the whole land in his name and left out Hamu. Hence, Hamu had accused Hisu for refusing to give him his share. To run the court procedure, he hired a *täbäqa* through a pledge of a land. But since Hisu was financially better off and had appropriated the tax receipt, he hoped to win the case. Because without a receipt for payment of taxes, the co-owner had

no recourse to the court. The *täbäqa* thus made a deal with Hisu for more land and win the case. The court proceedings went through 1958 and Hamu failed to succeed. Thus he became a tenant for his own relative.⁵⁶ What interests us here is that part of the land was appropriated by the *täbäqa*, an informal transaction in land. Though the case could not represent the sale of land in the whole of highland Bale, it was indicative of the pressures that were involved in the commercialization of land in the province.

The other factor behind the sale of land was the pawning land to money lenders, an institution called *wälläd-aged*. Peasants in need of money to pay taxes or to buy seeds, implements, clothing and other items; or those who were indebted by court decision or still those who had incurred debts in connection with socially required occasions, such as memorial feasts and weddings, undertook to temporarily transfer land to outsiders in return for money. Lenders would be entitled to utilize the lands for the duration of the agreement. Most of the time, however, peasants could not return the money on the due date. Many would, therefore, be forced to give up their lands permanently. Such an involuntary transfer of land was widely practiced in Dodola, where *wälläd-aged* was very common. Fear of lawsuits by the co-heirs of their debtors or in order to make more money, lenders who obtained land in this way would often sale it.⁵⁷ *Wälläd aged* was a favorite way of accumulation by officials and/or civil servants.

Officials and members of the royal family also appropriated large amounts of land through disguised “voluntary” transactions for nominal fees. Peasants under pressure for such sales could not put up any kind of resistance. Thus in 1955, about twenty-nine landowners were forced to “sale” 500 *gashas* of land for ten *birr* per *gasha* in Goba, in the *balabbatnät* of Shēdām and in Dallo *wäräda*. The purchasers were the Emperor himself, (100 *gashas*), Crown Prince Asfaw-Wäsän (200 *gashas*) and Prince Mäkonnen

Haylä-Sellasē 200 *gasha*.⁵⁸ The lands are said to have been suitable for coffee production. The price offered for these lands was obviously below the market of the period. Nevertheless, in view of threats from the local officials, who brokered the “transactions,” the peasants were forced to accept the deal. In 1970, the local *balabbat* *Grazmach* Roba Jilo and the twenty-nine men tried to reclaim the land that they had lost fifteen years before. They petitioned that they were intimidated to transfer the land for unreasonable price. They asked that they should regain it. However, the sale was said to have been conducted "legally" and therefore irreversable.⁵⁹ It is important to note therefore that transaction in land in highland Bale expanded in part through the influence of local and national elite.

Generally, though, elite pressures combined with economic factors to prompt the peasants to dispose of their lands. Given the paucity of our sources, it is difficult to figure out the relative significance of the two factors. There is little doubt, however, that the overwhelming majority of the peasantry transferred their lands to outsiders involuntarily.

4.2: Peasant Reactions to Expropriation: Individual Protest and Group Action

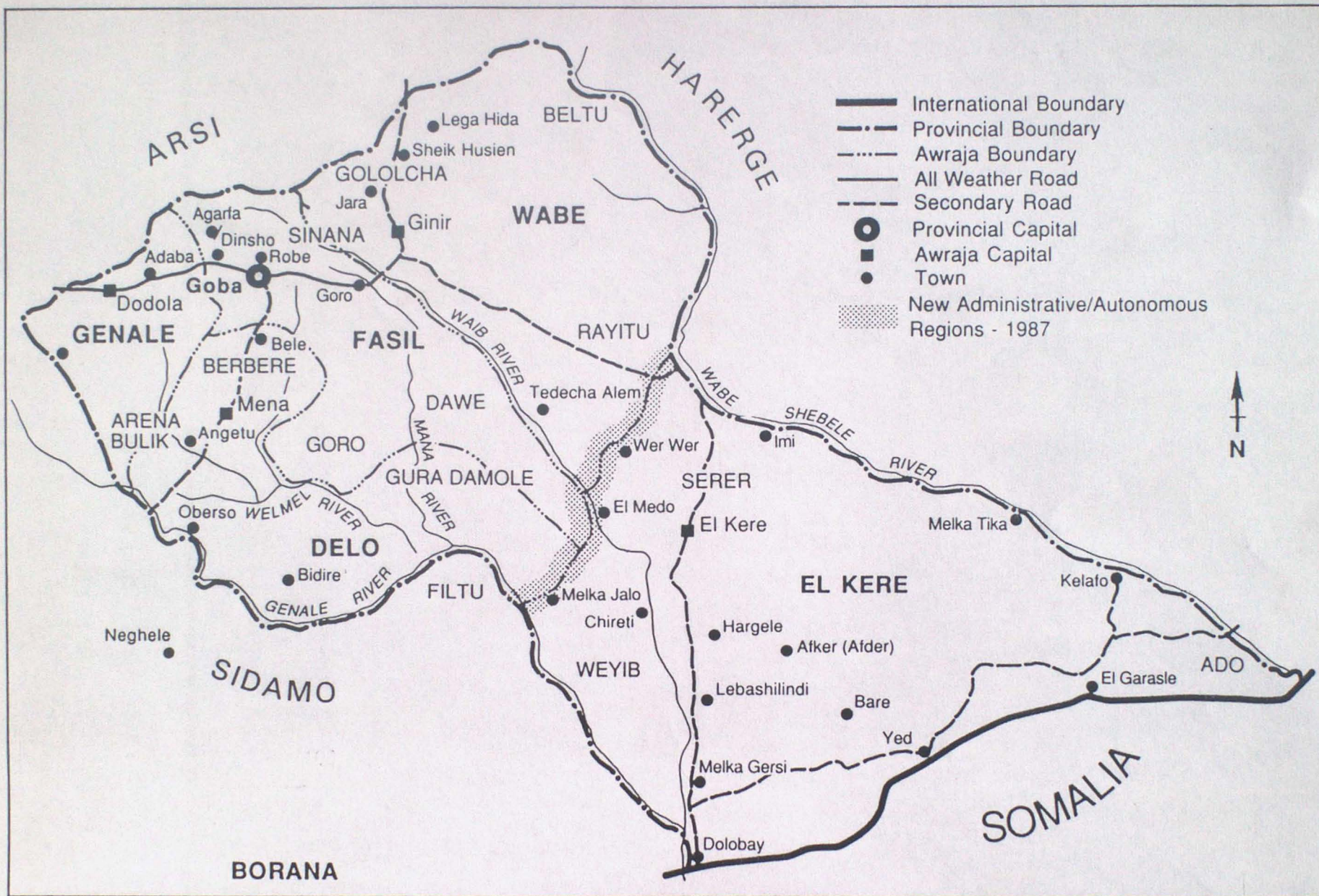
Access to agricultural land by the local and the newly arriving groups of people were determined not only by demographic and other economic factors but also by political conditions existing in the post - liberation period. As the size of the population in highland Bale increased over time, the government also became more determined to encourage northern settlement in Bale. Thus, competition over local resources became severe. Confiscation of land in the guise of measurement and through tax defaults disinherited many peasants and affected their well being. Hence the peasantry were

forced to react both legally and illegally. Petitions and resistance by the peasantry through legal procedure had gone beyond tolerable limit and reached a climax in the 1963-1970 rebellion in the province.

Resistance against confiscation of land and to grants of land to the outsiders was carried out both individually and in groups. While individual reaction took the form of petition and litigation in court, group response involved in addition to these, surreptitious acts of protest and sabotage. For instance, in 1967, a group of peasants in Adaba attacked the tenants of a grantee by the name Laqäw Mäshäsha and damaged his crops. The protesters argued that though they were forced to forfeit their land for failure to pay taxes, their right to reclaim the lands should have been respected. Imperial law, they said, entitle peasants to reclaim their lost lands as long as a request to repossess was put in place before the property was passed on to others. The land under question was taken by Laqäw, who was a lawyer in Dodola *wäräda*, while the claimants were appealing for its return. Since he had the power to influence authorities with the judicial and administrative powers, he was given the land despite the claim by its owners. He had even brought in tenants to cultivate it. It was in view of this that a group of twenty peasants took a forceful measure to stop the appropriation of the land by the grantee.⁶⁰

Laqäw accused the protesters of violating government orders and attacking his tenants. According to the plaintiff, he was granted the land for his services through the "legal procedure." He asked the court to punish the defendants for their "misbehavior" and for damage done to his crops. The peasants, of course, could not win the case. They were fined about 770 *birr* and were forced to give up the land.⁶¹

Similarly, in 1962 a *näch-läbasha* known as Gäzahäñ Zälläqä, who claimed to have been granted land in Sinana, was physically threatened by the local people who



Map 2 Bale

opposed the grant. They argued that he had taken their land without due process of the law. Hence two men who claimed the land confronted Gāzahāñ on the farm, beat off his oxen and prevented him from cultivating it. He accused them of assault and trespassing. The court case continued up to 1965, when it was finally decided in favor of the grantee.⁶²

In highland Bale, such small-scale resistances against land alienation were very many and common. Peasants resisted grants of land made even to the Church. In Sinana, for example, the Church of *Gäbrä-Keristos* faced a fierce opposition from the peasants of Sinana when it was granted land in 1946. Local claimants, like Fato Kalishu and his supporters, destroyed the tukul (house) that was built for the Church and prevented Christian burials from proceeding. The conflict was so serious that the chief priest, one Särtsä, went so far as to accuse the local *balabbat*, Muhammad-Amin Shēmo of sympathizing with the peasants against Christians. The *wäräda* officials eventually detained Muhammad-Amin and forced him to order the people to rebuild the Church after a fine of 70 *birr*.⁶³

These, however, were only some of the examples of sporadic peasant reactions against those forces which were lined up against their interests. There were also protests against seizure of land by large numbers of people in Bale. A case in point, for instance, was the struggle of the peasants of Dodola against land measurement. As I have indicated earlier, one of the means through which peasant land ownership rights were undermined was the repeated measurement of land in the province. Though measurements were ostensibly carried out to produce additional taxable lands, frauds by the surveyors and inconsistency of the measuring device had resulted in the confiscation of peasant holdings. The 1963 measurement in particular resulted in the alienation of a substantial

amount of land apparently discovered to be *terf* (extra). The surveyors had declared such land to be in excess of registered official holding and put them under the category of government tenure. Through this process the peasants of Dodola lost something like 2000 *gashas* of land.⁶⁴

However, they petitioned the government against the confiscation by refusing responsibility for the discrepancies between title and reality on the ground. As I have alluded to before, previous measurements in the province were carried out both visually and by using *qälad*. Those processes had resulted in inaccuracies as to the size of land owned by each owner. The 1963 measurement, which also involved the *qälad*, produced considerable quantities of land as extra. The peasants protested that the discovery of this "extra" land should not be regarded as their fault. It was the system itself that had resulted in under measurement and discrepancies in the first place. Even if indeed extra land was found, they argued, they had the right to retain the land on the basis of the 1930 proclamation. That proclamation provided that already "developed" extra lands were inalienable. The problem, as stated by the peasants, was that the surveyors designated their "developed" lands as "undeveloped" extra lands, thus exposing them to expropriation.⁶⁵

Besides the above argument, a 1964 Imperial order also entitled the peasants to reclaim their lost lands. During his first "historic" visit to Bale in March 1964, the Emperor declared the right of the peasants to reclaim those lands confiscated due to tax arrears or measurement by paying the arrears or by purchasing the extra lands.⁶⁶ Hence, in all cases the law provided that the peasants could continue as owners. The peasants of Dodola thus appealed to the authorities to be allowed to retain the lands through a

payment of taxes as of the recent measurement. They also requested for a reassessment of the quality of the lands by a special committee.

Nevertheless, an order from Wärfu Inqua-Sellasē, the *Endärasē* of the province, insisted that local officials enforce the payment of tax arrears as far back as 1953 on the newly discovered extra lands. This was simply too difficult to do for the peasant. The petitions from the peasantry did not stop the officials from granting the lands to new land seekers. Petitioning against expropriation involved the election of four men, namely Fäto Aynagē, Muhammad-Dhēkama Sheka, Ibrahim Nurē and Haji Hēbo Guyyē to present their case to the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Finance. The ministers advised Wärfu to reconsider the case and allow the peasants to retain their lands by paying the registration fee (*mätkäya*) only.⁶⁷

Initially Wärfu was not willing to obey "orders" from Addis Ababa. He argued that since the landowners had "concealed the lands knowingly" to evade taxes, they had to repurchase these properties or relinquish them. In the process of this altercation, many peasants were imprisoned and their moveable properties were confiscated. Due to repeated appeals and petitions by the peasants from Dodola, Wärfu was forced to reconsider his decisions. In fact, in a letter that he sent to the governor of Ganale *awraja*, *Fitawrari Wäldä-Mikael Bu'i*, he criticized the governor for allowing the peasants to accumulate tax arrears. He ordered him to collect registration fees only from the petitioners and return the extra lands, including those illegally granted to others to their previous owners.⁶⁸

The loss of "extra" or *gebrätäl* to grantees was a phenomena that had happened elsewhere too, not just in Dodola. The rescinding of the previous confiscations for the peasants of Dodola only created a discontent among the peasants of the rest of the

awrajas of the province. In 1966 the Parliamentary representatives of the people of Fasil and Gänale, Mamma Hussen and Haji Abdulqadir Ganamo, respectively, petitioned the government “for equal treatment of citizens”. Through their letter to the Ministry of Interior, they protested that the people suffered due:

- 1) Discriminatory decisions made within one governorate general whereby positive responses were given for protesters from one *awraja* only, while those of others were rejected or ignored. With regard to Gänale *awraja* itself, the governors are not implementing the orders. Hence we request that you follow up the implementation of the orders.
- 2) We [also] request that you take measures against those who had imprisoned the people, who auctioned off their properties and granted their *rest* to others, in disregard of imperial orders.⁶⁹

However, since the parliament was not influential in Ethiopian politics, the representatives could not be heard by those in upper strata. The government did not want to accept petitions from the remaining *awrajas*. Alienation of “extra lands” was thus enforced in the larger part of the province. In Gänale *awraja* itself, imperial orders were ignored under different pretexts. In 1967 more than twenty peasants, particularly from Dodola, appealed again against the continuation of land grants to outsiders and against delay in the execution of imperial orders.⁷⁰

One way of making it impossible for the peasants to regain control of their land was the shortening of the time period within which arrears had to be paid in full from the official six months to just three months. Many peasants were told that they had failed to redeem their lands within the proscribed period and that they had lost the lands permanently. To make matters worse, land measurements and quick transfer of so-called

extra lands to others continued unabated. In some cases, the extra lands included the very plots on which the houses of the peasants stood. Thus in 1967, about fourteen peasants petitioned the Ministry of Land Reform and Administration against land grants to *bäläwulätas*. I quote below part of the petitions as addressed to Bälläjä Gäbrä-Tsadiq (Minister of State at the MLRA):

...የቅያሱ ሥራ ቀጥሎ መሬታችን ሲመደብ ንብረታችንና ቤታችን በጠቅላላው ሀብታችን የሰፈረበትን ከጥንት ከአያት ቅድመ አያቶቻችን ጀምሮ ሲያያዝ የመጣውን ይዘታ መሬታችንን በቅያስ እየቆረጡ ለባለውለታ በመስጠትና እንዲሁም ለፈረንጅ በግኑናተር ከነቤታችን እየወሰዱ መተዳደሪያ አሳጥተው በግል ርስታችን ስደተኛ ሆነን... አዋጁ ሳይከበርልን... መብታችን ሳይጠበቅ ከመቅረቱም በላይ ይልቁንም በግል ርስታችን እንደወንጀለኛ የታሠርን ሲሆን አምስት ወገኖቻችንም ታስረው ሲሰቃዩ ...[ቆይተዋል].⁷⁵

Thus there was nothing the peasants did not do to have government ban alienation of land under the pretext of finding *terf* land. It was this growing number of appeals, and petitions and the outbreak of a peasant rebellion in the province, which I will describe shortly that forced the government to establish an investigating committee in 1967. The committee was led by Seyum Särtsä-Mädhen (the Director of Bale Governorate General). After looking at documents and discussing the issues with petitioners, the committee learnt that out of more than 280 *gashas* of land that were granted to the Church, members of the army, the police and the civil service, the large part belonged to 64 peasants who were dispossessed illegally. Further more, it observed that “cultivated” lands held by them were designated as “poor” and under-taxed while peasants were imprisoned illegally in the *wäräda* for not being able to pay taxes that they considered to be

exorbitant. Based on these and other findings the committee made the following recommendations to the Ministry.⁷²

1. That land grants be suspended in Dodola and Adaba.
2. That the imprisonment of peasants for failure to pay taxes and rents be suspended.
3. That the reasons for the designation of “developed” lands as “poor” or “undeveloped” be investigated.
4. That already settled or “developed” lands be returned to their previous owners; grantees who would give up such lands be compensated from other areas.
5. That the government should forego back payments on extra lands.

The MLRA endorsed the recommendations of the committee and ordered the governor to implement them. Those who claimed to have lost lands through the measurement were notified to reclaim their properties between September 11, 1969 (*Mäskäräm* 1, 1962) and March 7, 1970 (*Yäkatit* 28, 1962).⁷³ Grantees who would relinquish the lands were to be given lands that would compare in quality with those that they lost from elsewhere.

However, Christian grantees opposed the decision. They claimed that the Oromo were protesting the land grants on ethnic grounds. In their petition to the governor of Gänale, the grantees claimed that: “The petition by the local people was not due to shortage of land, but it was an opposition on the basis of ethnic differences against the settlement of Christians in the region.”⁷⁴ They asked the governor not to reverse the allocations that were already made.

Despite the efforts of the local people, and the decisions made by higher officials, the peasants did not regain their lost lands. Local elite who were beneficiaries of the

ongoing land grants delayed the implementation of the decisions. Hence appeals and protests from the disgruntled peasants continued all the way up to the 1974 Revolution.⁷⁵

The confiscation of land had disinherited and reduced many peasants either to small holders or to tenants. While those who lost part of their properties were left with small-holdings, those who were forced to give up their entire holdings were reduced to tenancy. As it has been stated above, appeals and petitions against eviction were to no avail. The high-handed administration and the bureaucratic red tape prevented the implementation of even imperial orders. This created considerable amount of dissatisfaction with the system among many peasants. The mal-administration was felt even more because of the state's prejudice in favor of the Orthodox Church in a Muslim area. While the Church got both material and financial support, Muslim religious centers did not benefit from government provisions.⁷⁶

Already, landless peasants were also discontented because they could not benefit from land grant orders made "for all landless Ethiopians". Though the 1952 proclamation entitled them to receive half a *gasha* of land, the processes that one had to go through to qualify for the grant was too long and too expensive for peasants to afford. Many, in fact had no knowledge of the provision itself.⁷⁷ Hence tenants in highland Bale also had grievances that they could not contain.

The growing discontent among the highlanders should not be seen separately from contemporary situations in the lowland areas of the province. Government land policy, heavy taxation and mal-administration had equally aggrieved the lowlanders. Under the circumstances, they were prepared to take advantage of the hostility between Ethiopia and the newly emerging state of Somalia, to advance their cause. Somalia had claimed the Ogaden and parts of southeastern Ethiopia, including Bale as its *terra*

irredenta (land that had to be liberated) and there was a wide-spread knowledge of this plan in the region. Thus, under the leadership of Kahin Abdi, disgruntled individual pastoralists from the Somali inhabited *awraja* of El kere started an armed movement in 1963 by attacking a small salt mine at Afqer. The revolt soon expanded throughout the *awraja*, targeting government installations and sites.⁷⁸ It later developed in to a popular upheaval and expanded to the neighbouring *awrajas* of Wabe and Dallo.

As in Elkere, the movement in Wabe and Dallo was instigated by individual fugitives. The revolt in Wabe was stirred up by a certain *Haji* Yisshaq Muhammad Dadhi, a *balabbat* of Raytu, who had fled to Somalia in 1961 to avoid arrest for the murder of an Amhara official in Ginnir. From Somalia, he established contacts with internal dissenters and channeled firearms in to the *awraja*. The prominent rebels from Wabe included Hussen Bune, Aliye Dadhi and Ismi Hissu Abba Wäsha. Similarly, unrest in Dallo was intensified with the rebellion of men, like Waqo Lugo (formerly a village judge) in 1964. Through persuasion and intimidation these individuals rallied popular support behind their uprisings.⁷⁹ Thus the rebellion in the province had a common cause, and it was largely related to land. Because the lowlanders were also forced to lease from the government lands that they used for pasture, which they could not afford.

In an attempt to check and stop the uprising, and “respond” to peasant grievance, the government quickly started to make promises. While insisting on the payment of the tax arrears that had accumulated between 1953 and 1963, the Emperor ordered that the peasantry be allowed to regain their lands. According to the decree, the money, that would be collected, would be invested in the construction of roads in the province. Above all, most probably to buy good will from the local elites, the Emperor ordered that the *balabbats* of Baale should be given *siso* privileges. In the words of the decree, the

Emperor stated that. በባሌ ጠቅላይ ግዛት የሚገኙ ባላባቶች እንደሌላው አገር ባላባት ሲሶ ያላነሱ በመሆናቸው፤ በደንቡ የሚደርሳቸውን ለወደፊት መተዳደሪያቸውን እናስታውቃቸዋለን።⁸⁰ “Since the *balabbats* of Bale governorate general unlike *balabbats* in other area have not had the privilege of taking their *siso*, we shall inform them of whatever will be due to them in accordance with the law.”

As I have pointed out in the preceding chapter, the *balabbats* of Bale did not pick up *siso* at the time of conquest or land measurement. During the 1951 land measurement, some of the *balabbats* of Goba and Sinana had asked for it. But local elders, like *Grazmach* Hussēn Mammē, *Haji* Adam Saddo and *Qāñazmach* Kenno Bānta convinced them not to try to cause the eviction of their own kins for the sake of wealth and position. The *balabbats* abandoned the idea in part because there was a promise of salaries from the government.⁸¹ Nevertheless, about thirteen dissatisfied *balabbats* later appealed to the Ministry of the Interior in 1954 and demanded that their *siso* rights be acknowledged. In order not to disinherit the tax paying landowners, the Ministry turned down the petition.⁸² Until 1961 the *balabbats* thus continued to receive the ten *birr* that was fixed as salary. In 1961, the *endärase* Abäbä Gäbre suspended the payment for reasons that are not very clear.⁸³ It appears therefore that the Emperor was making a real concession when he declared in 1964 that *siso* rights would be reconsidered.

Despite the efforts of the government to stem the insurgency, armed conflicts escalated in the province. Through the efforts of Waqo Gutu and his group, who in 1965 returned from Somalia, a loose coordination was assured among the rebels. Waqo assumed leadership of the movement in the Dallo front. With material and technical support from Somalia the rebels intensified their attack on government posts. Successive

victories by the insurgents, confined the governors to major towns, and finally forced the administration to abandon its hit and run tactics, and commit to crushing the rebellion.⁸⁴

The revolt in the lowland areas of the province not only encouraged stirrings in the highlanders but also transformed them into an "open resistance." But unlike the lowlanders, the peasants of the highlands did not take up arms. Only a few notable individuals are said to have joined the rebellion. Among these were Muhammad Abu-Bäkär, a *wäkil* of a *balabbat* in Goba and Umär Qabalo from Dodola were some of the most distinguished. The role of the highlanders in the Bale rebellion was, thus, predominantly, reflected in material, financial and moral support for the insurgents. Prominent local elites, who had played important role in organizing the support, included *Fitawrari* Ahmäd Imama (*wäräda* governor and later vice-president for Fassil *awraja* courts), *Qäñazmach* Abu-Bäkär Därga (a *balabbat* in Goba), *Grazmach* Umär Hussen who was working as a para-legal, and *Grazmach* Adam Saddo. In September 1966, they addressed a mass meeting at Dire Sheik Hussein and exhorted the crowd to join and support the rebels. Ahmad Imama, in particular, is said to have urged the congregation at Dire Sheikh Hussen to supply the insurgents with ammunition, clothes and money. He further agitated for a continuous fight against the government which had confiscated their lands, imposed on them heavy taxes and discriminated against their religion.⁸⁵

Nevertheless, with the exception of Adam Saddo, all of the above agitators were rounded up and captured by the army in the same month. They were brought to court in June 1967 and the Bale Provincial High Court sentenced them to forty lashes and 25 years of imprisonment each. The court also decided that the imprisonment be held outside of the province. Besides, the court also ruled that their property be confiscated.⁸⁶ But through their lawyer, Mulugeta Bärihun, the defendants appealed the case to the

Emperor's Royal Court. In order, it appears, to pacify the province and appease the rebels, the Court rescinded the bodily punishment and confiscation of property.⁸⁷

Amidst this the rebellion escalated and expanded to the highland areas as well. Some peasants from the *wärädas* of Goba, Ginnir and Dodola joined the rebels. Repeated attacks were launched by the rebels on the towns, including the provincial capital Goba, which was attacked twice in the year 1966. The police and the territorial army in Adaba and Dodola faced defeat. Critical points were reached when governors of Adaba and Dodola, *Grazmach Bäqälä Haragu* and *Fitawrari Wäldä-Mikael Bu'i* respectively were killed, the former in 1965 and the latter in 1966.⁸⁸

Accusing the Somali Republic for instigating and abetting dissent in Ethiopia, the government admitted that the rebellion had indeed become quite threatening to the stability and security of the country. It thus had reinforced the Fourth Army Division stationed in Nagēlē Borana, Robe and Goro. In December 1966, a state of emergency was declared over all *awrajas*, except Fasil. A police officer, general Wäldä-Sellase Bäräka, replaced Wärqu Inqua Sellase as the governor of the province. The government launched a whole scale counter-attack both on the ground and by means of aerial strikes. Those peasants, who were "suspected" of supporting the rebels, were fined and detained. The army managed to cut off rebel centers from supply routes.⁸⁹

To the disappointment of the insurgents, Somalia abandoned its support at this critical point. Due to its own internal problems and the need to come to a rapprochement with Ethiopia, the Somali government announced its interruption of aid to the rebels. Hence, the rebels faced intractable internal and external problems. With growing government suppression peasants could not sustain the struggle for long. Despite their strong resistance through guerrilla warfare, the rebels were overpowered by intensive

aerial bombardment in 1969 and 1970 in Dallo and Elkere. This spread terror within the peasantry and forced them to surrender. Rebel leaders were compelled to give up, the major submission, of course, being that of "General" Waqo Gutu on March 28, 1970.⁹⁰ The rebels finally surrendered upon the declaration of amnesty from the government. Thus, it appears, that they did not face executions or imprisonment after submission.

The revolt that lasted for nearly seven years has caused considerable suffering on the peasants. Besides the loss of human lives, livestock and other kinds of property were looted and plundered by the ill-disciplined *nach läbash* and territorial army. Though at a smaller scale government forces had also suffered a heavy losses and the state had incurred considerable expenses.⁹¹

With regard to the question of land, only few promises and concessions were made after the revolt. Finally, the government declared that it had canceled the tax arrears up to 1967. But by then, this was too late for most peasants for while some had already paid the arrears, others had already been forced to give up their lands. Thus, only a few peasants could benefit from the concessions. The government also announced that all former landowners, who had lost control over land should apply for reconsideration and set the dead-line to 1973. Some 279 persons submitted petitions reclaiming 417 *gashas* of land. Something like 6780 men applied for fresh grants of land.⁹²

The smaller number of peasant applicants was not due to the absence of confiscated land or satisfaction. The long and cumbersome administrative processes must have discouraged many of the peasants and thus drove them to refrain from the deal. The small number of peasant applicants appears to have been a result of the long and cumbersome nature of the processes through which they knew they had to go to get any results.

On the whole, the period after 1941 saw a great change in the forms of property ownership and economic conditions in Bale. On the one hand, land measurements and grant policies facilitated the “privatization” of lands even though, traditional inheritance laws had mitigated against its development into exclusive proprietorship. On the other hand, a large amount of land had changed hands through grants, sale, inheritance and bequeaths. But the process of taxation and land measurement had equally resulted in outright confiscation of land, which led to protracted peasant petitions and finally to armed resistance in the province

Chapter V

The Evolution of Tenancy in Highland Bale

In the preceding chapter I have traced the process by which land measurement and the conversion of the peasantry into individual landowning taxpayers had taken place. Subsequently the political economy of land in the province was characterized by a gradual and expanding dispossession of the landowners. An equally important process that needs to be told is the shifting and increasingly tightening conditions of tenancy for the peasantry whom had to live and work on lands owned by others.

Tenancy took many forms in highland Bale: from outright cash rentals of land to arrangements of sharecropping. There were local tenants and immigrant tenants. Yet the major trajectory of change in the story seems to have been the tightening of tenure leading to greater and greater poverty and widespread eviction of tenants. In this chapter, these points will be dealt with along with the role of both the local and central government institutions in the history of tenancy and the initiatives of the tenant farmers to protect themselves from the increasingly harsh conditions of access to land.

In the general literature tenancy is said to have been related to imperial land tenure policy. Specifically in southern Ethiopia, it is understood as a phenomenon concomitant to the incorporation of the region in to the Empire under Menilek II. The conquest is said to have resulted in an extensive dispossession of the local people for the distribution of land among the northern officials and the soldiery. It is, further argued, that the state assumed full control over unoccupied lands and lands confiscated from rebels. From these lands grants were made to the royal families, favoured personalities, chiefs and the Church. Many of the grantees were also settlers who thus reduced the local peasants to landless tenants, depriving them of their traditional rights over the land.¹

A section of the literature claims that land grants made immediately after the conquest were made in the form of *madärya* and that it was later, after the Italian period that they were converted to *rest* or private property. Up on the conversion of the grants to *rest*, the cultivators on the lands, according to the literature were, forthwith reduced to tenancy and lost their right over the soil.²

However, a closer examination of archival and oral sources does not bear out these claims. Rather, tenancy in high land Bale owes itself to several factors. One of them, of course, was the declaration of all unoccupied or unused land at the time of the region's incorporation as "government land", and the refusal, on part of the state, to recognize subsequent settlements on this category of land as ownership. Most peasants who settled on "government lands", therefore, became (or were regarded as the case may be) as tenants, first of the state to whom they paid rents, and then of whoever acquired land from the state in private tenure. Another important source of tenancy was confiscation of land from its previous owners under all kinds of pretexts, particularly under pretexts that land was found to be in excess of title and that owners were in default of taxes.³

My informants unanimously agree that stringent and heavy taxation coupled with the insensitivity of government had resulted in the reduction of many of the peasantry to tenancy.⁴ Those who lost only a part of their holdings became small owners who might need to involve in partial tenancy to survive,⁵ while peasants who were forced to give up all of their holdings became landless tenants. It appears that earlier forms of tenancy were arrangements among relatives, and that contractual arrangements between local tenants and non native, often absentee landowners became common much later. However, it was Imperial land grants that contributed to the expansion of tenancy considerably. Individuals

who were granted land rarely farmed it themselves. They "took in" tenants either as share croppers or as pasture tenants (the latter applying to lands not usable for agriculture).

⊗ In some parts of highland Bale, confiscation of land and reduction of local peasants to tenancy was also related to the expansion of towns. Those peasants who had holdings around the towns located alongside the Dodola - Robe - Goba highway, in particular, were vulnerable to expropriation in the pretext of expanding the towns. It was at the expense of these peasants that these towns grew in size in the period under study. Here, I am not criticizing the need and importance of expanding urban centers, but that peasant were expropriated for this purpose without any compensation. For instance, as the town of Goba expanded through time the people of Sinja, Michā, Bamo, Lashqona, Gamaṭaja and the like were forced to lose parts of their lands.⁶ Similarly the town of Robe grew at the expense of lands of the *balabalas* of the Wälāshé clan such as Hidora, K é r é, Zeybāla, Illu, Adosh é, etc.⁷ Every time that land was included into the towns peasants would be allowed to possess lands only for their domicile. If they wanted to continue with agricultural activities they would have to rent lands outside the town, thus becoming tenants.

Archival sources from Bale hold numerous petition letters against expropriation of peasant holdings in the pretext of expanding towns. For instance, in a petition they submitted to the governor of Bale *awraja* in 1946 E.C. (1953), about twenty peasants protested that their land known as Karmamisa was taken from them and enclosed as part of the town of Goba. Besides the destruction of crops on the field, they complained that they were not compensated for the loss.⁸ When they were refused a response from the local governors, eighteen of the peasants appealed to the Emperor claiming that not only were their ancestral lands taken over without any compensation but also that the

municipality of Goba had refused to receive taxes on their remaining plots, thus in effect expropriating them completely. The petition partly states that:

ይህ መሬት ከአያት ከቅድመ አያት ተላልፎ የደረሰንን እርስት ግማሹ
ወደከተማ ክልል ሆኖ ንግፍና ግምት ሳይሰጠን [በ1949 ዓ.ም.] ተወሰደብን።
... ይህም ሳያበቃ አሁን በጃችን ባለው ከግማሽ ያላነሰ እርስታችንን...
ከ1955 ዓ.ም. ጀምሮ የጌባ ግምጃ ቤት ግብር አልቀበላችሁም ብሎ
በልዩ ልዩ ዘዴ እርስታችንን ነቅለውን ለሌላ ሊሰጥብን ነው።⁹

More than ninety peasant families lived on the lands that were thus confiscated. Despite their petitions the peasants were unable to regain their properties or obtain compensation. In 1956 E.C. (1963) the provincial governor, *Fitawrari* Wäru Inqua-Sellase ordered the governor of Fasil *awraja* not to evict peasants from lands that were not effectively within the town's confines.¹⁰ But nothing happened about the compensation of those whose lands were already enclosed.

Another institution that facilitated land loss and thus the expansion of tenancy in the province was the *aläqa - menzer* institution already described above.¹¹ Occasionally the *aläqoch*, who represented groups of kin or heirs with the outside world, refused to recognize rights of ownership of the rest of their co-heirs. Specifically after 1951, when it was decided that all co-heirs should be entered in to the tax register, many *aläqoch* resisted the demands of others to be recognized as legal owners. The most common pretext, according to my informants and archival sources was that the *menzer* or member of his family were not related to the original owner. Alternatively, they would claim that the *menzer* were cultivating the lands merely as tenants, not as owners.¹² Failing to resolve the problem through arbitration or mediation by local elders (*jarsumma*), many a *menzer* were forced to sue the *aläqoch*. But they seldom succeeded. As the example of a lawsuit from Dodola shows, in a village called Dirsä a man by the name of Foge Dibbe who

claimed to have owned land jointly with an *aläqa* known as Abdälla Godana, accused the latter's son for refusing to share with him the land that was passed down to them from a common ancestor. Foge Dibbe argued that when the father of Butta, *Obbo* Abdälla was an *aläqa* on the land he was registered as a *menzer*. But Butta refused to acknowledge the right of Foge who thus remained landless.¹³

Even, where the *menzer* were entered into the tax register and acknowledged as landholders, they would still be "susceptible to foul play by unscrupulous *aläqoch* who misrepresented their relationship with their co-owners not as one of equal partners but as one of landlord and tenant."¹⁴ More often than not the *aläqoch* also expected their *menzer* to work for them ostensibly because they spent most of their time in submitting taxes and dealing with government on land related issues. Though such labour services were regarded as voluntary the *aläqoch* increasingly tended to expect them as a matter of right. The *menzer-aläqa* relationship should not, therefore, be regarded as a relationship among equals. As one of my informants, who previously was a *menzer* himself, but later became a tenant, told me "*wäl chalman menzerif chisi hanguma arerri bishan taru. Menzerin kan chisi itti chalu wanumä dhalata abba läfa tä'ef,*"¹⁵ Despite his recognition as "owner" of the land, the *menzer* was treated as dependent. His labour was exploited by the *aläqa* who acted as a landlord.

Be that as it may, in the period under study, there were a good number of tenants in highland Bale. Unfortunately, I could not find data on the specific numerical strength of tenancy in each of the *wärädas*. But one study conducted in 1972 by the Ministry of Agriculture in the three highland *wärädas* of Dodola, Sinana (Robe) and Adaba showed that tenants in these areas made up about 38 percent of the peasantry.¹⁶ The survey,

however, had various limitations. One of these was its failure to differentiate between owner tenants and landless tenants.

Landless peasants could enter into tenancy arrangements with their relatives in part because of the abundance of lands, relative to population but also because the terms of such an arrangement could be generous and fair. Tenants could even hope to obtain land from their relatives almost for free, with only minor obligations. This obligation might for instance, be that of providing occasional labour services.

In highland Bale, tenants were both local and immigrant peasants. Especially from 1950s on many immigrants peasants had come to Bale mainly from Shoa and Arssi. Informants say that in fact many migrants from Arssi had their origin in Shoa, and that Arssi was only a temporary stopover.¹⁷ Many of these peasants became tenants.

According to Blackhurst, the main interest of the Shoan immigrants in the province of Bale was the need to secure land and livelihood. He stated that a "few Tulama [a section of the Oromo in Shoa] were self-sufficient in land, though a good number owned their house sites and some agricultural land. Most, however, needed to supplement their holdings by renting or share cropping."¹⁸ Even though the majority of the immigrants entered into tenancy arrangement with the local landowning Oromo, a considerable number made such arrangements with resident or absentee Amhara landlords. For instance, one of my principal Amhara informants, *Ato* Taffäsä Molla, told me that he had about sixteen *gashas* of land in the localities of Qasso and Shaya in Sinana. On these lands, he said, he had about thirty tenants, of who about twenty were immigrant Shoans. Some of them, he said, had their own small plots of land, and were only supplementing their income by sharecropping with him.¹⁹

My informants contend that the larger proportion of the tenants were owner tenants, that is they had their own small plots of land as well and that they took up tenancy to supplement income from their plots. Possession of private plots of farmland by tenants owes it self mainly to two major factors. One was purchase. While the other was gift from kin. There is some evidence, however, that private ownership of plots by tenant-farmers also was related to the scarcity of tenant labour itself. Until the last decade preceding the dawn fall of the monarchy, finding tenants was a major problem for landlords in Bale. Since the larger proportion of the local peasants had their own land, landlords, both local and settlers were forced to take in outsiders or their poorer relatives under tenancy terms that also included provision of one or two *midde* of land for the tenant as his *hallaña* (private plot). The tenant would be free to use this piece of land for his own upkeep. Sometimes, in fact, the gift included a cow or two, from ten to twenty *birr* of cash and even a donkey. The tenant was not required to surrender these properties to the landowner at any future point. They would be given to him as his personal property. If there is mutual understanding between the parties, the tenant could even retain the land for a payment of a nominal fee. There were also benefits or prerogatives that were generally recognized as belonging to tenants at this early stage of the evolution of the institution. For instance, the tenant would be free to collect the residue of grains in the fields after harvest and threshing.²⁰ This indicates that until the beginning of the 1960s tenancy in highland Bale was not a major phenomenon or a difficult condition. The problem grown much later when dispossession of the locals under different pretexts was intensified and the value of land increased with the growing size of the population and the expansion of commercial farming.

In the final analysis, tenancy took two major forms in the province and, presumably, elsewhere in the south. These were sharecropping and cash rental forms of tenancy. The most common form was the one in which landlord and cultivator would share the product after harvest. Basically three systems of sharecropping had existed in highland Bale: *erbo arash*, *siso arash* and *yäkuto* or *ekul arash*.²¹

The first form of tenancy, the *erbo-arash*, was the least common form of agreement. It is said to have been practiced only in some parts of Goba *warada*. Like that of *siso-arash* to be discussed shortly, the whole contribution, with the exception of land, was made by the cultivator. But the landowner would take one-fourth of the produce from the tenant.

In the *siso-arash* arrangement, the landowner would provide the land only whereas the tenant would bring in all the rest, that is, seed, oxen and other equipment. Sometimes, depending on the distance of the farmland from the tenant's residence, remoteness of the location of farmlands, the landowner would provide half of the seed. After harvest all the products would be shared in such a way that the tenant keeps two-thirds for himself. That is, of course, after putting aside a tenth of the produce for *asrat*.

In *ekul arash*, the landlord and the tenant would share the crop on a fifty-fifty basis. The tenant would contribute in terms of physical labour while the landlord would contribute the land, oxen and the seeds. It appears that since most of the tenants were outsiders or immigrants with no tools or oxen of their own they depended on what was provided by the landlords. Such tenants by and large would be given plots for their residence on the estate. After harvest the cultivator would first pay back the seed and submit one-tenth of the produce as *asrat* (tithe) to the landowner before the division takes place.

Contrary to claims made in the literature, there is little evidence of a shift through time from *erbo* to *siso* and then to *ekul arash*.²² The three forms co-existed side by side through out the period under study. Greater benefits for landlords came in the form of diminishing amount of resources that landlords contributed. The development seems to have been from arrangements in which landlords provided oxen or seeds or both to those in which tenants provided the seeds or the oxen or both.

As I have indicated above, in all the tenancy arrangements the tenant paid *asrat* before sharing of the harvest with the landowner. But the Ethiopian Civil code of 1960 provided that the landowner shall pay the land tax and tax in lieu of tithe.²³ The intention of the provision was that the burden of taxation should fall not on the tenant but on the landowner himself. In reality, however, the tenant was forced to set aside one-tenth of his harvest so that the landowner would be able to pay the tax in lieu of tithe, before proceeding to the division of the harvest as rent payment. The landlord, thus, shifted the burden of tax to the tenant.

Even more interesting is the fact that despite the abolition of *asrat* in 1967,²⁴ it continued to be "collected" in the province of Bale up to the early 1970s. Both landowners and local governors seem to have enforced the payment. In one of the letters sent to the Sinana *wäräda* treasury in 1963 E.C. (1971), the governor of the *wäräda*, *Fitawrari* Nägash Wärqu warned that he had discovered the existence of landowners and tenants who have discontinued payment of *asrat* and that the office of the treasury would sue them and enforce the collection as soon as possible.²⁵ He insisted that peasants should give precedence to the payment of current taxes rather than the arrears. The former amounted to something like 2,689 *birr*.²⁶

The second major form of tenancy, the fixed rental agreement, was mainly made on the basis of cash. Landowners, both the government and individual owners leased out their holdings for fixed amounts of rent money, of course, the amount depending on the quality and accessibility of the land. Most of the time, government lands were rented out for pasture. And the amount ranged or varied from 49 *birr* in Ginnir to 24 *birr* in Sinana per *gasha* for a year.²⁷ Surprisingly enough, the payment on such lands was much greater in the lowland areas. The highest rate in the province was in Dallo, and that was 64 *birr* for a *gasha*.²⁸ It appears that the fact that the lowlanders were dependent on livestock and required pasture over extensive lands, the price of land was expensive there. Besides, lands in these areas largely belonged to the state. Hence the pastoralists had to rent it for their livelihood from the government.

In our sources we find no evidence of fertile government lands being leased out to tenants. Evidence shows that there was no such land at all. On the whole, out of lands under the disposal of the government, about 37 percent was rented for grazing. About 50 percent was "reserved" as forest land while the rest was set aside for "unidentified" purposes.²⁹ It appears that due to the inconvenience of location and the poverty of the soils, most lands in this category were not conducive for sedentary agriculture. Hence local government agents leased them out for grazing purposes.

Among individual landlords, by and large, it was absentee owners who leased lands for fixed payments of rent. Most of these absentee landlords who acquired lands either through grants or purchase, lived in towns. Since they did not live or reside on the farms, they used proxy supervisors or *wäkils* who would oversee their lands worked by tenants or leased out to them for grazing. The 1968 survey that was conducted under the

auspices of the Ministry of Land Reform and Administration showed that about fifteen percent of the landlords in the province were found to be absentee.³⁰

Informants say that compared to resident landlords absentee owners preferred to lease their lands for fixed rents. This, they said, was because they could not supervise work or monitor the harvest situation on the ground. Fertile land, depending on its location, could according to these informants be leased for about 120 *birr* for a year in Goba in the 1960s.³¹

On the other hand, to help protect their properties absentee owners preferred tenants whom would permanently live on the farm. Besides the protection of the land from infiltration by others, this would enable the landlord to extract permanent income from the tenant. Of course if the tenants were numerous, as indicated above, one of them would be appointed as *wakil*. Most of the time such representatives would be relatives of the landlords or simply honest and trusted tenants. He would be delegated to supervise the production activity, the payment of taxes and the collection of rents. As one of my informants, Muhammad-Hussen of Qasso told me, the *wakil*, besides a relatively better treatment by the absentee landlord, would also be given his own *halläña* land for personal upkeep.³²

For instance, an absentee landowner by the name *Wäyzaro Wälättäyes*, who lived in Goba town, had about three *gashas* of land at a nearby village called Burqitu. The land was rented out to about twenty tenants. These tenants used to pay a fixed rent by contributions they make in proportion to the amount of lands each of the cultivators. One of them, a tenant by the name of Täfäri, was responsible for the collection of the rent annually and its submission to Wälättäyes. For these services Täfäri cultivated an additional three *middes* of land on which he did not have to pay rent.³³

A tenant who cultivated lands belonging to an absentee owner was free to plant whatever crops he wanted to. As far as he met his rental obligations to the landowner, he could even sublease the land to other tenants. Of course, he would not be able to plant perennial plants or trees on the land. This would be possible only if a prior agreement had been reached in which the landowner agrees to compensate the tenant for such plants in the event that he leaves.

Evidently among both part tenants and full scale landless tenants, sharecropping was preferred to cash rentals. Informants argue that fixed cash rents were feared for their inflexibility relative to harvest. If harvests fail or turn out to be poor the tenant would get further deep in debt. In sharecropping agreements such risks would be shared by both parties. Sharecropping of course, had its own limitations as well. It militated against farm improvements and innovation by the tenant since increased productivity would only result in increased extraction by the landlord.

In addition to the payment of rent, tenants were expected to render free labour services. This could be either part of the agreement or simply traditional practice. Some of these services included working on the landlord's *hallaña*, collecting firewood, herding cattle, building granaries, providing domestic services such as grinding corn, cooking food on special occasions, etc.³⁴ Tenants who lived on the landowner's land were more prone to be exploited through unregulated, informal demands on their labour than tenants who resided on their own plots and therefore lived elsewhere. This, however, is putting it in relative terms. It was generally hard for a tenant to have refused to work for the landowner when called upon.

Agreements between landowner and tenants most of the time were concluded orally preferably with witnesses present. Written agreements were rare. Absence of such

agreements might theoretically appear to encourage tenant insecurity by reducing their ability to resist excessive demands coming from the landlord.³⁵ Nevertheless evidence from highland Bale shows that there was not a great deal of difference between the two. This seems to have been due to two major factors. For one thing, tradition prohibit landowners from evicting tenants for unsatisfactory reasons. To evict a tenant, a landowner would need to have concrete fact and valid reasons. Otherwise, one could face social isolation that might make it impossible for him to get another tenant. Secondly, until the late 1960s, due to the shortage of tenants landlords did not threaten to use absence of written agreement as a pretext to evict tenants

Insecurity of tenure by the tenants in some parts of the province came much later in time partly due to the introduction of tractorization. In the late 1960s some of the landlords and officials in highland Bale began to use tractors for agricultural activity. The most notable landlords who launched mechanized farming in Sinana and Goba included Muhammad-Hussen Fäqi, Dämmäqä Wube, Sirak Wärqnäḥ, *Grazmach* Tābājǰä Hayle and *Balambaras* Täkle.³⁶ Most of these men were government officials and civil servants. Between them some 1,680 hectares of land was brought under mechanization in the two districts.³⁷

Despite its apparent contributions to agricultural productivity, tractorization had adverse effects on the lives of tenants in two ways. On the one hand, those landlords who put their lands to tractorization were no more interested in tenant labour. Agricultural activities, like weeding and harvesting could be managed by less number of tenants or farm labourers. Thus, tenants who lived on lands belonging to tractor farmers were susceptible to eviction. On the other hand, the beginning of tractorization in the province increased the value of land and subsequently tightened tenancy terms. Landlords and

commercial farmers, who sought to expand their holdings, began to buy lands at expensive prices or make contractual agreements with owners. Landowners who leased holdings on contractual basis thus preferred those who had taken on mechanization. Hence many tenant farmers, especially in Sinana and Dodola are said to have been victims of the tractor.³⁸ *Grazmach* Sirak Warqnah, who was once a judge in Bale High Court, for instance, evicted his former tenants after he took on tractorization. Especially one of his tenants, Sanbato Macha, who was evicted from his land at Haydaro in the *balabbatnat* of Walashe is remembered for his victimization.³⁹

It is apparent that peasants who rented government lands were not affected by this new development. That was because such land by and large was leased out for grazing. Commercial farmers were not interested to make contracts with the government. The most vulnerable tenants thus were those who resided on landlords' holdings.

Eviction of tenants could be gradual or automatic.⁴⁰ Some times landlords would simply increase the amount of rent and request their tenants to pay more. If the latter failed to afford the designated amount of rent he would be forced to leave the land. Some times, however, landlords would order their tenants to leave the land automatically, so they could sell or lease the land to commercial farmers. There was, however, no mass eviction of the latter type in highland Bale. On the whole, however, in the later part of the imperial era what one observes is a growing grievance on landless peasants due to the tightening terms of tenancy and an increasing degree of insecurity of tenure.

Tenant farmers reacted to these harsh conditions in various ways. One of these was striving to get lands of their own as per the imperial land grant proclamations. As I have indicated in the preceding chapter, the government had through the proclamation of *Teqemt* 1945 E.C. (1952), promised all landless peasants to get half a *gasha* of land.

Based on this, some of the peasants, who had the information, petitioned their respective *wäräda* offices and the Bale provincial governor for grant. However, despite the fact that we lack a concrete data as to the degree to which the proclamation had benefited the tenants, it is evident that only a small number of applicants succeeded to obtain land. Informants attest that majority of the peasants were not aware of the provision, and that those who did know about it were unable to go through with the lengthy and corrupt bureaucracy.⁴¹ The procedures for obtaining land under the orders were so complex and expensive. They involved travelling by poor peasants as far as the provincial capital Goba and some times even as far as Addis Ababa.

Information gathered from Dodola indicates that peasant grantees who did get land on the basis of this imperial decree were very few in numbers. For instance, out of the 379 beneficiaries in the *wäräda* between 1968 and 1973 only 88 were formerly landless peasants.⁴² The number became small not because of the absence of peasant applicants, but the process was so cumbersome for the landless to succeed. Even if they succeeded in obtaining grant certificates, the lands that they would be "given" might be far away from their homes or not suitable for cultivation. Hence, peasants would be forced to find another landowner. Despite the hardship caused by increasingly harsh tenancy terms, peasants did not want to move away from their relatives and clans. Thus they would prefer to find other means, if any existed at all.

As indicated earlier, labour in the highland Bale was mobilized mainly in the form of informal and formal cooperatives. The most common form of these traditional cooperatives was the *jiga*, also known as *däbo* in some areas.⁴³ It was an informal arrangement whereby peasants would ask others to help them on the field on specific date. The host would simply say *jiga siqabadhe* (I have reserved you for the *jiga*) to obtain the

commitment. The date would be agreed upon and preparation would proceed. The host would incur expenses for the food and drinks to be consumed during the *jiga*. *Jiga* was carried out during ploughing, planting, weeding, harvesting and threshing. In this kind of co-operative activity the host would not necessarily be required to work for those who had helped in his turn. But he was expected, if asked, to work. Though *jiga* was practiced among the peasantry on the basis of mutual understanding, the landlords, the *balabbat*, *burqa*, generally the elite, tended to avail themselves of the labours of tenants and the surrounding small owners to work for them under the guise of *jiga*. For fear of retaliation peasants almost invariably acceded to these demands. But the elite did not themselves participate in such co-operative labour parties.

The other labour co-operative was known as *kora* or *wanfäl*. It was an arrangement in which peasants would work for one another in rotations. It was practiced by peasants on an equal basis.⁴⁴ The landlords seldom participated in this labour association. If they wanted to be involved at all, they would send one of their tenants to fill in for them.

Generally the problem of landlessness and deprivation in highland Bale reached a high stage in the last decade preceding the collapse of the Haylä- Sellase regime. Increase in population and the introduction of new technology of production -the use of tractor, had further worsened the life of tenants by increasing the insecurity of tenure.

CONCLUSION

Before the twentieth century a communal or lineage pattern of landholding had prevailed in Bale. While possession was individual, ownership was vested in the lineage groups. Members of the groups had usufructuary rights. But transfer of land to outsiders either by sale or gift was not known.

However, the conquest of the province by the Shoans in the later part of the nineteenth century and its incorporation into the Ethiopian Empire brought about changes of both social and economic significance. In the first few decades following the conquest peasants of highland Bale, who were given the generic name of *gäbbar*, were individually allocated to northern officials and their retainers so as to provide them with tribute. The tribute that the *gäbbar* paid to the *näftānas* and the *mälkānas*, as the conquerors were called, included payments in kind, cash and labour services. Though the peasantry were left on their lands, the tributary relationship that was introduced to the highland areas of the province exposed the *gäbbar* to onerous exactions.

Even if conquest was not followed by measurement and redistribution of lands, the state had confiscated lands that it claimed to have belonged to “criminals” and lands that were believed to be “unoccupied” even if the latter were regarded as communal ancestral holdings by the local people. These lands were put under the control of the governors or granted to the northerners either on permanent (*rest*) or temporary (*madärya*), basis. Such allocation of land by the state, however, was not made for the local elites, that is the *balabbat* and the *burqa*. They retained lands transferred to them from their ancestors.

In the period under discussion, the state had made legal the transfer of lands either by sale or “gift” to outsiders even if the consent of co-heirs was required. The process

encouraged changes of lineage or group ownership of land into private tenure. Despite constraints from traditional laws, those forms of surplus extraction that the *gäbbar* was subjected to had also contributed to the evolution of private property of lands. They had compelled the peasant to expand farming so as to pay tribute. Consequently, and through time, these lands came to be regarded as private property.

In the post-Italian period the centralization and standardization of taxes made it important to carry out land measurement in highland Bale. The purpose was to identify the size and quality of individually held lands, thus to facilitate collection of taxes. The measurements, however, triggered protracted opposition from the local people. People in the highland areas of the province initially resisted measurements for fear that they would increase the burden of taxes but what became much more vexing was that the measurements almost always resulted in the confiscation of property. It is equally significant, however, that the land measurements facilitated and completed the process of privatization of tenure. Concomitantly, the peasantry were also converted from tribute payers to individual landowning tax payers.

This thesis has attempted to show in this thesis the dynamic interconnections between administration, tax collection, and the transfer of land generally from its local owners to northern settlers and absentee proprietors. Tax collection sometimes meant other than what it literally means, for administrators made it deliberately difficult for the peasant landowner to balance his obligations to the state with his efforts to obtain livelihood. Tax defaults, in other words, were partly the making of the administration, for local elite made sure that lands on which taxes were not paid were taken over as quickly as possible and transferred to others.

Hand in hand with this the state granted large tracts of land to its civil and military officials while refusing to accommodate demands from the local peasantry to benefit from the grants. The policy nurtured the old Ethiopian tradition of buying supporters through the agency of land grants. The already landless peasants were devoid of access due mainly, to the cumbersome procedures of acquiring lands.

The last few decades of the imperial period also saw growing transactions in land. Even though both the traditional and imperial laws regarding transfer of property militated against disposal, a great deal of lands changed hands through sale. The reason was that peasants were compelled to sell land sometimes to pay their taxes and sometimes to buy protection to save as much of their lands as possible from powerful land hunters. Be that as it may, in spite of the rise of landlordism, small-scale ownership remained to be the dominant feature in the region. Of course, there was also expansion of tenancy. About one-third of the lands in highland Bale were tenant operated. And there were both immigrant and local tenants.

Peasants of highland Bale struggled to resist external pressures that threatened their control or ownership of land through different mechanisms. While the revolt of the 1960s was the major step, petitions and tax evasions were also used as means of opposition. Nevertheless both were undermined through government measures and/or due to the prevailing bureaucratic red-tape.

NOTES

Chapter I

¹ See, for instance, John Markakis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy of a Traditional Polity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), pp. 112-113; Joanna Mantel Niecko, *The Role of Land Tenure in the System of Ethiopian Imperial Government in Modern Times*, translated by Adam Bobinski Krzystof (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1980), p.139; Michael Stahl, *Ethiopia: Political Contradiction in Agricultural Development* (Stockholm, Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1974), pp. 45-46.

² Richard Pankhurst, *State and Land in Ethiopian History* (Addis Ababa: Central Printing Press, 1966), pp. 135-136; Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855 - 1974* (London: James Currey Ltd., 1991), p.187.

³ Mahtämä- Sellasé Wäldä - Mäsqäl, *Zikra Nagar* (Addis Ababa: Nätsannät Printing Press, 1942 E.C.), p.153. Compare this with the size of the *qälad* regions enumerated on pages 142 - 148 of the same book.

⁴ Markakis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, p.105; Mantel Niecko, *The Role of Land*, p.139.

⁵ The Arssi are an Oromo group in habiting the provinces of Bale, Arssi and parts of Shoa and Sidamo.

⁶ Ministry of Interior Archives, box title and number "Bale 2150," file number 2137, specific series number of the file H-4, the year the file was generated 1944 E.C.: Bale *Wäräda* Governorate to the Ministry of Interior, *Tahsas* 26, 1937 E.C. In subsequent notes the first series of letters refers to the sources of the archives; the second series of letters or/and numbers refers to the box; the third series of numbers or/and letters refers to the file number; the fourth series of numbers or/and letters refers to a specific file where a series of files exists; the fifth (or the fourth, as the case may be) series of numbers refers to the year in which the document was generated: Thus MIA/ Bale 2150/ 2137/ H-4/ 1944 refers to a Ministry of Interior Archive, a document kept in a box name and number "Bale 2150" in H-4th file under number 2137, generated in 1944 E.C.

The archives of the Ministry of Interior are found in the Wäldä -Masqal Tariku Memorial Research Center in Addis Ababa. Informants: Abba Jifar Tahiro and Haji Abadir Hussén.

⁷ For further description see, for instance, Mahtämä - Sellase, *Zikra Nagar*, pp. 121-124. The inheritability of *rest* land on the basis of amblinial descent, which is commonly practiced in the northern part of the country has been researched well by Hoben. See, Alan Hoben, *Land Tenure Among the Amhara of Ethiopia: The Dynamics of Cognatic Descent* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1973).

⁸ Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, p. 89; While explaining the pre-1936 land owning patterns in the province of Bale a letter sent to Harar also indicates that local peasants were allocated to the *naftañas* on *quter - gäbbar* basis. See, Bale Administrative Region

Office Archive, box number 33, file no. 11: Bale *Awraja* Governorate to Harar Governorate General, *Miyazia* 17, 1948 E.C.

⁹ An explanation against the theory of "privatization" has been made by Tekalign Walde Mariam, "A City and Its Hinterlands: The Political Economy of Land Tenure, Agriculture and Food Supply For Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 1887 - 1974" (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1995), pp. 11-14, 197 - 198.

¹⁰ There is of course an indication that some of the northerners were allocated lands on permanent tenure.

¹¹ Informants: Fäqi Hassäno and Bäqqälä Waldäyes. A *malkañä* was an official at a district level. Most of the time he would be appointed by the provincial governor and given lands and *gäbbars*. But *shaläqa* literally refers to an appointee, superior over a thousand (soldiers). He was appointed by the imperial authority at the provincial level as a commander. In some of the conquered regions he was also an official.

¹² FO/371/18030: Barton to Simon, 18 June 1934, found in the Institute of Ethiopian Studies microfilm section. Informants: Bäqqälä Wäldäyes and Wärgenäh Bälay also witnessed the efforts by the governor for reformation.

¹³ See, for instance, Stahl, *Ethiopia: Political Contradiction*, pp. 63-68; Siegfried Pausewang, *Peasants, Land and Society: A Social History of Land Reform in Ethiopia* (Munich, Koln and London: Weltforum Verlag, 1983), pp. 46 - 47.

¹⁴ The local people however, used lands, which were claimed to be unsettled, as marginal stretches for pasture.

¹⁵ Ministry of Interior Archives(henceforth MIA)/ Bale - *Qälad* 2158/ 2137/ 15/ 1944: "Bale *Awraja* Governorate: Details of *Madärya* Lands," 1948 E.C. in 15th file under number 2137, generated in 1944 E.C.

¹⁶ For the analysis on government land grant orders see, for instance, Nigatu Lakäw, "State and Land Grant System in Ethiopia, in Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, *Seminar Proceedings on Agrarian Reform* (Addis Ababa, 1970), pp. 208-214; Stahl, *Ethiopia: Political Contradiction...*, pp. 63 - 68.

¹⁷ John M. Cohen, "Ethiopia After Haile Selassie The Government Land Factor," *African Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 289 (October 1973), pp. 378 - 379.

¹⁸ Gebru Tareke, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest, Peasant Revolt in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 129 - 130.

¹⁹ In some other regions of southern Ethiopia, for instance southwest Shoa as observed by Tekalign, the existence of lands in the name of the first grantee after generations, coupled with the Amhara laws of inheritance, which was enforced by the state challenged the privateness of lands with each passing generation. See Tekalign, "A City and its Hinterlands ...," pp.259-263.

- ²⁰ Mantel Niecko, *The Role of Land Tenure...*, p. 139 ; Gäbrä- Wäld Ingida - Wärq, *Ya Itiyopya Märetinna Geber Sem* (Addis Ababa: Tinsae Zägubae Printers, 1948 E.C.), pp. 8-9.
- ²¹ MIA/ A/ 2077/ 4/ 1946: From Bale *Warada* Governor to the Ministry of Interior, *Hidar* 30, 1941 E.C. The remaining two measurements were carried out in 1951 and 1963.
- ²² Margery Perham, *The Government of Ethiopia* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1969), p. 355; Mahtämä Sellase, *Zikra Nagar*, pp. 140-141.
- ²³ MIA/ A/ 2077/ MT11/ 1946: Ministry of Finance to *Fitawrari* Taddäsä Nägash (Governor of Bale *Awraja*), *Nahase* 15, 1945 E.C; On similar assertion, see also, Tekalign, "A City and its Hinterlands...", pp. 201-202, 264-265; Bahru, *The History of Modern Ethiopia*, pp. 89-90.
- ²⁴ Bale Administrative Region Office Archive (hereafter BAROA), 33/44: *Bajerond* of Bale Governorate General to the Ministry of Interior, *Nahase* 2, 1956 E.C.
- ²⁵ Informants: Sänbätä Dubbi, Waqäyo Kotoshe, Adäm Buse.
- ²⁶ Prices of land in Bale in the last two decades of the imperial era increased from about 40 *birr* to 12000 *birr* for a *gasha*.
- ²⁷ Such process was also explained in one of the works of Pausewang. See Pausewang, *Peasants, Land and Society: ...*, pp. 63 - 64.
- ²⁸ Bizuwork Zewde, "The Problem of Tenancy and Tenancy Bills: With Particular Reference to Arssi" (M.A. Thesis, Addis Ababa University, History, 1992).
- ²⁹ For the detailed discussions on the Bale rebellion, see Gebru Tareke, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest...*, pp. 125 - 159.
- ³⁰ MIA/ A/ 1277/ 1946: Bale Governorate General Land Reform and Administration Office to the Ministry of Land Reform Administration, *Hidar* 3, 1962 E.C.; J.C.D. Lawrence and H.S. Mann, "FAO Land Policy Project - Ethiopia," *Ethiopian Observer* 9, 4(1966), p. 332.; Ministry of Agriculture (henceforth MOA), *Results from Surveys of Basic Form Conditions in Eleven Provinces of Ethiopia*, Part II (Addis Ababa, 1973), p. 268.
- ³¹ MOA, *Results from Surveys...*, p. 266. The survey, however, did not identify between the landless and owner tenants. As I have explained clearly in chapter five of this study the larger number of tenants in the province had their own smaller plots as well.

Chapter II

- ¹ MOA, "Annual Report of Agricultural Development Section of Bale Agricultural Development Office," *Hamle* 1975 E.C. p. 32.
- ² Bale Zone Planning and Economic Development Office, "Wäräda Details," August 1996.
- ³ MOA, "Annual Report....," p. 43.
- ⁴ Oromiya Planning and Economic Development Bureau, *Condensed Physical Geography of Oromiya* (Finfinne, 1997), pp. 56, 86-87.
- ⁵ Central Statistical Authority, *The 1994 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia: Results For Oromiya Region*, vol.I, part 1(Addis Ababa, 1996), p.36.
- ⁶ Central Statistical Authority, *Population and Housing Census 1984: Analytical Report on Bale Region* (Addis Ababa, 1989), pp. 79-80. The 1994 census puts the size of their population at 362, 877.
- ⁷ For explanations on this history of the Oromo, see Karl Knutsson, *Authority and Change: A Study of the Kalu Institution Among the Macha Galla of Ethiopia* (Goteburg: Etnografiska Museet, 1967); Mohammed Hussen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia: A History 1570-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 4-17.
- ⁸ Gebru Tareke, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest...*, p.128. Informants like Abba Jifar Tähiro and Fäqi Hassäno also attested this.
- ⁹ Von Eike Haberland, *Galla Sud Athiopiens, (English Summary)* by Peter Wingard, trans. (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer Gmb H., 1963), pp.772-773.; Informants: Fäqi Hassäno, Shamsi Abdulle. The other Oromo moiety is the Borana.
- ¹⁰ Mohammed Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia:....*, p. 4.; Haberland, *Galla Sud Athiopiens*, pp.772-773; G.W.B.Huntingford, *The Galla of Ethiopia: The Kingdom of Kaffa and Janjaro* (London: International African Institute, 1955),p.18.; Tesema Ta'a, "The Oromo of Wollega; A Historical Survey to 1910" (MA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, History, 1980), pp.10-11.
- ¹¹ Informants: Haji Abadir Hussén, Hussén Näsro, Adäm Busé.
- ¹² Bahrey, "History of the Galla" in *Some Records of Ethiopia 1593-1646*, by C.F.Beckingham and G.W.B.Huntingford, trans. and eds. (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1954), p.115.; Herbert S. Lewis, "The Origins of the Galla and Somali," *Journal of African History*, 1 (1966), p.33. What is not clear, however, is whether the Muslim state of Bali had included Mädda Walabu (Dallo) or not. The Oromo claimed this region as their ancestral homeland.

¹³ See Map 1 .; Informants: Muhammad- Amin Shemo, Aman Gäsho.

¹⁴ Informants tell that four *gada* centers seem to have existed in the province. These were the *Abba Muda* in Dallo, Oda Deniq or Oda Roba in Ginnir, Horä Boqa in Mandoyu and Oda Chäffa Lemman in Dodola.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*; Haberland, *Galla Sud Ethiopiens*, p.782; seems he has confused *Bahira* with *Abba Bokku* when he state that "He (*Abba Bokku*) enjoyed almost monarchical status, and had power over life and death." The Arssi Oromo of Bale might have adopted Islam as of the sixteenth century when they had come across the pre-Oromo Muslim community in Bali.

¹⁶ Informants: Fäqi Hassäno, Muhammad Amin Shemo.

¹⁷ Ketebo Abdiyo, "A Historical Survey of the Arssi-Oromo ca.1910-1974,"(MA Thesis , Addis Ababa University, History, 1999), p.16. Among the *Macha* Oromo, those early settlers were vested with *Qabiye* rights, while the late arrivals had become dependents. For further explanation see Tesema, p.12.; Guluma Gemedä, "Gumma and Limmu: The Process of State Formation Among the Oromo in the Gibe Region, ca.1750-1889," (MA Thesis, AAU, History, 1984),pp.39-44.; Tekalign Walde-Mariam, 'Land, Trade and Political Power Among the Oromo of Gibe Region: A Hypothesis," in *Third Annual Seminar of the Department of History* (Bahr Dar, 1985), p.264.

¹⁸ It is impossible to find data on the early periods. But the 1964 statistical survey for instance, put the size to about 145,700 that is 1.2 persons to a square kilometer. See Central Statistical Office, *Ethiopia: Statistical Abstract* (Addis Ababa, 1964), p.1.

¹⁹ Informants: Haji Abadir, Hussen Näsro.

²⁰ *Ibid.*; MIA/ Bale 2150/ 2137/ H-4/ 1944: From Bale *Wäräda* Governorate to the Ministry of Interior, *Tahsas* 26,1937E.C.

²¹ Informants: Haji Abadir Hussen, Abba Jifar Tahiro, Fäqi Hassäno.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Haberland, *Galla Sud Ethiopiens*, pp.773-774.; See also, J.Spencer Trimmingham, *Islam in Ethiopia* (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1976), pp.9-11.; Mohammad Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia...*,pp.xii-xiii, 4.

²⁵ Informants: Aman Gasho, Mamma Ebu, Muhammad Tena.

²⁶ *Ibid.* A *middé* is the size of a farm which a pair of oxen could till in a day. One hectare equals six *middés*.

²⁷ As a mountain you did not defend me from the Garora,
Nor are you flat to enable me see the Garora [advance],
And what are you that fit for nothing.

The triplet refers, of course, to the hill, which was too small to make for natural defense but big enough to hide Garora advances. Informants: Fäqi Hassäno, Muhammad Amin Shemo; Bale High Court Archive, "Historical Magazine," by Umär Hussen, Zälläqä Birru et al. (Goba, *Tahsas* 26,1976 E.C.), p.2. Type script. It appeared impossible to tell the exact period of their conflict.

²⁸ On the state formation in the Gibe region and Wallaga, see Guluma, "Gumma and Limmu:...",; Tekalign, "Land, Trade and Political Power...", pp. 261- 279.; Tesema, "The Oromo of Wellega:...", pp. 34-62.

²⁹ Informants: Fäqi Hassäno Muhammad Amin Shemo, Shämsi Abdulle,.

Chapter III

- ¹ Bairu Tafla, " Ras Darge Sahle Selassie C.1827-1900, " *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, 13, 2(1975), pp.29-30. On the process of the incorporation of Arssi see also Abbas Haji, "The History of Arssi 1880-1935, " (BA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, History, 1982), pp. 18-43.
- ² Bairu, "Ras Darge...", pp. 29-30. See also, Margery Perham, *The Government of Ethiopia*, p. 295. But Gebru argues that the conquest of Bale was achieved in the 1880s. Gebru Tareke, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p.128.
- ³ Informants: Fäqi Hassäno, Mamma Ébu; see also Sintayehu Kasaye, " Goba: Foundation, Growth and Development to 1974" (B.A. thesis, Addis Ababa University, History, 1985), p.7.
- ⁴ Informants: Adäm Buse, Fäqi Hassäno, Hassän Saddo.
- ⁵ Guranda which is located on the edge of the Wabe Shabale gorge is a strategic place with one entrance to the site and is surrounded by steep hills.
- ⁶ Informants: Haji Abadir Hussen, Mamma Ébu.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*; Hassän Sado; Sintayehu, "Goba: Foundation, Growth...", p. 7.
- ⁸ Sintayehu, "Goba: Foundation, Growth...", p. 7.
- ⁹ Informants: Mamma Ebu and Hassän Saddo; They tell that not more than three or four families, from both *balbalas*, were spared the killing.
- ¹⁰ Regarding the foundation of Goba town and its development see, Sintayehu, "Goba: Foundation, Growth...",
- ¹¹ Informants: Aman Gäsho, *Shaläqa Aläme Kättäräw*; Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest...*, p. 128.
- ¹² Ginnir is a garrison town founded in 1894 by *Däjazmach* Wäldä-Gabriel. See Ketema Maskela, " The Foundation, Growth and Development of Ginnir Town to 1974" (BA thesis, Addis Ababa University, History, 1987), pp. 3-7.
- ¹³ Informants: Haji Abadir Hussen, Abba Jifar Tahiro, Fäqi Hassäno, Shämsi Abdulle, Alo Ahmäd.
- ¹⁴ Sintayehu, "Goba: Foundation, Growth...", p. 7.

¹⁵ In English: after he achieved the pacification of Arssi with his son *Dajazmach* Asfaw, *Ras Darge* sought to cross into Bale. But he heard that the people of Bale were prepared to fight. Hence, he sent one of his followers, a man from the Wallo region by the name Busari, with lots of abujedid cloth contaminated with smallpox. He distributed the cloth, which was contaminated by the smallpox pus to the people and the disease spread and devastated the whole place. The people of Bale knew that they could not fight under these circumstances. Hence they sent their elders to *Ras Darge* and "allowed" him to enter Bale. See Bale Region Administration Office, "Pre-and -Post Revolution History of Bale" (Goba, *Tahsas* 1976 E.C.), p. 1. Amharic type script. The document was prepared by the office for the tenth anniversary of the Ethiopian Revolution.

¹⁶ Arnold Wienholt Hodson, *Seven Years in Southern Abyssinia*, (London: T.Fisher Unwin, 1927), p. 92.

¹⁷ Informants: Muhammad-Amin Shemo, Aba Jifar Tahiro, Hussien Näsro.

¹⁸ *Halange hin däbsinu jechun warrä hangafa kennätän. Ibid.*

¹⁹ Literally, as to the appointment of the *balabbats*, previously during the period of the Galla [Oromo] there were leaders of the ethnic group who were known as *Bokku* or *Bahira* who had the power to imprison and punish [people]. Later on when *Ras Darge* conquered the region those *Bokku*, ... who submitted peacefully and helped him were retained in power and their positions became hereditary, continuing up to now. MIA/ Bale 2150/ 2137/H-4/ 1944: From Bale *Wäräda* Governorate to the Ministry of Interior, *Tahsas* 26, 1937 E.C.

²⁰ For more on the description of the names of the *balabbats* and areas of their control. See appendix one.

²¹ Richard Pankhurst, *State and Land*, p.136.; John Markakis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, pp.106-116; Mantel-Niecko, *The Role of Land Tenure*, pp. 135-136.

²² In English, ...those who later became *balabbats* had [territories also known as] *burqinnät* over which they had the authority to levy troops or provide services. All those who are found in his *burqinnät* have their own *rest*. In either cases of the *balabbatinnät* and the *burqinnät*, with the exception of the land that he has inherited from his father, neither the *balabbat* nor the *burqa* can claim *mert*. All those who are within the jurisdiction, [of the *balabbat*] be it the *burqa* or the *gäbbar* have their own *rest* inherited from their fathers. Similarly the *burqa*, who served simply as a deputized leader of the *rest* owners, was not given the privilege of owing *siso*. [He owned only] lands transferred to him from his father or forefathers. MIA / B 2150/ 2137/H-4/ 1944: From Bale *Wäräda* Governorate to the Ministry of Interior, *Tahsas* 26, 1937 E.C. *Siso mert* refers to a land chosen by a *balabbat* from lands under his control. The proportion may vary from a third to a sixth.

²³ Informants: Adäm Buse, Aläme Kättäräw, Bäqälä Abaynääh.

- ²⁴ Charles F. Rey, *Unconquered Abyssinia as it is Today* (London: Seeley, Service and Co.Ltd., 1923), p. 189. However, Mahtäma-Sellase tells us that a *mälkänya* who was a chief of hundred men had about 70, a *mäto-aläqa* 40, a *hamsa alaqa* 25 and the soldiers 10 *gabbars* each. Mahtäma-Sellase Wäldä-Mäsqäl, "Land System of Ethiopia," *Ethiopian Observer*, 1,9 (1957), p. 293.
- ²⁵ Informants: Adäm Buse, Aläme Kättäräw.
- ²⁶ Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest...*, pp. 129-130. *Gesho* (*rhamnus prinoides*) is used in the manufacturing of taj, a local drink of Ethiopians.
- ²⁷ Gabrä-Wäld Ingida-Wärq, *Yä-Itiyopya Maretinna Geber Sem*, p. 19. The money that was paid for the governors was locally known as *qarshi quce*.
- ²⁸ Informants: Wärqnäḥ Bälay, Taffäsä Molla, See also, Umär Hussen, Zälläqä Birru, et al, "Historical Magazine," (Goba; BHC, *Tahsas* 26,1976E.C),p. 3. Amharic type script.
- ²⁹ BHC/ File 2: To *Däjazmach Näsibu Chilot*, *Säne* 15, 1926 E.C.
- ³⁰ Informants: Abärra Wärq, Fäqi Hassäno, Taffäsä Molla; See also, Umär Hussen, et al, p. 3.
- ³¹ Unlike the other regions of the country, the people of this *awraja*, before 1936 were designated as *gabbar* and were required to pay *geber* on the basis of their herds. [They were classified as] *arat awuchi*, *sost awuchi*, etc. [It was] not [done] after the amounts of land under their control as assessed by enumerators. See MIA/ B 2167/ 2137/11/ 1944: From Bale *Wäräda* Governorate Office to the Ministry of Interior, *Tahsas* 21,1941 E.C.
- ³² Gäbrä-Wäld, *Ya - Itiyopya Meretinna Geber Sem*, p. 19; Mahtämä-Sellase, *Zikra Nagar*, p.133.
- ³³ Informants: Aläme Kättäräw, Abäbä Wäldä-Tsadiq, Abba Jifar Tahiro, Haji Abadir Hassän.
- ³⁴ Gäbrä-Wäld Ingida-Wärq, *Ya-Itiyopya Märetinna Geber Sem*, pp. 16-17. He notes that the *guaz-tägasha* received seven *qunnas* per *gasha*, plus five additional *qunnas* for each dependent. C.M.McClellan, "Reaction to Ethiopian Expansionism: The Case of Darasa, 1895-1935," (Ph.D Thesis, Michigan State University, 1978), p. 170. Reports a payment of five to ten thalers per year and a monthly grain allotment of half a *dawulla* (fifty kilograms).
- ³⁵ For more information see Mahtämä-Sellase, *Zikra Nagar*, pp. 334-335.
- ³⁶ On this basis, for instance, a certain *Qanyazmach* Bizunah and a son of *Gerazmach* Nur used to pay about ten *dawulla* on one *gasha* of their land in Goba-Sinja. BRHCA/ File-2: To *Dajazmach Näsibu Chilot*, *Nähase* 2,1926 E.C. See also Mahtämä-Sellase, *Zikra Nagar*, p. 335.

³⁷ A *burqa* is an *alaqa*, that is, a senior member (or chief) of a *rest* [owning lineage]. As such, he has *rest* for himself. As an *alaqa* to his relatives he orders them. A *burqa* who is in charge of ten *gäbbars* was not required to pay *geber* but he orders them (his *gäbbars*). And if he has got less than ten *gäbbars* to manage he would be paid ten *birr* in lieu of honey and salary but was not required to pay *geber*. MIA/ B 2147/ 2137/ 3/ 1944: From Bale *Wäräda* Governorate Office to the Ministry of Interior, *Tahsas* 21, 1941 E.C.

³⁸ BHC/File 2: To *Däjjazmach Näsibu Chilot, Säne* 15/1926 E.C.; Informants: Shämsi Abdulle, Muhammad-Amin Shemo.

³⁹ BAROA/ 33/11: From Goba *Wäräda* Governorate to Bale *Awraja* Governorate, *Hamle* 5, 1951 E. C.

⁴⁰ Issues related to land measurement will be explained in the next chapter. In many of the provinces of southern Ethiopia, conquest was attended by land measurement and subsequent redistribution either on *madärya* or on *rest* (permanent) basis. See Tesema Ta'a, " Political Economy of Western Ethiopia From mid-16th Century to the 20th century," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Michigan State University, 1986), pp.195-200; C.M. McClellan, *State Transformation and National Integration: Gedeo and the Ethiopian Empire, 1895-1935* (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1988), pp. 81-82.

⁴¹ On this theory, see Shiferaw Bekele, " The Evolution of Land Tenure in the Imperial Era, " in *An Economic History of Ethiopia*, vol. I (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1995.), pp.78-80.

⁴² Informants: Fäqi Hassäno, Abdurahman Sayd, Shämsi Abdulle, Abdi Usman.

⁴³ Informants: Taffäsä Molla, Abba Jifar Tahiro, Yared Wäraqnäh, Haji Abadir .There are controversial views as to the period of the introduction of plow farming to highland Bale. While some of my informants claim its existence before the conquest, others are attributing it to the Amharas. The point requires further investigation and is beyond the scope of this paper.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Hodson, *Seven Years...*, p. 92.

⁴⁶ Informants: Abäbä Wäldä-Tsadiq, Fäqi Hassäno, Käbädä Amarä.

⁴⁷ In Dallo *awraja*, for instance, *Ras Täfäri* (later Emperor Haylä Sellase) is said to have appropriated not less than 2000 *gashas* of land. BAROA 21/ H: From *Fitawrari Täsära Rätta* to Bale *Awraja* Governorate, *Nahase* 15, 1942 E.C.

⁴⁸ Informants: Haylu Fäye, Hussen Näsro, Haylu Fäye, Shämsi Abdulle, Siyum Wäldä-Amanuel.

⁴⁹ Informants: Abäbä Wäldä-Tsadiq, Fäqi Hassäno, Muhammäd Amin Shemo.

⁵⁰ In English, when my father Junda was alive we have bequeathed our *rest* located at Barbare to His Imperial Majesty, but now we have no pension as designated by the rule. Both before and after the death of my father, *Grazmach Wäldä-Mariyam* (representative of the the Emperor) used to take *erbo* from us....” see, BHCA/ File 2: To *Däjazmach Näsibu Chilot, Nähase* 11,1926 E.C.

⁵¹ Informants: Fäqi Hassäno, Mamma Ebu; BARO, “Pre-and Post Revolution History of Bale," p. 5.

⁵² Informants: Ayälä Dänägäto, Käbädä Amarä, Tibäbu Abäbä, Täklü Wärqnä. For general explanation on this see Shiferaw, pp. 79-80; Gäbrä-Wäld, *Ya-Itiyopya Märetinna Geber Sem*, p. 24.

⁵³ Nicola Malizia, " La regione del Bale, " *Rivista delle Colonie*, anno 12, No.10 (October 1938), pp. 1368-1369.

⁵⁴ "Land Sale Agreement," *Mäskäräm* 4,1920 E.C. Letter found in the possession of Tägäñ Ayala.

⁵⁵ Bale Agricultural Development Office Archive (BADOA) /321/1: From Nuro Qacho to Bale *Awraja* Governorate ,*Teqimt* 10,1947 E.C.

⁵⁶ Informants: Taffäsä Molla, Tägäñ Ayälä, Haji Abadir Hussen .

⁵⁷ FO/ 371/ 18030: Report by Mr. de Halpert, 28 May 1934 , in Barton to Simon, July 9,1934.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*; BRAO, " Pre-and -Post Revolution ..." p. 6; Informants: Bäqälä Abaynä, Wärqnä Bälay. Perham, *The Government of Ethiopia*, pp. 165, 312., She notes the appointment of a reformist governor but did not mention the arrival of the Belgian mission in Bale. The Belgians, according to her trained the Imperial guard and the army in Harar.

⁵⁹ Informants: Bäqälä Abaynä , Haji Abadir.

⁶⁰ In *qalad* regions , regions where land was measured, *gäbbars* who have held lands after 1933, were declared free from labour services but had to pay a fixed *geber* of 30 *birr*. See, Gäbrä Wäld, *Ya-Itiyopya Märetinna Geber Sem*, p. 20.

⁶¹ Informants: Shämsi Abdulle, Fäqi Hassäno, Haji Abadir Hussen.

⁶² On the explanation of the abolition of the reversionary rights of the state on lands in the north see, for instance, Shiferaw, "The Evolution of Land Tenure...", pp. 80, 110-111; Mahtämä-Sellase, *Zikrä Nagar*, p. 72.

⁶³ Informants: Shämsi Abdulle, Fäqi Hassäno, Haji Abadir Hussen, Adäm Buse.

- ⁶⁴ Alberto Sbacchi, *Ethiopia Under Mussolini: Fascism and the Colonial Experience* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1985), pp. 101-102. ; Informants: Taddäsä Abdi, Wäraqnäh Bälay
- ⁶⁵ Malizia, "La regione...", p. 1348.
- ⁶⁶ Sbacchi, *Ethiopia under Mussolini*, p. 102-104. For more explanation on Italian land policy in Ethiopia see also Haile- Mariam Larebo, *The Building of an Empire: Italian Land Policy and Practice in Ethiopia 1935-1941* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1994)
- ⁶⁷ MIA/ B 2150/ 2137/ H-4/ 1944: From *Fitawrari* Taddäsä Nägäsh to Bale *Awraja* Treasury. *Mäskäräm* 5, 1941 E.C.
- ⁶⁸ BARO/ A/69: From *Balambaras* Haylu Bäqqana to Bale *Awraja* Governorate, *Sane* 12, 1946 E.C . The court case, of course, went on throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Post war imperial law declared the return of land to its previous owners (holders).
- ⁶⁹ Sbacchi, *Ethiopia under Mussolini:....*, pp. 160-161.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 153-154, 163.
- ⁷¹ Informants: Fäqi Hassäno, Abba Jifar Tahiro, Shämsi Abdulle Taddäsä Abdi. See also, Tekalign, "A City and its Hinterlands...", pp. 228-229.
- ⁷² Informants: Aläme Kätäräw, Abba Jifar Tahiro, Taffäsä Molla, Sbacchi, *Ethiopia Under Mussolini:....*, p. 163. Tekalign, "A City and its Hinterlands...", pp. 228-229.
- ⁷³ MIA/ B 2167/ 2137/ 8/ 1944: From *Fitawrari* Nuh Dadhi to Bale *Wäräda* Governorate, *Nähase* 5/1936 E.C.; MIA/ B2167/ 453/ 3: From Mäkuriya Bantirgu to Ministry of Interior, *Mäskäräm* 28, 1937 E.C.
- ⁷⁴ Sbacchi, *Ethiopia under Mussolini:....*, pp. 102-104.
- ⁷⁵ Informants: Muhammad-Amin Shemo, Taffäsä Molla. Haile- Mariam, however, indicates that about 11,500 hectares were leased out for colonial concessionaires for commercial farming. See Haile- Mariam, *The Building of an Empire:....*, pp. 184- 186.

Chapter IV

- ¹ Gäbrä-Wäld Ingida-Wärq, *Yä-Itiyopya Maretinna Geber Sem*, pp.78-79, 87; "A Proclamation to Provide a Tax on Land," *Nägarit Gazeta*, no.8(1942); Perham, *The Government of Ethiopia*, p. 355; Peter Schwab, *Decision-Making in Ethiopia: A Study of the Political Process* (London: C. Hurst, 1972), p. 27.
- ² Haylä- Sellase, Emperor), *Hiwatenna Yä-Itiyopya Ermejja* (My Life and the Ethiopias Progress), vol. I (Addis Ababa, 1965 E.C.), p. 54. Other regions included Jijjiga, Chärchär, Säyo, Jimma and Wallaga.
- ³ Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest...*, p.130; BARO, "Pre-and Post Revolution History of Bale," pp.11,84.
- ⁴ BAROA 21/53-1, Dämissee Ambärber to Mäkuriya Bantirgu, *Ginbot* 13,1935 E.C. Through the administrative restructuring scheme of 1942 Bale was united with Hararge at a *wäräda* level. It was given an *awraja* status in 1946 and remained as such up to 1960.
- ⁵ Informants: Muhammad - Amin Shemo, Adäm Buse and Alo Ahmad.
- ⁶ Informants: Muhammad-Amin Shemo, Abdurahaman Hussén.
- ⁷ "Land Tax Proclamation," *Nägarit Gazeta*, no.70 (November 1, 1944); Schwab, *Decision Making in Ethiopia:...*, pp. 27-28; Perham, *The Government of Ethiopia*, pp.209-210; Gäbrä-Wäld, *Ya Itiyopya Maretinna Geber Sem*, pp.101-102.
- ⁸ MIA/ Bale *Qälad* 2158/ 2137/ 14/ 1965: Bale *Wäräda* Governor to the Ministry of Interior, *Pagume* 4,1938 EC.; BAROA/ 21/8: Bale *Wäräda* Governor to Harar *Awraja* Governorate, *Mäskäräm* 19,1938 EC. Regarding the purpose of land measurement see also Bahru, *A History of Ethiopia:...*, p. 89; Tekalign, "A City and Its Hinterlands..." pp. 201-202.
- ⁹ Informants: Hussen Näsro, Muhammad-Amin Shemo, Fäqi Hassäno; MIA/ B 2147/ 2137/ 3/ 1944: Dämissee Ambärber to the Ministry of Interior, *Tahsas* 21,1941E.C.
- ¹⁰ Informants: Muhammad-Amin Shemo, Shämsi Abdulle, Yared Wärqneh; BAROA/ 21/8: Bale *Wäräda* Governor to Harar *Awraja* Governorate, *Mäskäräm* 19,1938 E.C.
- ¹¹ MIA/ BQ 2158/ 2137/ 14/ 1965: Bale *Wäräda* Governor to the Ministry of Interior, *Pagume* 4,1938 EC. Six *masa* equals one hectare.
- ¹² MIA/ B 2150/ 2137/ H-4/ 1944: Bale *Wäräda* Governorate to the Ministry of Interior, *Tahsas* 26,1937 EC.; MIA/ B 2150/ 2137/ 1/ 1944: Minutes of Bale *Awraja* Governorate, *Mäskäräm* 5,1946 EC.; Informants: Abäbä Wäldä-Tsadiq, Muhammad – Amin Shemo.
- ¹³ Informants: Fäqi Hassäno, Yared Wärqneh.; MIA/ BQ 2158/ 2137/ 14/ 1965: Taddässä Nägash (Governor) to Abäbä Aragay, *Nahase* 10,1944 E.C.

¹⁴ MIA/ B2150/ 2137/ H-1/ 1944: Bale *Wäräda* Governor to the Ministry of Interior, *Nahase* 28, 1937 E.C. See also, MIA/ B 2150/ 2137/ H-4/ 1944: Gäbrä – Wäld (Finance Officer in Bale) to Yelma Dheressa (Deputy Minister of Finance), *Miyazia* 1, 1940 E.C.; MIA/ B 2150/ 2137/ H-4/ 1944: Dämissie Ambärber to the Ministry of Interior, *Tahsas* 21, 1941 E.C.; MIA/ B 2150/ 2137/ H-4/ 1944: Gädäb *Wäräda* Governorate to Bale *Awraja* Governorate, *Tir* 2, 1942 E.C.

¹⁵ Informants: Haji Abadir Hussen, Shämsi Abdulle, Adäm Shallo.

¹⁶ Literally, in reality when I investigate the reason for which they hate [oppose] *qalad*, [what I found out was that] first, when the *qalad* was implemented in Arssi, the government had appropriated *terf* (extra) lands and granted them to the *näftäña* on the basis of *madärya* or *rest*; besides the recognition of the Amhara as *restäña*, the Christian Oromo from Shoa had come and evicted the Arssi landowners and became *restänya*... Therefore [notable local elders warned that] before this happen to them and weaken their religion [faith] those who supported the introduction of *qalad* should know that they were enemies of their people and that they should leave this idea. See, MIA/ B 2150/ 2137/ H-4/ 1944: Captain Dämissie to the Ministry of Interior, *Tahsas* 21, 1941 E.C.

¹⁷ MIA/ B 2150/ 2137/ H-4/ 1944: Dämissie to the Ministry of Interior, *Tahsas* 30, 1941 E.C. Since the people of Bale used to believe in Sheikh Hussen, it was aimed to use the Imam to agitate and convince them on the introduction of *qalad*.

¹⁸ MIA/ A/ 2077/ 4/ 1946: From the *Rest* and *Wul* Director to Acham-Yelläh Wäldä – Amanuel, *Mäskäräm* 7, 1945 E.C.; MIA/ A/ 2077/ 4/ 1946: Suggestion to Determine a *Qälad* to Forty hectares, *Pagume* 2, 1946 E.C.; Informants: Fäqi Hassäno, Mendaye Tässäma. The measurement in Bale was 32 by 20 and one *qalad* equals 25 meters.

¹⁹ Informants: Abba Jifar Tahir, Abärra Wäru. Dodola Agricultural Development Office Archive (DADOA)/ 52/ A.; Dodola *Wäräda* Governorat to Bale *Awraja* Governorate, *Tir* 2, 1942 E.C.

²⁰ MIA/ A/ 2077/ 4/ 1946: Leader of the Second Group of Surveyors to the Ministry of Interior, *Tir* 30, 1944 E.C.

²¹ MIA/ BQ 2158/ 2137/ 15/ 1944: Lands Held by the People and the Government in Bale *Awraja*, 1948 E.C. Units in centimeters and square meters were rounded up to the nearest digit. Note: Church leaders in the *awraja* claimed to have possessed *samon* lands of about 1262 *gashas*. See Bale Regional Diocese Office (BRDO) 313/47: Bale *Awraja Hagärä – Sebkät* Director to Bale *Awraja* Governorate, *Teqimt* 4, 1947 E.C.

²² Tekalign, “A City and Its Hinterlands...,” p. 264.

²³ Informants: Abdi Hussen, Muhammad-Hussen Shemo, Shamsi Abdulle.

²⁴ *Ibid.*; BHCA/ 3/ 63: Tax Receipt of Haji Abdalla Wahab, *Tir* 30, 1953 E.C.

²⁵ Gäbrä-Wäld Ingida-Wärq, *Ya-Itiyopya Märetinna Geber Sem*, p.102.; MIA/ BQ 2158/ 2137/ 14/ 1965: Bale *Awraja* Governorate to the Six *Wäräda* Governorates, *Yakatit* 11,1946 E.C. The amount for *läm* lands was reduced from 50 to 45 *birr* for the provinces of Wallaga, Gamugofa, Sidamo, Illubabor, Kaffa and Bale *Awraja see*, *Nägarit Gazeta*, No.70 of 1944.

²⁶ MIA/ BQ 2158/ 2137/ 14/ 1965: Taddässa Nägash to *Ras* Abäbä Arägay (Minister of the Interior) , *Nähase* 10,1944 E.C. The governor had recommended a tax payment of 26.30 *birr*, 20.25 *birr* and 10.15 *birr* for *läm*, *läm-täf* and *täf* lands, respectively.

²⁷ Informant: Shamsi Abdulle, Taddässa Abdi, Muhammad-Amin Shemo; MIA/ BQ 2158/ 2137/ 14/ 1965: Mammo Seyum (*Indärase*) to Mäkonnen Habtä-Wäld (Minister of Finance) *Mäskäräm* 22,1949 E.C.

²⁸ MIA/ BQ 2158/ 2137/ 14/ 1965: Wärqu Terfe to Bale *Awraja* Governorate, *Hamle* 11,1948 E.C. Informants: Adäm Buse, Mamma Ebu.

²⁹ For instance, lands estimated to be 95, 49, 46 *gashas* in Dodola turned out to be only 11, 19, 8 *gashas* respectively after remeasurement. See, MIA/ BQ 2158/ 2137/ 18/ 1944: Abäbä Gäbre (*Indärase*) to the Ministry of Interior, *Yakatit* 30,1953 E.C.

³⁰ In English, as far as I know and as I had hoped, the surveyors, ... should have put stones or planted pillars to mark borders for lands; but with appeals from landowners measurements were carried out through visual assessment and estimation, and the balance of the “market [benefit] had fallen between the landowner and the surveyors; since there is no mechanism to prevent a surveyor from pursuing his own interest, he would use to determine the size of every landowner’s holding as he desired, and the landowner would deal with them for under registration. Hence the price [fate] of the work of the *qalad* fell between the two beneficiaries. BAROA/ 33/6: Abäbä Gäbre to Abiy Abäbä, *Ginbot* 2,1953 E.C.

³¹ MIA/ BQ 2158/ 2137/ 18/ 1944: Eskender Dahne to Warqu Inqua-Sellase, *Tir* 6,1956 E.C.; Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p.133.

³² MIA/ BQ 2158/ 2137/ 18/ 1944: Abäbä Gäbre to Minister of Interior, *Yakatit* 30,1953 E.C.; Informant: Taddässa Abdi. In the years from 1953-1959 arrears were 546,314 *birr* and 653,187 *birr* for Goba and Dodola *Wärädas* respectively.

³³ BAROA/ B33/ 44: *Bäjirond* (Treasurer) of Bale Governorate General to the Ministry of Interior, *Nähase* 2,1956E.C.; Aberra Ketsela, “The Rebellion in Bale 1963-1970” (BA Thesis, Haylä-Sellase I University, History, 1971), p.18.

³⁴ MIA/ B 2150/ 2137/ H-4/ 1944: Dasta Ali (*Bäjirond* of Bale Governorate-General) to the Ministry of Finance, *Mägabit* 30,1956 E.C. This land must not be seen in its face value. Since the government was making grants from such lands in the period under study, the size of *gebrätäl* lands must have been larger than this. Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p.133 argue that lands confiscated until 1963 was about 23,038 *gashas*.

³⁵ Däfo Tura, Gäbäyāhu Endaylallu, et al. "Historical Study of Mandoyu *Awraja* Finance Office," (Sinana *Wäräda* Finance Office, SWFO, *Nähase* 1975 E.C.) memo; Markakis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, pp.120-121.

³⁶ Ministry of Land Reform and Administration (MLRA), *Report on Land Tenure Survey of Bale Province* (Addis Ababa, December 1969), p.10. The difference between the size of *gebrätäl* lands perhaps was partially related with the designation of part of the confiscated lands under the government tenure.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Nigatu Lakew, "State and Land Grant Systems in Ethiopia," pp. 209-210; Cohen, "Ethiopia After Haile Sellasse," pp. 376-377; Tekalign, "A City and Its Hinterlands..." pp. 239-242. It is known that grants for dignitaries had a long history in the country.

³⁹ *Ibid.*; For further explanation on the ambiguity of the proclamation see also, Bizuwork Zewde, "The Problem of Tenancy and Tenancy Bills, pp.12-14.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ BADOA/ No box no./69, Bale *Awraja* Governorate to Goro *Wäräda*, *Säne* 7,1946 E.C.; MIA/ B 2150/ 2137/ H-4/ 1944: Taddäsä Nägash to the Six *Wäräda* Governorates, *Tahsas* 2,1947 E.C; Informant: Alame Kättäräw.

⁴² MIA/ BQ 2158/ 2137/ 1/ 1944: Bale *Awraja* Governorate to Masfin Seläshi, *Hamle*, 17,1948 E.C; Bale Land Reform and Administration (BLRA), "Annual Report of 1970/71," *Säne* 30,1963 E.C; BLRA, "Annual Report of 1971/72," *Säne* 30,1964 E.C.; BADOA /no box no/6375, BLRA to MLRA, *Miyazia* 28,1965 E.C BLRA, "Six Month Report of 1973/74," *Tahsas* 30,1967 E.C.; MIA/ B 2150/ 2137/ H-4/ 1944: Zä-Amanuel Hayle to the *Indärase* of Bale Governorate General, *Nähase* 11,1963 E.C. Gebru claimed the size to be much more greater than this. Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, pp. 129-130.

⁴³ BADOA No box no./69: Bale *Awraja* Governorate to Goro *Wäräda*, *Säne* 7,1946 E.C.; MIA/ B 2150/ 2137/ H-4/ 1944: Taddäsä Nägash to the Six *Wäräda* Governorates, *Tahsas* 2,1947E.C. In Fasil *awraja* the lands allocated to the grantees in 1971/72 for instance predominantly went to the army and the civil servants. See below:

Size of lands in <i>Gasha</i>							
Total No of Grantees	New Year Service	Military Service	Ethiopian	Previous Service	<i>Näch Labash</i>	Patriots	Total
1018	182	86	138	23	139	8	576

BADOA, "Notes on Lands Granted in the Six *Waradas* of Fasil," No date.

⁴⁴ BLRA, "Annual Report of 1963 E.C. (1970/71)," *Säne* 30,1963 E.C.

⁴⁵ Informants: Abärra Wäru, Getachäw Wäldä-Mikael; MOA, *The Forgotten Aborigines: Socio-Economic Survey in Southern Ethiopia*, by Ayele Gebre-Mariam (Addis Ababa, 1975), pp.17-18.

⁴⁶ Informants: Mamma Ebu, Käbädä Amarä, Wärqenäh Bäläy.; See also BLRA, "Annual Report of 1971/72," *Säne* 30,1963 E.C. Experts who had surveyed lands suitable for settlement purpose showed that about 87,756 square kilometer was reserved in the province. See V.E.M.Bruke and F. Thornley, *A Policy Oriented Study of Land Settlement*, vol. I (Addis Ababa, MLRA, December 1969), p.69. MLRA, *Report on Land Temure Survey of Bale*, p. 25.

⁴⁷ BADOA/ T/306: Sälämon Abrähäm (Deputy Minister of the *Wul* and *Rest* Department) to Bale Governorate General, *Hidar* 13,1955 E.C.; Ashagari Abozän to Goro *Wäräda* Governorate, *Ginbot* 25,1957 E.C.

⁴⁸ For more explanation see Nigatu, "State and Land Grant..." pp. 213-214; Cohen, "Ethiopia After Haile Sellasse," p. 377. Informants: Mindaye Täsämma, Fäqi Hassäno, Taffäsä Molla.

⁴⁹ Tekalign, "A City and Its Hinterlands:..." pp. 247-248. See also Cohen, "Ethiopia After Haile Sellasse," pp. 377-378; Informants: Mindaye Täsämma, Fäqi Hassäno.

⁵⁰ BRDO/ 145/6: Wäldä-Tinsa'e Alämu to *Betä-Kihnät Täqlay* Office, *Pagume* 1,1967 E.C.; Informants: Käbädä Amarä, Täklü Wärqnah, Ayälä Dänägätu.

⁵¹ BAROA /22/3: *Liqä – Mäkuas* Käbädä Mäkonnen to the Twelve Governorate General and Bale *Awraja* Governorate, *Ginbot* 19,1950 E.C.

⁵² Informants: Taffäsä Molla, Muhammad-Amin Shemo, Haji Abadir Hussen, Sänbäta Dubbi, Waqayo Kotoshe; BADOA/ 1752/2: Aräga Bäbis to Fassil *Awraja* Land Administration Office, *Miyazia* 29,1962 E.C.; See also Blackhurst on the migration of the Shoan Oromo to Bale. Hector Blackhurst, "Adopting an Ambiguous Position: Oromo Relationships with Strangers," in P.T.W Baxter et.al (eds.), *Being and Becoming Oromo: Historical and Anthropological Enquiries* (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1996), pp.239-240, 248. Some times the Shoans used to receive land in exchange for mule, thus goes the saying "*läfä läfen bitne*," literally, we bought a land with a bone.

⁵³ Informants: Abdurahaman Hussen, Taffäsä Molla,

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*; Mahammad- Amin Shemo, Mäkonnen Hassän, Sänbäta Dubbi.

⁵⁵ MLRA, *Report on Land Temure Survey of Bale*, p.26; BADOA / Nuro 312/ 1: Nuro Qacho to Bale *Awraja* High Court, *Tir* 24,1946 E.C; MIA/ 1767/ 2179: Za-Amanuel Hayle to the MLRA, *Ginbot* 13,1960 E.C. Sources from Dodola *Wäräda* court indicate that in the years between 1963-1974, 25 percent of the court cases were related to disputes on land. In Goba, *tabaqas* like Tasfaye Abdi used such disputes as their business route.

⁵⁶ Sinana *Wäräda* Court Archives (SWCA) /21/60: Hamu Sheka to Goba *Wäräda* Court, *Hidar* 14, 1948 E.C.; BHCA/ 9/ Hisu 51: Hisu Wayte to Bale High court, *Säne* 10, 1951 E.C. Similar cases prevailed in other *wärädas*. See BHCA /12/ Foge 57: Foge Dibbe to Dodola *Wäräda* Court, *Tahsas* 22, 1957 E.C.; SWCA/ 181/63: Bäkafa Dubç to Fassil *Awraja* Court, *Teqimt* 26, 1964 E.C.; SWCA / 64/ 13: Gäbrä-Sellasç Manyazawal to Goba *Wäräda* Court, *Mägabit* 6, 1953 E.C.

⁵⁷ Informants: Abba Jifar Tahiro, Mäkonnen Hassän, Yared Wärgenah, Taffäsä Molla. "Wälläd-Aged Wul," *Magabit* 26, 1965 E.C. Conducted between Husses Mamme, owner of the land and four men, that is Damisse Yesshanäw, Ashagre Yesshanäw, Tagaï Ayala and Haji Argo.

⁵⁸ MIA/ BQ 2158/ 2137/ 2/ 1944: Roba Jilo and Others to Bale *Awraja* Governorate, *Nähase* 7, 1947 E.C.; BADOA/ 843/ 6001: Roba Jilo and Others to Bale Governorate General, *Sane* 19, 1953 E.C.; BARO "Pre and – Post Revolution History of Bale," pp. 74-75. The crown prince had additional 66 *gasha* of land in Ginnir *wäräda* while Empress Mänän had about 50 *gashas* in three *wärädas* of highland Bale. See MIA/ A 2256/ M5: Bale LRA to the MLRA, 1967 E.C.; MIA/ A2237/ 5/ 1946: Wuhib Wäldä-Mariyam to the Ministry of Interior, *Tahsas* 17, 1952 E.C.; Sinana *Warada* Finance Office, "Historical Study of Mandoyu *Awraja* Finance Office," by Däfo Tura, Gäbäyähü Indaylallu, et al (*Tiqimt* 1976 E.C), memo.

⁵⁹ BARO "Pre-and – Post Revolution History of Bale," pp. 76-77.

⁶⁰ BADOA 7/ Laqäw 2079: Laqäw Mäshäsha to Wäldä-Sellase Bäräka (*Indärase*), *Hamle* 3, 1960 E.C.

⁶¹ Dodola *Wäräda* Court Archive (DWCA) 11/ Laqäw 6: Laqäw Mäshäsha to Ganale *Awraja* Court, *Hidar* 4, 1961 E.C. Totally Laqäw had about five *gasha* of lands in different *wärädas*.

⁶² BADOA/ No box no./ Gäzahäñ 42: Gäzahäñ Zäläqä to Bale High Court, *Mäskäräm* 8, 1955 E.C.; BHCA/ 12/55, "Bale High Court Official Minute and Decision," *Hidar* 10, 1958 E.C.

⁶³ Informants: Tibabu Abäbä, Ayälä Dänägätu.

⁶⁴ BAROA/ B 389/1-2: "Official Minute of Bale Government General," *Tahsas* 30, 1960 E.C.; Informants: Abdurahaman Sayd, Abba Jifar Tahiro, Mäkonnen Hassän.

⁶⁵ MIA/ B 2147/ 2137/ 3/ 1944: Peasants of Ganale to the Ministry of Interior, *Teqimt* 30, 1957 E.C.; BAROA/ B 389/1, Peasants of Dodola to Bale Governorate General, *Ginbot* 14, 1956 E.C.; The 1930 Proclamation had ordered the division of uncultivated extra lands among the four claimants, that is the *balabbat* or previous owner, the tenant on the main or extra land, *tänäqay balabbat* (evicted *balabbat*) and new land seeker. see Mahtämä-Sellase, *Zikrä Nagar*, pp. 119-121.

⁶⁶ "Imperial Majesty has Returned from His Visit to Bale," *Addis Zämän*, vol II (*Mägabit* 1, 1956 E.C.).

⁶⁷ MIA/ B 2147/ 2137/ 3/ 1944: Kifle Irgäto to His Imperial Majesty, *Hidar* 1, 1957 E.C.; MIA/ B 2147/ 2137/ 3/ 1944: Sälämon Gabrä-Maryam to Yilma Dheressa, *Hidar* 9, 1957 E.C.; MIA/ B 2147/ 2137/ 3/ 1944: Wäru Inqua-Sellase to Ganale *Awraja* Governorate, *Miyazia* 12, 1958 E.C.

⁶⁸ MIA/ B 2147/ 2137/ 3/ 1944: Warqu Inqua-Sellase to Ganale *Awraja* Governorate, *Miyazia* 12, 1958 E.C.

⁶⁹ MIA/ B 2147/ 2137/ 3/ 1944: Mamma Hussen and Abdulqadir Gänamo to the Ministry of Interior, *Sane* 8, 1958 E.C. These men were elected as members of the parliament from the *awrajas* of Fassil and Gannale. The first parliamentary election was held in 1957.

⁷⁰ MIA/ B 2147/ 2137/ 3/ 1944: Peoples of Ganale *Awraja* to the MLRA, *Ginbot* 4, 1959 E.C. For the detailed explanation of the petition see appendix three.

⁷¹ Literally, ... while the process of land measurement and allocation was proceeding, our holdings on which our property and houses, generally [our] wealth were established, property transmitted to us from our forefathers, is being taken in the name of measurement (*qiyas*) and given to the *baläwulätas*; or leased out to the *färänji* (foreigner, white men). [These gifts are made] together with our houses and we have as a result lost our livelihood, are being forced into exile on our own land... besides the absence of respect for the law and disregard for our rights, we are considered as criminals, and are being imprisoned MIA/ B 2147/ 2137/ 3/ 1944: Peoples of Dodola and Adaba to Bälätä Gäbrä-Tsadiq (MLRA), *Nahase* 30, 1959 E.C. See also, appendix four. Gebru has indicated that about 100 *gashas* of land was leased out to a Norwegian in a locality of Dinsho. See Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p.241, foot note number ten.

⁷² BAROA/ B 389/1: The MLRA to Bale Government General, *Mäskäräm* 26, 1960 E.C.; MIA/ B 2147/ 2137/ 3/ 1944: Seyum Särsä-Mädhen to Mängäsha Wäldä-Kidan (Governor of Ganale *Awraja*), *Hidar* 15, 1960 E.C.; BAROA/ B 389/1: Official Minute of the Investigating Committee, *Tahsas* 30, 1960 E.C.; BAROA/ B 389/1: Official Minute of Bale Governorate General Assembly, *Hamle* 30, 1961 E.C.; MIA/ B 2147/ 2137/ 3/ 1944: Fäto Aynage and Others to Bale Governorate General, *Tir* 14, 1960 E.C.

⁷³ "Notice," *Addis Zämän*, no 426 (*Mäskäräm* 21, 1962 E.C.), p. 3.

⁷⁴ BAROA/ B 389/1/2: Christian Grantees in Ganale *Awraja* to MLRA, *Tiqimt* 18, 1963 E.C.

⁷⁵ BAROA/ B 389/1-2: Muhammad-Dhekama Sheka and Others to the MLRA, *Hidar* 17, 1967 E.C.; BAROA/ B 389/ 1-2: B/General Girma Gäbrä-Amlak to Bale Governorate General *Bäjirond* Office, *Tahsas* 9, 1967 E.C. Similarly peasants of Goba, Ginnir and Gololcha had faced alienation of lands on the pretext of *terf* and damage of their properties by the new grantees. See, BAROA/ 28/ 1: Wäru Inqua-Sellase to Haylu Mäsäy, *Tiqimt* 14, 1956 E.C.; MIA/ B 2150/ 2137/ 1/ 1944: Awäl Muhammad and Fiqrä-

Sellase Täsa (Parliamentary representatives from Wabe *Awraja*) to Seyfa Taddasa, *Hidar* 10, 1963 E.C.

⁷⁶ Aberra Ketsela, "The Rebellion in Bale," pp.13-17; Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, pp.136-138. In Fassil, while the 38 Churches had possessed about 770 *gashas*, the 49 Mosques had no land granted to them. See, BAROA/ F19/ 14: Admasu Tariku (*Awraja* Governor) to Jagama Kello (*Indarase*), *Tiqimt* 28, 1965 E.C.

⁷⁷ Informants: Ibrahim Sayd, Yared Warqenah, Adam Shallo. Discussions on tenancy is found in the next chapter.

⁷⁸ Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, pp. 140-141.; Aberra, "The Rebellion in Bale, pp. 2-4.; BARO, "Pre-and Post Revolution, pp. 86-87.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*; BAROA/ W21/ 2: "The Condition of Stability in Wabe," *Säne* 10, 1956 E.C.

⁸⁰ *Addis Zämän*, II (*Magabit* 1, 1956 E.C.). The Emperor declared these during his visit to Bale in March 1964. But the orders were not put to effect.

⁸¹ Informants: Muhammad-Amin Shemo, Ibrahim Sayd. MIA/ B 2150/ 2137/ H-4/ 1944: Bale *Awraja* Governor to Ras Abäba Arägay, *Tiqimt* 13, 1945 E.C.

⁸² MIA/ BQ 2158/ 2137/ 2/ 1944: Ministry of the Interior to *Belata Ayälä Gabre* (*Indarase* to Harar), *Säne* 1, 1946 E.C.

⁸³ Informants: Muhammad-Amin Shemo, Ibrahim Sayd; MIA/ 2117/97: Ministry of the Interior to Bale Governorate General, no date.

⁸⁴ Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, pp. 143-145., Aberra, "The Rebellion in Bale," p. 11.; Waqo Gutu was a man with *qallu* and *balabbat* family background who deserted to Somalia in 1964 due to grievances he faced in Borana. see Jagama Kello, " Report to Army Headquarter," *Yakatit* 20, 1962 E.C. Found in the disposal of Jagama.

⁸⁵ BHCA/ M/ 64: Seyum Haylä-Mika'el to Bale High Court, *Mäskäräm* 24, 1959 E.C. Informants: Mamma Ebu, Fäqi Hassäno.

⁸⁶ BHCA/ M/ 64: Official Minute of Bale High Court, *Säne* 6, 1959 E.C.

⁸⁷ BHCA/ M/ 64: Imperial Supreme Court to Bale High Court, *Mäskäräm* 11, 1960 E.C.

⁸⁸ Informants: Getachaw Wäldä-Mikael, Fäqi Hassäno, Abba Jifar Tahiro, Jagama Kello. See also Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, pp.144-145; Aberra, "The Rebellion in Bale," p.11. Informants, however, implicated Warqu Inqua-Sellase for the murder of Wäldä-Mikael Bu'i who also was the Governor of Ganale *awraja*. It is said that Warqu ordered this because of their personal quarrel and suspicion of his sympathy with the rebels.

⁸⁹ Aberra, "The Rebellion in Bale," p. 22; Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p.145. Informants: Jagama Kello, Getachäw Wäldä-Mikael.

⁹⁰ Aberra, "The Rebellion in Bale," pp. 23-24; Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, pp. 147-148; Jagama Kella "Report to Army Headquarters, *Yäkatit* 20, 1962 E.C.; See also *Addis Zaman* "Leader of the Rebels Surrendered in Bale," *Addis Zaman*, *Mägabit* 1, 1962 E.C.

⁹¹ With the absence of enough sources the size of loses could not be told convincingly. For instance Gebru has estimated that some 54 men died from the government side against 871 from the rebels. See Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p.156. My own sources from the personal records of General Jagama Kello indicate that until, the year 1965/66 alone while the rebels had lost about 2264 lives, about 190 men were killed from government side. See Jagama Kello, "Memo" *Miyazia* 13, 1958 E.C. (found at the disposal of Jagama).

⁹² Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p.157; Aberra, "The Rebellion in Bale," p. 25; "The Emperor in Bale Governorate General," *Addis Zämän*, no 172 (*Hamle* 19, 1962 E.C.)

Chapter V

¹ On this argument see for instance, Markakis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, pp. 108-112; Pankhurst, *State and Land*, pp.174; Stahl, *Ethiopia: Political Contradiction*, pp. 45-50; John M.Cohen & Dov Weintraub, *Land and Peasants in Imperial Ethiopia: The Social Background to a Revolution* (Assen: Van Gorcum & Comp. B.V, 1975), p. 36.

² Pausewang, *Peasants, Land and Society*, pp. 46-47; Nigatu, "State and Land Grant System," p. 208; Bizuwork, "The Problem of Tenancy and Tenancy Bills," pp. 5-6.

³ Informants: Taffäsä Molla, Fäqi Hassäno.

⁴ *Ibid*; Makonnen Hassän, Haji Abadir.

⁵ Stahl argued that those peasants operating up to three hectares of lands were termed as poor while those with holding up to ten hectares were designated as middle peasants. See Stahl, *Ethiopia: Political Contradiction*, pp. 87-88. But one source from Sinana *Wäräda* indicates that peasants who possessed less than five hectares were designated as tenants. Sinana *Wäräda* Agricultural Development Office Archive (SWADOA)/ no box no./21: "Explanation on Shallo Peasant Association," 1968 E.C.

⁶ Informants: Käbbädä Amarä, Ayälä Dänägäṭu, Mamma Ebu.

⁷ Informants: Muhammad-Amin Shemo, Adäm Buse.

⁸ BADOA/ 28/1, Petitions by Peasants of Kärmmisa to Taddäsä Nägäsh (Governor), *Hidar* 2,1946 E.C.; BADOA/ 28/ 1: Peasants of Kärmmisa to Harar Governorate General Office, *Hidar* 5,1946 E.C. See also appendix five.

⁹ In English, [about half of the] land which has been transmitted to us from our forefathers was taken from us and enclosed as part of the town [of Goba in 1949 E.C.] without compensation. Moreover as of 1955 E.C [1963] the Office of the treasury of Goba district has refused to receive taxes on the remaining half under different pretexts and [has thus] evicted us from or rest to give to others. BADOA 28/1, Aman Hussen and Others to His Imperial Majesty, *Tiqimt* 12,1949 E.C.; BADOA 28/1, Hussen Dorimo and Eight Men to the *Indärase* of Bale, *Tiqimt* 5, 1956 E.C.

¹⁰ BADOA 28/1, Warqu Inqua-Sellase to Haylu Masay (Governor of Fasil), *Tiqimt* 14,1956 E.C.

¹¹ See, pp. 61 and 71.

¹² Informants: Adäm Shallo, Muhammad Tena, Ibrahim Säyd; See also SWCA/ 171/ 53: From Säyd Ali and Muhammad - Hussen Dinqa to Bale *Awraja* Governorate, *Hidar* 4,1944 E.C.; SWCA/ 78/ 50: Kanfalcha Arabo to Bale *Awraja* Governorate Court, *Tiqimt* 27,1950 E.C.

¹³ BHCA/ 12/ Foge 57: Foge Dibbe to Dodola *Warada* court, *Tahsas* 22,1957 E.C. Similarly Kadir Kimo was dispossessed in Sinana on this basis. See SWCA 134/61: Kadir Kimo to Sinana *Wäräda* Court, *Miyazia* 30,1961 E.C. Buta had inherited the title of *aläqemät* from his father.

¹⁴ Tekalign, "A City and Its Hinterlands ...," pp. 264-265.

¹⁵ In English, the difference between a *minzir* and a tenant was like the difference between curd and water. A *minzir* exceeds a tenant only because he was recognized as a member of the land-owning lineage. Informant: Adäm Shallo.

¹⁶ MOA, *Results From Surveys...*, p. 266. But a survey conducted by the same Ministry in 1974 put the size at 27 percent. See, MOA, *Agricultural Sample Survey of 1974/75*, Vol.III (Addis Ababa, 1975), p. 174.

¹⁷ Informants, Sänbätä Dubbi, Waqäyyo Kotoshe, Taddäsä Abdi. The 1984 Central Statistical Office report shows that more than 30,000 peasants had entered Bale in the few decades before 1974 from Shoa and Arssi; See CSO, *Population and Housing Census...*, p. 230.

¹⁸ Blackhurst, "Adopting an Ambiguous Position," p. 248.

¹⁹ Informant: Taffäsä Molla. He says that although he had inherited about two *gashas* from his father, an early *naftañña* killed by the Italians, the rest he bought from local peasants.

²⁰ Informant: Adäm Buse, Taffäsä Molla, Ibrahim Tola; BARO, "Pre-and-Post Revolution..." p. 79.

²¹ Informants: Adäm Buse, Taffäsä Molla; MOA, *Results from Surveys...*, p. 268; Lawrence and Mann must have been wrong when they stated that the majority of tenants in Bale paid rent at the rate of one-third of the crop: see, Lawrence and Mann, "FAO Land Policy Project," p. 332. Based on information gathered from local sources, I found the *yäkuto* system to be the most common rental form.

²² Cohen and Weintraub for instance, argue that under the influence of agricultural development the arrangement shifted from *irbo* to *siso* and then to *Yäkuto*. See, Cohen and Weintraub, *Land and Peasants in Imperial Ethiopia*, p. 53.

²³ "Proclamation No.165 of 1960," *Nägarit Gazeta* No.2 (1960).

²⁴ "Income Tax (Amendment) Proclamation," *Nägarit Gazeta*, No. 4(1967). See also Taye Gulilat, "The Tax in Lieu of Tithe and the New Agricultural Income Tax: A Preliminary Evaluation," *Seminar Proceedings on Agrarian Reform*, by MLRA (Addis Ababa, 1970), pp. 110-117.

- ²⁵ SWCA/ 14/69: Nägash Wäru (Governor) to Sinana *Wäräda* Treasury Office, *Hamle* 15,1963 E.C. See also, MLRA, *Report on Land Tenure Survey of Bale...*, p. 26; SWCA/ 14/69: Sinana *Wäräda* Court to Jeylan Hussen (*balabbat* of Sanbitu), *Hamle* 25,1965 E.C.
- ²⁶ SWCA/ 14/69: Täshomä Bälätä (Secretary of the *Wäräda*) to *Wäräda* Treasury Office and the Parish Office, *Tiqimt* 15, 1964 E.C. In this year about twenty-five peasants were brought to court in Sinana for failure to pay *asrat*.
- ²⁷ MIA/ 1767/ 12754: Bale Governorate General to the Ministry of Land Reform and Administration, *Mäskäräm* 15,1962 E.C; MLRA, *Report on Land Tenure Survey of Bale...*,p.23.
- ²⁸ MLRA, *Report on Land Tenure Survey of Bale...*, p. 23.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19. There were about 11,992 *gashas* of government lands in the province.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- ³¹ Informants: Fäqi Hassäno, Wärqenah Bälay. See also, SWCA/ 246/55: *Shambäl Wäldäyes Täsämma* to Fassil *Awraja* Court, *Nahase* 21,1955 E.C.
- ³² Informant: Muhammad - Hussen Shemo.
- ³³ Informant: Abäbä Wäldäyes. This informant had his own land in Burqitu village.
- ³⁴ Informants: Fäqi Hassäno, Adäm Shallo, Muhammad-Hussen Shemo.
- ³⁵ Lawrence, "FAO Land Policy Project," pp. 310-311; Cohen and Weintraub, *Land and Peasants in Imperial Ethiopia*, p.55.
- ³⁶ Informants: Muhammad-Amin Shemo, Taffäsä Molla.
- ³⁷ BAROA/ 714/19: "Report on Activities and Problems Encountered in 1964 E.C.," *Mäskäräm* 1965 E.C. Gebru States that such farm lands amounted to about 4000 hectares. See, Gebru, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, p. 157.
- ³⁸ Informants: Taffäsa Molla, Ibrahim sayd, Muhammad - Amin Shemo.
- ³⁹ Dafo Tura, "Historical Study...", p. 3.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*; Sälämon Haylä-Mariyam
- ⁴¹ Informants: Taffäsa Molla, Yared wärqenäh, Ibrahim Tola, Fäqi Hassäno. For further explanation on the processes involved in the bureaucracy see also Nigatu, "State and Land Grant System," pp. 213-214; Cohen and Weintraub, *Land and Peasants in Imperial Ethiopia*. pp. 60-61.

⁴² "Rest Land Register," found in Dodola Agricultural Development Office, no date.

⁴³ Informants: Fäqi Hasāno and Adām Shallo.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

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Dodola *Wäräda* Agricultural Development Office Archive (DWADOA), Dodola:

52/A.

Dodola *Wäräda* Court Archive (DWCA), Dodola:

11/L6.

Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES), Addis Ababa:

FO371/18030.

Sinana *Wäräda* Agricultural Development Office Archive (SWADOA), Robe:

n.b.no./21.

Sinana *Wäräda* Court Archive (SWCA), Robe:

21/H60; 64/13; 134/61; 181/ B63; 246/W55.

Ministry of Interior Archive (MIA)

A/1277/1946; A/1767/ 12754; A/1767/ 21797; A/2077/ 4/1946;
A/2077/ MT11/1946; A2237/ 5/ 1946; A/2256/ M5; B2147/ 2137/ 3/1944;

B/2150/ 2137/ 1/1944;B2150/ 2137/H-4/1944;BQ 2158/ 2137/ 1/1944;
BQ 2158/ 2137/ 2/1944; BQ 2158/2137/ 14/1965; BQ2158/ 2137/ 15/1944;
BQ 2158/ 2137/ 18/1944; B 2167/ 453/ 3; B 2167/ 2137/ 8/1944;
BQ 2167/ 2137/11/1944.

List of Oral Informants

Name of Informant	Age	Date of Interview	Place of Interview	Remark
<i>Ato</i> Abäbä Wäldä-Tsadiq	78	29/6/2000	Goba	He was a lawyer. Had a land grant by the state.
<i>Grazmach</i> Abärra Wärqu	65	20/5/1999	Addis Ababa	Worked as a governor in three <i>wärädas</i> during the Imperial era. Now lives in Addis Ababa.
<i>Abba</i> Jifar Tahiro	Ca.94	7/12/1999	Dodola	He was a well known landlord in Dodola. Despite his old age he has a good memory of the early history of the Oromo and the land tenure patterns.
<i>Haji</i> Abdir Hussen	70	3/6/2000	Robe	He was a landlord in Sinana Had a fairly good memory on the pre-conquest history of the Oromo and the land regime that was introduced into highland Bale.
<i>Obbo</i> Abdi Usman	82	20/5/2000	Robe	Former peasant and now he is a merchant in Robe.
<i>Haji</i> Abdurahman Sayid	63	14/7/2000	Dodola	He had his own land worked by tenants. And he is a lawyer as of 1965.
<i>Haji</i> Adäm Buse	Ca.82	4/6/2000	Robe	He was a land lord in Sinana. Very important oral informant.
<i>Obbo</i> Adäm Shallo	53	2/6/2000	Robe	Former tenant. He gives a good account on landlord tenant relationships.
<i>Shaläqa</i> Aläme Kättäräw	Ca.91	5/5/2000	Jarra	Former <i>näch-läbash</i> . Had been granted three <i>gashas</i> of land. He is a knowledgeable informant of the conquest of Bale and the land grant orders.

Name of Informant	Date of A Interview	Place of Interview	Remark
<i>Haji Alo Ahmäd</i>	6 30/5/1999 2	Addis Ababa	A landowner who participated in the Bale peasant revolt. He is presently a member of the Parliament.
<i>Haji Aman Gäsho</i>	7 2/5/2000 6	Jarra	An <i>aläqa</i> on land. He is a notable oral informant.
<i>Mammire Ayäla Dänägätu</i>	9 28/6/2000 5	Goba	Member of the early <i>näftänäs</i> and a priest in Goba. Despite his old age he has a good memory on church lands.
<i>Ato Bäqqälä Abaynääh</i>	7 4/12/1999 2	Dodola	He was a lawyer in Dodola.
<i>Ato Bäqqälä Wäldäyes</i>	8 16/7/2000 7	Dodola	He worked on different posts in Dodola <i>wäräda</i> administrative office and Bale provincial administration. He has a good knowledge of the land holding patterns.
<i>Haji Fäqi Hassäno</i>	5 16/6/2000 8	Goba	He was an employee in the provincial finance office. Had participated in the 1963 land measurement. He is a notable oral informant on the history of the region, land measurement and taxation.
<i>Obbo Gätachäw Wäldä- Mikael</i>	7 17/7/2000 5	Goba	Member of the Chamber of Deputies in the old Parliament for eight years. He is a grand son of the <i>balabbat</i> of Gannale.
<i>Haji Hassän Saddo</i>	6 2/7/2000 7	Goba	He is a member of the <i>bälbäla</i> of Abarossa. A well-known informant on the confrontation with <i>Däjazmach</i> Asfaw and the fate of his <i>bälbäla</i> .

Name of Informant	Age	Date of Interview	Place of Interview	Remark
<i>Obbo</i> Haylu Fäye	53	27/5/2000	Robe	He came to Bale from Shoa with his parents in search of land. After working on tenancy basis in the 1950s his father bought a land.
<i>Haji</i> Hussen Näsro	63	20/11/1999	Addis Ababa	He was <i>rest aläqa</i> in Sinana. Gives a good account on <i>aläqa-Minzir</i> relationships.
<i>Obbo</i> Ibrahim Säyid	55	14/1/2000	Dodola	A former tenant in Dodola.
<i>Obbo</i> Ibrahim Tola	48	2/12/1999	Dodola	Though had a small plot of his own he worked partly as a tenant.
<i>General</i> Jagama Kello	81	2/5/1999 9/5/1999	Addis Ababa	He was a commandor of the Fourth Army Division that quelled the Bale peasant uprising in the 1960s. He was later appointed as an <i>Indärasç</i> of the province.
<i>Ato</i> Käbbädä Amarä	72	28/6/2000	Goba	A land-owner and a lawyer in Goba.
<i>Obbo</i> Mäkonnen Hassän	67	3/12/1999	Dodola	He worked as a secretary in different <i>wärädas</i> during the Imperial era; had lands granted to him.
<i>Haji</i> Mama Ebu	80	2/7/2000	Goba	Is a descendant of the survivals from <i>Däjjach</i> Asfaw's massacre. He is a well-known oral historian on Oromo and the land regime of the Imperial period.
<i>Ato</i> Mendaye Täsämma	56	3/6/200	Robe	Was a head of Sinana <i>wäräda</i> finance office. Has a good knowledge on the land-measurment, taxation and tenancy.

Name of Informant	Age	Date of Interview	Place of Interview	Remark
<i>Qänazmach</i> Muhammad Amin Shemo	73	20&25/5/ 2000	Robe	He was a <i>balabbat</i> of Walashe. And a lawyer in Sinana. A live historian on land issue by himself.
<i>Haji</i> Muhammad- Hussen Shemo	Ca.69	3/6/2000	Robe	A land-owner in Sinana. Has a good knowledge on the history of land-ownership in the <i>wäräda</i> .
<i>Obbo</i> Muhammad Tena	65	8/12/1999	Dodola	A former peasant and now engaged in trade.
<i>Ato</i> Sälämon Haylä- Mariyam	48	1&6/12/1999	Dodola	He was once the head of Gannale <i>awraja</i> Agricultural Development Office.
<i>Obbo</i> Sänbata Dubbi	Ca.83	27/5/2000	Robe	An Oromo from Shoa who bought a land. Has fairly a good memory.
<i>Ato</i> Seyum Wäldä- Mikael	63	4/6/2000	Robe	A land-owner and uncle of Käbädä Råde, the prominent landlord in Sinana.
<i>Haji</i> Shämsi Abdulle	Ca.85	22/5/2000	Robe	A former <i>buraqa</i> in Sinana. In spite of his old age he has a good memory of the landholding patterns.
<i>Qänazmach</i> Taddäsä Abdi	75	19/6/2000	Goba	He was a secretary in Gannale <i>awraja</i> Administrative Office and latter a <i>wäräda</i> Governor of Kokosa during the Imperial era. Now lives on pension.
<i>Ato</i> Taffäsä Molla	87	4/7/2000	Robe	He was a landlord in Sinana. Had many tenant farmers.
<i>Ato</i> Tägän Ayälä	68	26/5/2000	Robe	A landowner in Sinana. Provided me with his personal and family documents.

Name of Informant	Age	Date of Interview	Place of Interview	Remark
<i>Mämmire</i> Täklu Wärqnäh	81	8/12/1999	Dodola	A priest who had his own land. Gives a good account of the administration.
<i>Alaqa</i> Tibäbu Abäbä	65	3/6/2000	Robe	He is a priest at Robe
<i>Obbo</i> Waqayo Kotoshe	72	22/5/2000	Robe	A former tenant who also had a small plot of land.
<i>Mäto-Aläqa</i> Wärqnäh Bäläy	78	19/6/2000	Goba	He was a member of the early soldiers. Had provided a good information on the <i>gabbar</i> system and Italian period.
<i>Ato</i> Yared Wärqnäh	70	10/12/2000	Dodola	Worked as a <i>wäräda</i> governor during the Imperial era. Had lands granted to him.

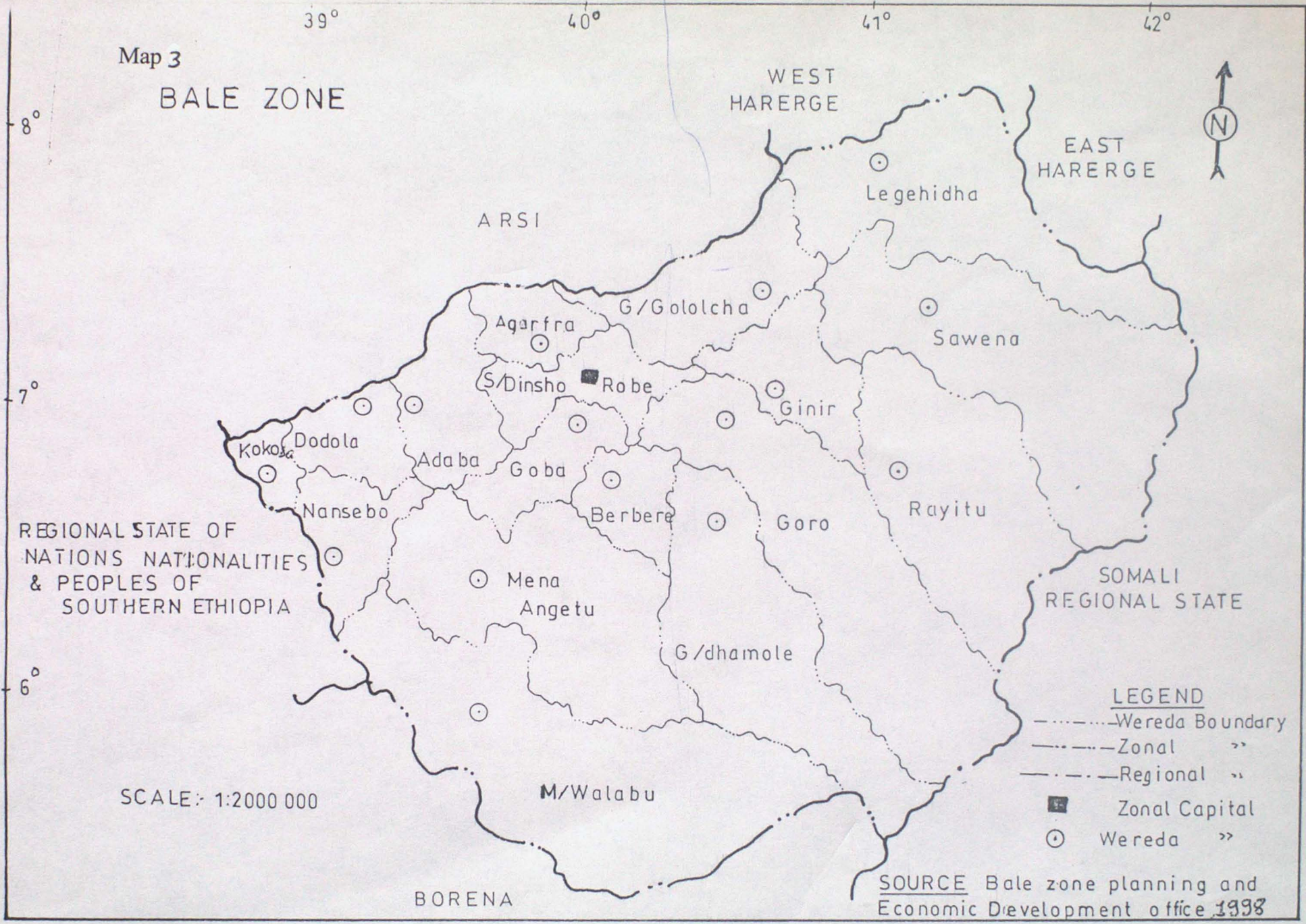
Glossary *

- Aläqa-* A representative of a group of people who pay taxes together on a pieces of land, a person in whose name land tax was paid; echnically regarded as owner of the land by the state. Head of a church, a learned priest.
- Angafa-* Genealogically elder; the preceding one.
- Asrat-* One-tenth of harvest paid to the state in the form of produce tax; later replaced by the agricultural income tax.
- Bädda-* Highland; upland.
- Bäddä-däré-* Zone between highland and lowland, midland.
- Bähira-* Hereditary local official below the *Abba Bokku* among the Oromo.
- Balabbat-* Literally, "one who has a father", indigenous; more commonly, a member of the local community who exercised authority under the imperial system; *balabbats* provided the link between local communities & government bureaucracy.
- Bala-Bufäta-* Laying leaves, symbolic leaves of occupation of land.
- Bälbäla-* Door; minimal lineage group; line of descent through *gossa*.
- Balambaras-* Head of an *amba*; a low level administrative title.
- Birr-* Official Ethiopian currency.
- Chisäña-* Tenant or landowner who pays tax or tribute to someone other than the state because his ownership rights were considered to be secondary.
- Däjjazmach-* Commander of the gate, a politico-military title below *Ras*.
- Dhala-* Inheritance, gift; levirate-marriage system of inheriting one's brother's wife.
- Ekul-Arash-* Sharecropper, who splits the harvest in half with the landowner.
- Endärase-* "In my place", viceroy or local representative of a higher authority.
- Fitawrari-* Commander of the vanguard, a title below *Dajjazmach*.
- Gäbbar-* Taxpayer; land on which tax was paid to the state in labour and/or in kind.
- Gada-* An age-grade socio-political system of the Oromo.
- Gämmoji-* Lowland.

* Source - Tekalign Wolde Mariam, "A City and its Hinterlands: The Political Economy of Land Tenure, Agriculture and Food Supply for Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 1887-1974." Ph.D dissertation, Boston University, 1995; Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, 1991; and my own field work.

<i>Gasha-</i>	Shield; a soldier, unit of land measurement usually about 40 hectares.
<i>Geber-</i>	Land tax; also called <i>Fire-geber</i> .
<i>Gebrätäl-</i>	Land taken over by the state for failure to pay tax.
<i>Gossa-</i>	Sort or kind; lineage group, breed, genus, kind of species.
<i>Grazmach-</i>	Commander of the left, a politico-military title above <i>Balambaras</i> .
<i>Halläña-</i>	Freehold, land for which rent is not paid.
<i>Hudad-</i>	Land set aside for the supply of the royal court worked by landowning peasants; labour rendered on such land.
<i>Läm-</i>	Fully developed, well-cultivated or fertile land.
<i>Läm-Täf-</i>	Partially developed, partially cultivated or semi-fertile land.
<i>Madärya-</i>	Land temporarily held in return for service to the state.
<i>Mälkäña-</i>	Official appointed by the state as governor (administrator) with varying degrees & types of rights over lands and incomes from his governorship. Official given a number of <i>gabbars</i> .
<i>Meddäba-</i>	Allocation, division.
<i>Menzer-</i>	Individuals who share the tax burdens of land among themselves.
<i>Mesläne-</i>	Royal official in charge of royal farms & tax collection; later district governor; sometime equivalent to district.
<i>Näch-läbash-</i>	"Those who wear white"; militia, civil defense forces, commanded by local nobles; rural auxiliary police force.
<i>Näftäña-</i>	From <i>naft</i> ; 'rifle', name given to Emperor Menilek's warriors of northern origin, who later settled in the south.
<i>Qälad-</i>	A divise for the measurement of land; sometimes used interchangeably with <i>gasha-maret</i> to conquered land that was subsequently appointed by the state.
<i>Qäñazmach-</i>	Commander of the right, a politico-military title above <i>Grazmach</i> .
<i>Quter-Gäbbar-</i>	peasantry who provided labour services & paid tribute to individual soldiers, priests or officials rather than directly to the state.
<i>Rest-</i>	Permanently held land; heritable property (in some cases conditional).
<i>Säbbät-märi-</i>	An additional money paid to co-heirs or relatives of a land seller during a sale of land.
<i>Sämon-</i>	Land under the control of the Church or land over which the Church exercised taxation rights.

- Shaläqa-* Local representative of a higher authority, entrusted with the collection of tribute in recent times equivalent to the army rank of a major.
- Siso-* Literally, "one-third;" land left to the *balabbat* by the state upon land measurement, also called *Ya-balabbat siso*; a share-cropping arrangement in which the landowner obtains a third of the harvest.
- Täf-* Undeveloped, uncultivated or poor land
- Terf-* Land said to be "extra", held in excess of the standard *gasha* measurement worked out for each region.
- Wakil-* Representative; local agent with power of attorney; also called *wakil-nagarafaj*.
- Wälläd-* Interest.
- Wälläd-Aged-* A system of borrowing money temporarily.
- Wurs-* Inheritance, gift, confiscation.



NOTE The delineation of Zonal and Regional Boundaries shown on this Map must not be considered Authoritative.

why not? explain.

Appendix 1

Names of *Balabbats* and Areas of Control (1944)

No.	<i>Balabbat</i> Name	<i>Meslānē</i> (District)	<i>Kabalē</i> /Locality
1.	<i>Grazmach</i> Fāto Dānboba	Goba <i>Meslānē</i>	Kārmamida (Goba)
2.	<i>Grazmach</i> Abubākār Dārga	" "	Shēdām
3.	<i>Balambaras</i> Tilmo Ṭinniqa	" "	Kadu
4.	" Waqo Koro	" "	Fasila
5.	" Cinqisso Danboba	" "	Aranna
6.	<i>Obbo</i> Isu Subi	" "	Wacho
7.	<i>Balambaras</i> Hasu Saddo	" "	Ellasa
8.	<i>Fitawrari</i> Shēmo Kimo	" "	Walashē
9.	<i>Qāññāzmach</i> Kadir Hamu	" "	Dawadina
10.	<i>Grazmach</i> Bonsho Aynagē	" "	Garora
11.	<i>Obbo</i> Husen Shiko	" "	Oborra
12.	" Fato Shonka	" "	Sinana
13.	" Alāmma Kādu	" "	Kabira
14.	" Kābir-Gālātu Mammē	" "	Hamida
15.	" Shāmsi Asaba	Ginnir <i>Meslānē</i>	Sābro
16.	" Abdurrahaman Argo	" "	Gololcha
17.	" Qasim Turkē	" "	Ēbsana
18.	" Muhammad Abba Fato	" "	Gidda
19.	" Qasim Saydo	" "	Bālē
20.	" Aliy Butta	" "	Ilanni
21.	" Kābir Tura	" "	Jawwi
22.	" Aliy Jaldo	" "	Kajawa
23.	" Hussēn Abba-Aliy	" "	Sura
24.	" Abdi Shātē	" "	Awṭu
25.	<i>Grazmach</i> Ēlēmo Jilo	" "	Abdulla
26.	<i>Obbo</i> Adām Ēlēmo	" "	Karara
27.	" Umār Jilo	" "	Fējja
28.	<i>Grazmach</i> Hussēn Ali	" "	Bēltu
29.	<i>Obbo</i> Nuri Qallichā	Ginnir <i>Meslānē</i>	Wachalē
30.	" Aliy Boranqa	" "	Bullalla
31.	<i>Qāññāzmach</i> Hussēn Abdurro	Agarfa <i>Meslānē</i>	Agarfa
32.	<i>Grazmach</i> Burqa Batiro	" "	Lajjo
33.	<i>Fitawrari</i> Bilu Lolē	" "	Saymanna
34.	<i>Balambaras</i> Dānnabo Cirri	" "	Qasso
35.	" Usman Abba-Saliha	" "	Sambitu
36.	<i>Obbo</i> Muhammad - Siraj Mahammād	" "	Ali
37.	<i>Grazmach</i> Abdulqadir Aliy	" "	Fasasa

38.	<i>Obbo</i> Kabir Hussēn Kali	" "	Shafila
39.	<i>Balambaras</i> Kādē Hubba	" "	Koloba
40.	" Sani Mammē	" "	Hambēntu
41.	<i>Grazmach</i> Waqo Roba	Goro <i>Meslānē</i>	Māgalo
42.	" Muhammad Yubē	" "	Dhabayē
43.	<i>Balambaras</i> Lāta Gārbi	" "	Kajawa
44.	<i>Grazmach</i> Kikko Intāle	" "	Dhamolē
45.	<i>Grazmach</i> Ṭahir Dubē	" "	Awaṭu
46.	<i>Obbo</i> Yuse Dhayu	" "	Awṭu
47.	" Adām Gada	" "	Awaṭu Raya
48.	<i>Grazmach</i> Mole Oga	" "	Dawē
49.	<i>Obbo</i> Intale Jilo	" "	Garjēda
50.	<i>Ugaz</i> Adām Nur	" "	Gurra
51.	<i>Fitawrari</i> Nuh Dadhi	" "	Raytu
52.	<i>Obbo</i> Tāmbido Roba	" "	Raytu Raya
53.	<i>Fitawrari</i> Wāldā-Mikael Bu'i	Dodola <i>Meslānē</i>	Gadab
54.	<i>Grazmach</i> Gābrā-Sellasē Cakkē	Dallo <i>Meslānē</i>	Dallo

Source: Ministry of Interior Archive, Bale 2150/ 2137/ H-4/ 1944: From Bale *Wārāda* Governorate to the Ministry of Interior, *Tahsas* 26, 1937 E.C.

Note: Many of these *balabbats* were second generation *balabbats* who inherited this position from their fathers who were directly appointed by the Shoans at their arrival.

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12/11

Abdulkadir



Appendix 2

It indicates the pre-1935 landholding feature and the request by Bale *Wäräda* governor for land measurement in the postwar period. *Tahsas* 1937 E.C (December 1944).

Source: Ministry of Interior Archive. B 2150/2137/H-4/1944.

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned declare that this thesis is my work and that all sources of material used have been duly acknowledged.

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Date of submission: July

