

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT IN  
MÄTÄKÄL, NORTHWESTERN  
ETHIOPIA, 1880s to 1990s**

**BY  
AYENEW FENTA ALEM**

**ADVISOR  
DR. BELETE BIZUNEH**

**JUNE 2019  
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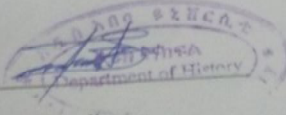
This is to certify that the dissertation prepared by Ayenew Fenta Alem, entitled: "Society and Environment in Metekel, Northwestern Ethiopia, 1880s-1990s" submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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# **ABSTRACT**

## **SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT IN MÄTÄKÄL, NORTHWESTERN ETHIOPIA, 1880S TO 1990S**

Ayenew Fenta,  
Addis Ababa University, 2019

This dissertation is an environmental history of Mätäkäl, a region located along Ethiopia's northwest, from the late 1880s to the early 1990s. The late 1880s forms an important watershed in the environmental history of Mätäkäl since it witnessed a major transformation in the demographic structure and environmental features of the region due to the conjuncture of a major cattle epizootic, locust invasion and failure of the rains. These ecological shocks were played out against the backdrop of major political disturbances and local and regional and cross-border warfare that deepened the vulnerability of the population to these disasters. The early 1990s, on the other hand, marked the end of a decade of intensive projects of social and ecological engineering initiated by the Derg socialist government that primarily consisted of the resettlement of tens of thousands of agrarian populations from the southern and northern highlands in the lowlands of Mätäkäl as well as its large-scale socialist agrarian projects that depended on the operation of large state farms. The dissertation demonstrates that in the decades since the end of the Great Famine in 1892 or so the populations of the region reconstituted the livestock and farming economy of the region through trading and raiding. On the other hand, the populations of lowland Matakäl and especially the Gumuz and their environment suffered as a result of the slave raids conducted against them to acquire agricultural labor for the highlands of northern Ethiopia. Over the same period, the wildlife sector also witnessed depletion in

consequence of its integration into the global trade in ivory and other wildlife resources and the transformation of the technology of hunting through the easier and widespread acquisition of modern rifles. During the post-1940s period the tempo of environmental change accelerated as a result of the expansion of plow agriculture in the forest zone where livestock herding was extensively practiced as well as in the lowlands which had been the site of mostly shifting agriculture based on the hoe. The dissertation argues that while in the pre-revolution period the major agents of environmental change in Mätäkäl were self-sponsored settlers who were encouraged by local officials to settle in the region, during the post-revolution period the key actors of environmental change were the state and the peasants it settled in the region under the large scale resettlement projects of the Derg government.

**Keywords:** Environment, Society, Disease, Hunting, Agriculture, Resettlement

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During my arduous yet memorable field work in Mätäkäl, my youngest brother Tsegaye and youngest sister Zewdinesh Fenta hosted me in Chagni town covering all expenses.

Particularly, my sister's husband, Kassahun, deserves special mention for his accompany during the course of my wandering in search of knowledgeable informants from different districts of Mätäkäl. He was one of my companions during my travel from one district to another. My sister washed my clothes every return from districts after dusty and long journey in a burning hot environment.

Above all, I am grateful to my family, my wife Yeneytu Dagnaw and my kids Samrawit, Samuel, Amanuel, and Chernet Ayenew who have endured the slow and sometimes frustrating process of writing this dissertation. I am particularly indebted to my wife for her patience and support even when she was hard-pressed by nursing our kids besides her job. I left the whole responsibility of caring the kids to her. My kids were forced to endure the past six years without due affection and care expected from a father. Even I could not get spare time to visit my aged parents, my mom Yesi-Hareg Berihun and my dad, Fenta Alem. I am also grateful to my brother Anteneh and sister Workinesh Fenta for their support throughout my educational life and for caring to our aged parents.

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## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

CDC---- Center for Disease Control

DMUAC---Debre Markos University Archive Center

EPRA---- Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Army

EPRDF—Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front

EPRP-----Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Party

F.O. -----Foreign Office

FAO----- Food and Agriculture Organization

IBAH----Inter-African Bureau of Animal Health

IDA -----International Development Association

JP15 -----Joint Campaign against Rinderpest

KCTE---- Kotebe College of Teachers' Education

MES-----Malaria Eradication Service

MoA-----Ministry of Agriculture

NALA ---National Archive and Library Agency

NHDN-----National Health Development Network

NOCMVD----National Organization for the Control of Malaria and Other Vector-Borne Diseases

PMAC--Provisional Military Administrative Council

Q.H. S. -----Qädämawi Haile Sillassie

RRC-----Relief and Rehabilitation Commission

SA -----Settlement Authority

T.C.A---- United States Technical Administration (Point Four)

USAID -----United States Agency for International Development

WHO-----World Health Organization

WPE -----Workers Party of Ethiopia

# **Keys to the Transliteration System**

## **(Institute of Ethiopian Studies System)**

I have used the following IES transliteration system

I. The Seven Sounds of the Ethiopic alphabet are represented as follows

በ = Bă

ቡ = Bu

ቢ = Bi

ባ = Ba

ቤ = Bé

ብ = Be

ቦ = Bo

II. Palatalized sounds are represented as follows

ቫ = Š

ቫ̣ = Č

ቫ̣̣ = ě

ገፍ = Zh

ገፍ̣ = J

III. Glottalized sounds are represented as follows

ቀ = q

ጠ = ʈ

ጠጠ = Ch

ፀ = ʃ

ጸ = p

## Introduction

This study is an environmental history of Mätäkäl a region located in northwestern Ethiopia. It is informed by perspectives that explore human and natural agents like disease and different forms of human activities as actors in bringing about environmental change. Environment history deals with the mutual relationship between man and nature. Its major goal is to deepen our understanding of how humans have been affected by the natural environment through time and conversely, how human beings affect the natural environment. It studies the interactions that societies in the past had with the non-human world.<sup>1</sup>

Change is an inevitable phenomenon in human societies and in the world of nature, and in the interaction between the two. Environmental historians study ecological processes to understand the course of human-environment interaction. Human beings have made major changes to their environments and had to adapt themselves to these changes. Thus, environmental history examines the mutual effects of man and nature, and the actions of human beings that affect the “web of connections with non-human organisms and entities.”<sup>2</sup> It tries to understand how the natural world organized and functioned in the past, how man interacted with the natural world during the course of his social and economic

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<sup>1</sup> Donald Worster, *The Wealth of Nature: Environmental History and Ecological Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 49; J. R. McNeill and Erin Stewart Mauldin, eds., *A Companion to Global Environmental History* (London: Willy-Blackwell publishing Ltd., 2012), pp. XVI—XVI.

<sup>2</sup> J. Donald Hughes, *An Environmental History of the World: Human Kind's Changing role in the Community of life, Second edition* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2009), pp. 1—4; See also Donald Worster, ed., *The End of the Earth: Perspectives on Modern Environmental History* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 5-6

life, and the role of human perception in the transformation of it.<sup>3</sup> Not only human agency brings transformation in the natural environment but also natural events like disease, drought, and fire can drastically change the physical environment. Plant disease, drought, and fire have the potential to destroy forests of a region. Climate change can also result in the transformation in landscapes.<sup>4</sup>

The objective of this study is to investigate the contours of environmental change and the agents behind this change in Mätäkäl from the 1880s to 1990s. I took the 1880s as benchmark to start the environmental study in Mätäkäl because it was during this period that Ethiopia faced severe environmental disaster that lasted from 1888 to 1892. This disaster resulted in transformations in social and economic life of the people as well as in the physical environment. The 1990s, on the otherhand, saw the end of socialist experiment under the Därg and the collapse the planned resettlement projects that had such an important impact on the environment of Mätäkäl. I attempted to locate the context for environmental transformation of the region from a largely forestland populated by diverse wild-animals to vast agricultural and settlement lands during this study period.

The few studies on Mätäkäl have focused on political, ethno-cultural, settlement and resettlement studies. The studies that focus upon political and anthropological aspects of the region have attempted to show the political and cultural expansions of the Christian kingdom to the region. The gradual expansion of plow agriculture in Mätäkäl was one of the manifestations of these political and cultural expansions to the region. One of these

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<sup>3</sup> T.C. Smout, *Exploring Environmental History: Selected Essays* (Great Britain: Edinburgh University Press Ltd.,2009), p.4.

<sup>4</sup> William Cronon, *Changes in the land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003). P. 11.

scholars, Tsega Endalew, studied ethnic interaction in Mätäkäl and the process of incorporation of the region by the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia. He stated that the region is represented by the four Ethiopian language families (Semitic, Cushitic, Omotic and Nilo-Saharan). Gumuz belongs to Nilo-Saharan, Shinasha to Omotic, Agaw, Oromo, (Hadya and Kambata after 1985/6 settlement) belong to Cushitic, and Amhara to Semitic language families. Thus, the composition of these language families in the region marked 'Ethiopia in Miniature' meaning many ethnic groups of Ethiopia are represented in the region. Gumuz were the original inhabitants in the region followed by the Agaw, Shinasha, Oromo and Amhara respectively. They occupied extensive lowland territory in Mätäkäl straddling borders of Sudan from Metema to Didessa valley in Wellega.<sup>5</sup> Though Tsega investigated social and political aspects of the region, he did not give emphasis to economic and cultural systems of Gumuz communities and their ties to natural environment. The natural environment itself has shaped socio-economic life and settlement patterns of the Gumuz community. His analysis focused on ethnic identity formation, early attempts of Anglo-Egyptian governors to expand to the region from Sudan (Funj Kingdom), the process of incorporation of the region by the Ethiopian state, and center-periphery relations, and conflict and conflict resolution mechanisms of peripheral society. However, Tsega's study that shows us the expansion of Christian Kingdom to Mätäkäl implicitly tells us the expansion of highland traditions like plow agriculture to the region which was one of the factors of environmental change in Mätäkäl.

Abdussamad H.Ahmed also dedicated a chapter in his dissertation to Gumuz land economic history and the fate of Gumuz community under the Ethiopian State since the

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<sup>5</sup> Tsega Endalew, *Inter-Ethnic Relations on a Frontier: Mätäkäl (Ethiopia), 1898—1991*(Harassowitz Verlag-wiesbaden, 2006), p.15.

medieval period. Rich natural resources of the Mätäkäl region attracted the Christian highlanders of the Ethiopian State since medieval period. However, hostile environmental condition for highlanders inhibited them from directly exploiting the resources of the region. Ethiopian state agents used the neighboring Agaws as intermediaries to extract the rich resources of Mätäkäl. The Gumuz community was targeted by the military class and the nobility of the northwestern highlands as sources of slaves. Raiding for slaves severely affected the life of Gumuz society in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Gojjam provincial ruling class directly conquered the region since 1898. Except Gubba region of Mätäkäl, the remaining Gumuz territories particularly those to the east of the Beles River were not politically strong and well organized during this time. Thus, the Gumuz became easy prey for slave raiders coming from northeastern highlands of the Ethiopian State. For this reason, many Gumuz communities were forced to flee either to the Sudan or south across the Blue Nile to different parts of the then western Wellega province or today's Beni-Shangul-Gumuz region.

In addition to raiding for slaves, the military class and the nobility of the Ethiopian state used lowlands of Mätäkäl as a hunting ground. The members of these classes went down to Mätäkäl annually during the dry season to hunt game.<sup>6</sup> Abdussamad discussed important issues like slavery and hunting activities in Mätäkäl, but his analysis centered on the economic interest of the highland nobility and military class. He did not show socio-economic evolution within different communities of Mätäkäl or local dwellers of the region and changes across time. His perspective explored items of trade like slaves and ivory, which had high demand in the world market but ignored the internal developments in the

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<sup>6</sup> Abdussamad H. Ahmad, "Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital and The World Economy, 1901—1935" (PhD Dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana—Champaign, 1986), pp. 114—145.

region and the influence of the environment on the socio-economic life of the local populations. He also did not give due emphasis to the nature and systems of agriculture in Mätäkäl.

Anthropological studies done on Mätäkäl are also limited in number, time, and space, which focused on the imperial period self-sponsored resettlement and the Därg period emergency resettlement projects. Berihun Mebrate's work deals with spontaneous migration of self-sponsored settlers to Mätäkäl during the imperial regime and the settlers' interaction with different ethnic groups in Mänta-Wuha area, a sub district in Dibati district of Mätäkäl. His analysis gave much emphasis to protracted conflicts between Wollo settlers and the Gumuz that lasted from the 1950s to 1990s. The major cause of the conflict was settlers' expansion into Gumuz occupied territories and displacement of Gumuz from their territories. Berihun also discusses cultural changes and ties that were established between Gumuz and settlers through the course of time.<sup>7</sup> However, the geographical scope of Berihun's research is limited to Mäntawuha area in Dibati district. Much more important, Berihun did not look at the role of settlers in transforming the natural environment and the difference between settlers and Gumuz production systems and how these systems reshaped the landscape.

Woldesillassie Aboute has carried out his thesis on the Därg's resettlement site in Mätäkäl in Pawe Resettlement area. In 1985/6, the Ethiopian government initiated sponsored resettlement project in Pawe and more than eighty-two thousand people who came from different parts of Ethiopia settled in the area. The settlers were the victims of famine from

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<sup>7</sup> Berihun Mebrate, "Spontaneous Settlement and Inter—Ethnic Relations in Mätäkäl, North-West Ethiopia" (MA Thesis in Anthropology, Addis Ababa University, June 1996), pp. 42—133.

Wollo and North Shoa, and peasants who suffered from shortage of land in Kambata and Hadya region. Woldesillassie identified the “three victims of the resettlement program” as a focus of his research. These were settlers themselves, the host population, and the environment. The settlers faced psychological and social problems because of dislocation from their birthplaces and separation from families and relatives. They also suffered a lot to adapt themselves to the new physical environment.

The resettlement program destroyed the socio-economic life of the host community by destroying vast forestland and displacement of Gumuz community who were living in and around settlement area. The government introduced a new mechanized agricultural system in the settlement area. Settlers were used as laborers in the mechanized agricultural scheme that covered about twenty thousand hectares of land. The collective agricultural system that was implemented in the settlement area deprived settlers of their economic and social freedom.<sup>8</sup> Though Woldesillassie raised important issues like forest destruction for resettlement program and development projects, and displacement of the Gumuz community from their economic and social base area, his analysis on land cover destruction and socio-economic problem of the host population is very shallow. He also discussed different adaptation mechanisms of settlers in the new environment and activities of Salini development projects in the Pawe settlement area. However, the geographical scope of his research covered only Pawe settlement area and its surrounding. Woldesillassie’s analysis was limited only to the Pawe settlement area and did not cover vast agro-ecological zones of Mätäkäl and socio-economic life of various ethnic groups living in the vast territories of

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<sup>8</sup> Wolde Sillassie Abbute, “The Dynamics of Socio- Economic Differentiation and Change in the Beles Valley /Pawe/ Resettlement Area, North-Western Ethiopia,” (MA Thesis in Social Anthropology, Addis Ababa University, June 1997), pp. 29—61.

Mätäkäl. Temporally, his research limited to the Därg period and especially the time from the beginning of the settlement program to the early readjustment efforts made by the settlers after the fall of the Därg regime.

Dessalegn Rahmato was also one of scholars who has produced articles on Darg's settlement program implementations in Mätäkäl. He described Mätäkäl as an ecologically and sociologically different zone from other parts of Gojjam and was made part of Gojjam for only administrative purposes with a peripheral status. He argued that the region remained peripheral due to environmental barriers and absence of 'basic infrastructures.' Famine, war, and disease that broke out in highland Ethiopia in 1984 forced Mätäkäl to receive many settlers. This brought in many changes in the region.<sup>9</sup> Dessalegn stated that about one hundred seventy-four thousand hectares of land in Pawe was selected for resettlement. Desalegn tried to reveal how the settlement of huge number of people in Mätäkäl that exceeded the total number of Gumuz population in the region affect physical environment of Mätäkäl. However, he gave little attention for socio-economic activities of Gumuz community and their interaction with the environment. Moreover, his analysis on how the settlement program affected the landscape of Mätäkäl is shallow and limited in time and space. The Pawe settlement area was not empty space. There were Gumuz clans living inside forest-covered lands of Pawe region.

Getachew Weldemeskel, on the other hand, argued that Mätäkäl resettlement area was not suitable for human and animal habitation because of the prevalence of malaria and its hot

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<sup>9</sup> Dessalegn Rahmato, "Settlement and Resettlement in Mätäkäl, Western Ethiopia," in *Africa: Rivista Trimestrale de Studi e Documentazione dell Istituto Italiano per l' Africa e l' Oriente*, Anno 43, No. 1 (Istituto Italiano per l' Africa e l' Oriente (IsIAO), MARZO 1988), pp. 15—16. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40760225>.

climate. Attempts to control malaria were made late after the settlement of settlers in the area and therefore cost the life of many settlers who came mostly from the highland regions of Ethiopia. During the first two years of settlement, the mortality rate in Mätäkäl was eleven percent, which made it the highest from all the resettlement areas of Ethiopia.<sup>10</sup> Malaria was not the only challenge that resettlers faced in Mätäkäl. There was also widespread cattle disease, mostly trypanosomiasis that hampered the settlers' effort to support their livelihood by cattle breeding.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, both Getachew and Wolde Sillassie's analysis regarding place of malaria and trypanosomiasis in the ecology of the region is limited both geographically and temporally. They fail to highlight the deep-rooted history of disease in the region and how disease has shaped settlement patterns and livestock economies of the population of Mätäkäl. Prevalence of Malaria and trypanosomiasis in the study area resulted in human and animal morbidity that affected the efficiency of labor and hence the management of environmental resources. The difficult nature of the physical environment kept away the highlanders from intruding into the vast low lands of Mätäkäl and it in consequence enabled the Gumuz to maintain their identity in production systems and cultural organization. For this reason, the vast land of Mätäkäl stayed covered with forest and sparsely populated for long. The nature of the physical environment had also determined the agricultural system of the region to depend on slash-and-burn techniques.

My research is different from the literature discussed above in many ways. Geographically, my study covers all the districts which were under Mätäkäl *awraja* (sub-province) during the Imperial and the Darg periods. Mätäkäl occupies different ecological unit both

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<sup>10</sup> Getachew, p. 364.

<sup>11</sup> Wolde Sillassie, p. 57.

geographically and socially. The western part of the region bounded by the border with the Sudan, the northern and southern regions naturally bounded by Dinder and Abay rivers respectively. The eastern part of Mätäkäl separated from other regions of Gojjam by mountain ranges of Agaw Meder. Temporally, my research starts from 1880s and ends up with 1990s. As I stated in the objectives of the study, the 1880s was the period that Ethiopia faced severe environmental disaster that transformed my study area as well as the whole country in many ways. The 1990s was also the period that marked the end of the Därg's socialist experimentation in the region and the collapse of resettlement projects.

My study is also different in approach from the above literature because many of these studies investigate one or two issues mostly the expansion of the Christian kingdom in Mätäkäl or resettlement programs of the Därg period whereas this research followed multilateral approach to investigate the course of interaction between human beings and the natural environment over 100 years. I selected this historical period to study the environmental history of Mätäkäl because many gradual and drastical transformations in the physical environment of Mätäkäl were made during this period. Environmental disasters, hunting practices, the imperial period agricultural modernization efforts and the Därg's socialist projects of resettlement and state farm were some of the responsible factors for the environmental change in the region. Hence, my study covered different themes that got focus at different times during the course of study period. Generally, this research deals with major human and natural agencies of environmental change in Mätäkäl.

This study is informed by several influential studies on environmental history that have adopted different explanatory perspectives for different themes. Hence, my research

addresses a set of related themes that have been developed based on ideas of different scholars. Among these, the first category of scholarly works deal with the theme of environmental disaster. Of these I benefited most from Richard Waller's work on the late 19<sup>th</sup> century rinderpest epizootic in Maasailand in East Africa. Waller outlines the course and consequences of quick successive epidemic diseases in Maasailand and peoples' survival strategies to overcome the crisis of 1883-1902 that coincided with the period of the Great Famine in Ethiopia.<sup>12</sup> Waller's approach to study the epidemics is very significant for my study of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century environmental disaster in Mätäkäl because the major cause of this disaster was rinderpest epidemics that ravaged more than ninety percent of livestock from the region of Gojjam including my study area. Other works on the theme have examined the disasters of the same period focusing on Southern Africa. The dreadful cattle plague that reeled southward from Ethiopia and Somaliland to South Africa through Kenya and Tanganyika brokedown long established ecological balance and made the people easy preys to natural factors like disease and famine. The African black peasant communities who depended on livestock resources who lost their cattle became destitute overnight which forced them to migrate to towns and mining areas. Hence, this cattle plague disrupted the socio-economic norms of black societies in South Africa and dismantled fundamental social institutions like marriage and loan systems of herder communities.<sup>13</sup> These works helped me to place the "Environmental Disaster" in Mätäkäl within broad continental framework and outline sequences of events of the period.

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<sup>12</sup> Richard Waller, "Emutai: Crisis and Response in Massailand 1883—1902" in *The Ecology of Survival: Case Studies from Northeast African Studies*, Douglas Johnson and David M. Anderson, eds. (Westview Press, 1988), pp. 73—112

<sup>13</sup> C. Van Onsele, "Reactions to Rinderpest in South Africa, 1896—1897" in *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 13, No.3 (1972), pp. 473—488; Charles Ballard, "The Repercussions of Rinderpest: Cattle Plague and Peasant Decline in Colonial Natal" in *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol.19, No. 3 (1986), pp. 421—450

Furthermore, scholars have also produced monographs, articles and book chapters on the 1888—1892 period Great Famine of Ethiopia, which could be taken as part of the broad continental environmental disaster. One of the important scholars who produced a book chapter and articles on the Great Famine period in Ethiopia is Richard Pankhurst. His works, especially a chapter in his book entitled *The History of Famine and Epidemics in Ethiopia* and his articles<sup>14</sup> on this specific period provided me with information on the causes, course, consequences and sources for the period under study.

The other scholars who have studied the Great Famine of Ethiopia are Donald Crummey and Steven Kaplan. Donald Crummey in his book *Farming and Famine in Ethiopia* dedicated a chapter to the Great Famine of 1888 to 1892. Crummey provided chronological events, the causes and course of the Great Famine, and its geographical reach that enabled me to draw a clear picture of the period and socio-economic consequences of the Great Famine that imprinted deep memory in the society.<sup>15</sup> Both Pankhurst and Crummey focused on countrywide overview of the Great Famine in Ethiopia which overlooked grassroot level differences and the impacts of the Great Famine in the peripheral regions like Mätäkäl. Kaplan also dedicated a chapter to the Great Famine of Ethiopia in his book entitled *Béta Israel (Falasha) in Ethiopia* and produced an article on the same issue. Kaplan's approach is more informative than the above general works to understand the challenges of the Great Famine from the grassroot level. Kaplan's studies focused on the trajectories of the Great Famine among the Beta Israel community in Gonder which

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<sup>14</sup> Richard Pankhurst, *The History of Famine and Epidemics in Ethiopia prior to the Twentieth Century* (London: H and L Communication Ltd, 1987), pp. 57—120; see also his articles, "The Great Famine of 1888—1892" A New Assessment Part two" in *Journal of History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, Vol. XXI, No. 2 and 3 (April 1966), 97—294

<sup>15</sup> Donal E. Crummey, *Farming and Famine in Ethiopia: Landscape Vulnerability in Northeast Ethiopia, 1889—1991*, James C. McCann, ed. (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2018), pp. 8—33

resulted in changes in demography, settlement patterns and in their religion. The Great Famine resulted in depopulation of Beta Israel community from the Bégémeder and Lake Tana regions that estimated by 75 percent mortality rate. Many of the community members were also forced to change their religion to Protestant or Orthodox Christianity. Many settlement areas were also found deserted because of death or migration to other parts of the country. What makes his study significant to my research is its geographical contiguity to my study area. Kaplan showed that recurrent political instability and wars in the region increased vulnerability of society to famine and aggravated the severity of famine problem in the region. His works helped me to understand the regional characteristics of the Great Famine in Northwestern Ethiopia.<sup>16</sup>

The other theme that my research deals with is hunting practice and its environmental implications in Mätäkäl over the course of time. The most informative scholarly work on this theme in Africa is William Beinart and Peter Coates' book *Environment and History in Africa*. Their work discusses the motives of hunters in Africa, types of hunters and phases of hunting during precolonial and colonial periods.<sup>17</sup> William Beinart and Lotte Hughes also have another valuable work for this theme entitled *Environment and Empire*. This work likewise deals with hunting practice and organization in British Empire, America and South Africa. In this work, Beinart and Hughes gave emphasis to environmental factors like climate, disease, and vegetation type, and the role of technology in shaping hunting practices and hunters' organization. They also discussed market expansion as the major

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<sup>16</sup> Steven Kaplan, *The Beta Israel (Falasha) in Ethiopia: From earliest times to the twentieth century* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), pp. 143—154; See also his article, "Kifu-Oen: The Great Famine of 1888—1892 and The Beta Israel (Falasha)" in *Paideuma: Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde, Bd. 36, Afrika Studien II* (1990), pp. 67—77

<sup>17</sup> William Beinart and Peter Coates, *Environment and History: The Taming of Nature in the USA and South Africa* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 17—27

factor in the transformation of hunting in African environments.<sup>18</sup> This work particularly helped me to understand the role of technology and market expansion in intensification of hunting practices and its impact on wildlife destruction in my study area.

Agriculture is also another theme of my research. I benefited more from the works of James McCann in understanding the peasant agency in transformation of environments. In his book *Green land, Brown land, Black land* McCann addresses factors that are responsible for the change of physical landscapes in Africa. His analysis shows that besides the actions of climate, fire and disease, factors that shaped African landscapes have been the “labor, tools, and ideas of African inhabitants.” Hence, McCann concluded that “African landscapes are anthropogenic, that is the product of human action.” It was these human actions that changed Africa’s forests, soils and animal populations over the course of time.<sup>19</sup> Another insightful work of McCann is *People of the Plow* in which he discusses the long history of the Ethiopian agriculture. McCann in this work shades light on peasant agency in transforming Ethiopia’s physical environment in the long course of economic traditions of highland people, plow based agriculture. His analysis shows agricultural history as an element of environmental history that was shaped by technology and forces of nature.<sup>20</sup> Hence, McCann’s publications are valuable sources for my research, particularly for understanding the interface between agriculture and environmental change.

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<sup>18</sup>William Beinart and Lotte Hughes, *Environment and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 58—75

<sup>19</sup>James C. McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land: An Environmental History of Africa, 1800—1990* (Oxford: James Currey Ltd., 1999), pp.1—173

<sup>20</sup>James C. McCann, *People of the Plow: An Agricultural History of Ethiopia, 1800—1990* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), pp. 23—252

Scholars from different disciplines like anthropology and geography have also produced articles on the problems of resource management and population pressure among the agricultural communities of highland Ethiopia which were responsible for shaping landscapes. For instance, Abebe Zegeye in his article entitled “environmental degradation, population movement, and war” discusses absence of proper resource management and reckless deforestation activities were the major causes for environmental degradation.<sup>21</sup>

Similarly, Zemenfes Tsighe also narrates the degradation history of the Ethiopian environment. He mainly focused on the problem of rapid population increase that reached beyond the limit of the carrying capacity of the land, which in turn led to excessive exploitation and depletion of natural resources.<sup>22</sup> Zemenfes’ narration on population pressure reflects his view from neo-Malthusian theory which emphasizes rapid population growth and sees it as the major cause of environmental change. However, linear narratives like Zemenfes’ are not good approaches for the study of environmental history. Richard Pankhurst also has related view with Abebe and Zemenfes. The difference is that he focused on a long history of deforestation resulted from settlement expansion and deep-rooted agricultural economy.<sup>23</sup> These articles also have their own contribution in understanding the role of human agency in transforming the landscapes. Agro-ecological and climatic condition of Ethiopia has determined economic systems and settlement patterns of the society. Highlanders were/are plow agriculturalists whereas the society of

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<sup>21</sup>Abebe Zegeye, “Environmental Degradation, Population Movement, and War,” in *Ethiopia in Change: Peasantry, Nationalism, and Democracy*, eds. Abebe Zegeye and Siegfried Pausewang (London & New York: Academic Press, 1994), pp. 172—191

<sup>22</sup>Zemenfes Tsighe, “Political Economy of Land Degradation in Ethiopia” in Proceedings of the Sixth Michigan State University Conference on Northeast Africa (East Lansing, April 23—25, 1992), pp. 416—634

<sup>23</sup>Richard Pankhurst, “The History of Deforestation and Afforestation in Ethiopia prior to World War I,” in *Northeast African Studies*, New Series, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1995), pp. 119—133. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41931194/>

lowland Ethiopia was either pastoralists or shifting cultivators. The favorable climatic condition of highland Ethiopia made the majority of the Ethiopian population to concentrate on the highland regions. This concentration put pressure on resource utilization of the region. Thus, by this research I tried to show the changing role of human agency, and how the lowland environment of Mätäkäl shaped social and economic life of the society. Particularly, settlement and agricultural expansions in my study area were detrimental factors to environmental change.

Disease was also a constituent theme of my study that I benefited more from the works of different scholars to develop my analysis on this theme. Some of these scholars who produced seminal works on the relationship between disease and environment include Helmut Kloos and Zein Ahmed. Their work entitled *Health and disease in Ethiopia* demonstrates the linkages between the political, socioeconomic and cultural factors in the ecology of disease. The governments of Ethiopia with limited resources and inefficient health sector performances were not in a position to reverse cyclical epidemics that prevailed in the country. Poorly planned irrigation and resettlement programs were major health constraints in the country.<sup>24</sup> The work of Kloos and Zein helped the researcher to understand the relationship between climate and disease pattern, disease agents and their vectors in specific environments. Their study shows that geographic distribution and seasonal variation of infectious diseases is associated with climate that helps me a lot to understand disease patterns in Mätäkäl.

Another influential work on disease is James McCann's publication entitled *The Historical Ecology of Malaria in Ethiopia* which focused on a single disease, malaria. McCann's

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<sup>24</sup> Helmut Kloos and Zein Ahmed Zein, eds., *Health and Disease in Ethiopia* (Boulder, Oxford: Westview Press, 1993), pp. 1—519

work is a unique contribution to environmental history of Ethiopia that helps us to understand the social and economic impacts of malaria over the long historical periods in the Blue Nile basin. One of the interesting perspectives in McCann's analysis of malaria is profound influence of agro-ecological changes on distribution and intensity of malaria.<sup>25</sup> The association of malaria with the expansion of maize production is a new scientific approach which shows us to see new perspectives in the study of malaria and its problems.

The last theme in my research is related to development encounters that were mainly characterized by government intervention to implement resettlement and mechanized agricultural projects. Mätäkäl was identified as the potential resettlement area since the Imperial regime. Berihun Mebrate's work that deals with spontaneous migration of self-sponsored settlers to Mätäkäl in early 1960s could justify this. His analysis gave much emphasis to protracted conflicts between Wollo settlers and the Gumuz that lasted from the 1960s to 1990s. The major cause of the conflict was settlers' expansion into Gumuz occupied territories and displacement of Gumuz from their territories. In contrary to conflicts, Berihun also discusses cultural changes and ties that were established between Gumuz and settlers through the course of time.<sup>26</sup> However, the geographical scope of Berihun's research is limited to Mäntawuha area in Dibati district. Berihun attempted to show how settlers of the Imperial period transformed forestlands across the Dura valley. The Gumuz had used this vast forestland for shifting cultivation and for hunting and gathering to supplement their subsistence. Hence settlers' pressure on this forestland continued to be the source of conflict between the Gumuz and settler communities. Except

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<sup>25</sup> James C. McCann, *The Historical Ecology of Malaria in Ethiopia* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2014), pp. 1—160

<sup>26</sup> Berihun Mebrate, "Spontaneous Settlement and Inter—Ethnic Relations in Mätäkäl, North-West Ethiopia" (MA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, June 1996), pp. 42—133.

Berihun's attempt, scholarly researches on imperial period settlement in Mätäkäl are limited.

Scholars were better involved in the study of the Därg period resettlement program. One of these scholars is Woldä Sillassie Aboute. He produced his MA thesis and PhD dissertation on Därg's resettlement in Bäläs valley in Mätäkäl. In 1985/6, government sponsored settlers came from different regions of Ethiopia and more than eighty-two thousand people settled in Pawe area. The settlers were the victims of famine from Wollo and North Shoa, and peasants who suffered from shortage of land in Kambata and Hadya region. Woldä Sillassie identified 'three victims of resettlement program' as issues of discussion for his research. These were settlers themselves, host population, and the environment. The settlers faced psychological and social problems because of dislocation from their birthplaces and separation from families and relatives. Resettlement program affected socio-economic life of host community by destroying vast forestland and displacement of Gumuz community who were living in and around settlement area. The government introduced a new mechanized agricultural system in the settlement area. Settlers were used as laborers in the mechanized agriculture that covered about twenty thousand hectares of land. Collective agricultural systems that were implemented in the settlement area deprived economic and social freedom of settlers.<sup>27</sup> Though Woldä sillassé as anthropologist focused on contemporary issues, I benefited a lot from his study. Woldä sillassé provided good

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<sup>27</sup> Wolde Sillassie Abbute, "The Dynamics of Socio- Economic Differentiation and Change in the Bäläs Valley /Pawe/ Resettlement Area, North-Western Ethiopia," ( MA Thesis in Social Anthropology, Addis Ababa University, June 1997), pp. 29—61; See also his dissertation, "Gumuz and Highland Resettlers: Differeing Strategies of Livelihood and Ethnic Relations in Mätäkäl, Northwestern Ethiopia" (University of Gottingen, March 2002), pp. 1—299

information on environmental implications of the Därg's resettlement program in Bäläs Valley which was helpful for my study.

Paolo Dieci and Claudio Viezzoli have also edited a book entitled *Resettlement and Rural Development in Ethiopia* in which most of the contributors' articles or book chapters dedicated their work to Bäläs valley resettlement and agricultural projects of the Därg. Dieci and Viezzoli provided valuable information for researcher on the Tana Bäläs project that was run by Italians. This project was engaged in development and expansion of mechanized agriculture in resettlement area of Mätäkäl.<sup>28</sup> Hence, the implementation of big farm and resettlement projects were among the detrimental factors to the environmental Change of Mätäkäl. Gebre Yntiso's study also examines social and environmental problems of settlement program in Mätäkäl. His study shows that large-scale clearing of forests for constructing thousands of houses needed for resettlers had affected the ecosystem of the region. During the course of constructing resettlement villages and establishing large-scale mechanized agricultural fields between 1985 and 1990, dense vegetation of Pawe region was wiped-out. Settlers were also dependent on wood for fuel and woodwork activities to gain supplementary income for their livelihood.<sup>29</sup>

The other scholars who produced articles on resettlement program of Mätäkäl and its environmental and social implications are Dessalegn Rahmato and Getachew Woldämeskel. Dessalegn's article mainly deals with social and economic life of the Gumuz and

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<sup>28</sup> Paolo Dieci and Claudio Viezzoli, *Resettlement and Rural Development in Ethiopia: Social and Economic Research, Training and technical Assistance in the Bäläs valley* (Milano: Franco Angeli s.r.l., 1992), pp. 35—240

<sup>29</sup> Gebre Yntiso, "The Mätäkäl Resettlement in Ethiopia: Why did it Fail?" in *People, Space and the State: Migration, Resettlement and Displacement in Ethiopia*, Proceedings of the Workshop held by the Ethiopian Society of Sociologists, Social Workers and Anthropologists, and the United Nations Emergency Unit for Ethiopia, eds., Alula Pankhurst and Francois Piguët (Addis Ababa, July 2004), pp. 92—104.

the problems of pressure on resource created due to the arrival of new settlers.<sup>30</sup> Getachew also provided valuable information on environmental and social consequences of settlement program in Mätäkäl.<sup>31</sup> Both Dessalegn Rahmato and Getachew argue that ‘Mätäkäl is hot, humid, flat, and desolate’ that constitute nearly half of Gojjam province and it is sparsely populated region. They described Mätäkäl as ecologically and sociologically different from other parts of Gojjam. It was made part of Gojjam for only administrative purposes with peripheral status. The region remained peripheral due to environmental barriers and absence of ‘basic infrastructures.’ Famine, war, and disease that broke out in highland Ethiopia in 1984 forced Meteke to receive many settlers, which brought in many changes in the region.<sup>32</sup> The arrival of these settlers to the region put great pressure on the host communities. There were Gumuz clans living inside forest-covered lands of Pawe region. According to Woldä rsillassie, about fifteen thousand to twenty thousand (15000—20000) Gumuz were living in the settlement area who were later displaced because of resettlement program.<sup>33</sup>

Getachew Weldemeskel on the other hand argues that Mätäkäl resettlement area is not suitable for human and animal habitation because of prevalence of Malaria and hot climate of the region. Attempts to control malaria made late after the settlement of settlers in the area so that cost the life of many settlers who came from mostly highland regions of

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<sup>30</sup>Dessale Rahmato, “Resettlement and the Indigenous People: The Case of Mätäkäl,” in Proceedings of the Workshop on Famine Experience and Resettlement in Ethiopia (Addis Ababa University, Institute of Development Research, December 29—30, 1988), pp. 29—33.

<sup>31</sup> Getachew WoldeMeskel, “The Consequences of Resettlement in Ethiopia” in *African Affairs*, Vol. 88, No. 352 (July, 1989), pp. 362—363.

<sup>32</sup> Dessalegn Rahmato, “Settlement and Resettlement in Mätäkäl, Western Ethiopia,” in *Africa: Rivista Trimestrale di Studi e Documentazione dell’Istituto Italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente*, Anno 43, No. 1 (Istituto Italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente (IsIAO), MARZO 1988), pp. 15—16. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40760225>.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 52

Ethiopia. During the first two years, the mortality rate in Mätäkäl was eleven percent, which made it highest from all resettlement areas of Ethiopia.<sup>34</sup>

### **Significance of the study**

The history of society-environmental interaction in Ethiopian history is still a relatively untouched field of research. Historical studies on human-environment interaction carry strong power to enhance public understanding of contemporary environmental issues by placing those issues in a broader historical context. Doing so increases people's interest on the study of history by demonstrating the relevance of the past to the present because environmental history examines environmental change and agents of change over time. Hence, it provides views or information for planners that would shape resource use of the society and provides contemporary experiences to resource managers and policy makers with its focus on human-nature interaction. Thus, environmental history deals with human-nature interplay together with political and cultural factors that affect the management of natural resources. Particularly the political economy of the Mätäkäl region in north-western Ethiopia by which people depended on and worked for life-sustenance is investigated together with the impact of nature on human life and human perception in adapting and transforming natural environment across periods in the past.

Second, the interplay between society and environment in the region like Mätäkäl where there have great deals of social, political, and economic dynamics is very important. This region had been place of big games, slave raiding, and the region of resettlement at least beginning from 1960s in Ethiopian history. Thus, it helps to understand the causes modern

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<sup>34</sup> Getachew, p. 364.

environmental challenges of Ethiopian society. I hope, this study will help as a stepping-stone for further studies on the environmental history of Ethiopia and for enriching and diversifying perspectives of Ethiopian historiography.

This dissertation examines major factors that led to the transformation of the region of Mätäkäl since the late nineteenth century by focusing on natural and human agents of environmental change. Many factors in combination brought about environmental changes in Mätäkäl. These included different forms of human activities and natural factors like climate, and disease, which shaped the landscape of the region over the course of time. Environmental challenges kept away massive intrusion of highlanders for long at least until the 1940s and hunting activities that depleted wildlife of the region and development encounters that transformed physical environment of Mätäkäl have been discussed. The settlement programs in Mätäkäl transformed agricultural systems of the region and bolstered population number, which aggravated environmental exploitation in the region. Hence, to undertake comprehensive study on the issues stated above, I have organized my dissertation in to five chapters.

Chapter one, describes the geographical and ecological setting of the region, settlement patterns and subsistence systems of the local people, and expansion of the Christian kingdom to the region and its environmental consequences before the 1880s. Mätäkäl was one of the last frontiers of former Gojjam province due to the limits imposed by the vector-borne human and cattle diseases. This chapter aims to set geographical and historical context for my dissertation that deals with environmental history of Mätäkäl. It describes the climatic condition of the lowland Mätäkäl that shaped the subsistence systems and

settlement pattern of the Gumuz, Nilotic speakers. Relatively cool highland regions have been occupied by the Agaw, Šinaša and Oromos. The highland communities were cattle herders and plow agriculturalists whereas the lowlanders were hunters and shifting cultivators. Beginning from the last period of 17<sup>th</sup> century, highland parts of this region was put under cultural and political influence of the Christian kingdom at Gonder. Long and continuous wars waged to put the region under the Christian domain had significantly affected the physical environment of the region. Forestlands were opened up for military operations and expansion of Christianity to highland parts of Mätäkäl gradually changed attitudes and traditions of local population to their environment.

Chapter two, deals with the environmental disaster that occurred in Mätäkäl from 1888 to 1892. It shows, the causes and consequences of this disaster, peoples' survival strategies. One of the causes of the environmental disaster of the period was rinderpest epidemic that perished livestock resources of Ethiopia. The highland peoples of Mätäkäl were largely cattle herders and dependents on cattle products. Hence, the destruction of cattle by the rinderpest had severely affected the life of people in the region that resulted in destructive famine. To overcome the challenges of the period, the people of Mätäkäl devised different survival strategies that included shifting their economic system to gathering and hoe cultivation. After nearly four years of famine and attendant disease problems, the surviving people gradually restored their livestock resources by looting and using market institutions. Full restoration of peoples' cattle wealth was so gradual that extended even beyond 1910s.

Chapter three, deals with state centralization, market expansion and its environmental consequences in the period 1900s to 1940s. The Great Famine depopulated agricultural population in northwestern Ethiopia. The demand for agricultural labor during the post

famine period became critical issue for the ruling class and well-to-do families of highlanders in the northwestern Ethiopian highlands. The prevalence of high demand for agricultural labor led to the expansion of slave market in the region. Hence, the lowland parts of Mätäkäl became areas of slave raiding, which in turn depopulated the lowland parts where Gumuz population inhabited. The slave raiding either shifted lowland population to highland areas or forced them to flee to areas south of the Blue Nile and in to the Sudan. Hence, the deserted villages in lowland areas changed in to bushlands and the home of tsetse fly. The fall of neighboring countries under colonial rule since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century also facilitated the development of international market in the Horn of Africa. Ivory became one of the highly demanded commodities during the period 1900s to 1940s. One of the sources of ivory for the Ethiopian ruling class and merchants was my study area, Mätäkäl, which led to intensification of hunting in the region. To control ivory and other items of trade such as slaves and gold, the Ethiopian state strengthened its control over peripheral regions. These activities depopulated Gumuz population and destroyed big game animals from the environment of Mätäkäl hence the larger areas the lowland environment turned in to uninhabited bushlands and wildlife diversity declined from the region.

Chapter four examines environmental consequences of recipient modernization efforts of the Imperial regime. This chapter dealt with expansion of plow agriculture in Mätäkäl, disease control, settlement and attempts made to control illegal hunting practice which was widely exercised in the region. The idea of modernization reached Mätäkäl with countrywide administrative restructuring in the post liberation period. Following this administrative restructuring, Mätäkäl became a separate *awraja* in 1948. The first *awraja* governors sent from Addis Ababa were well acquainted with ideas of modernization that

was growing in Ethiopia during the post-war period. When the first *awraja* governor, Woldä Berhan Akalu, arrived Mätäkäl, he saw the region's potential for the development of agriculture in the region and encouraged the local population to expand plow agriculture. His ideas were caught up by his successors who were engaged in pushing the local people to shift from cattle herding to plow agriculture. These governors even began to propose settlement of people from land scarce parts of the country, which implemented in early 1960s because official saw vast uncultivated land covered with forest. These efforts of expanding plow agriculture and settlements of the 1960s led to the destruction of vast forestlands along the Durra valley.

Chapter Five, deals with the Därg's socialist project that was designed to solve the food crisis of the period. The Därg planned to effectively utilize "underutilized" lands in the west and northwestern lowlands to give lasting solution to food shortage problems in the country. As part of this national plan, in the mid 1980s, the Därg began to implement in Mätäkäl large-scale resettlement and mechanized agriculture projects which had catastrophic consequences to the physical environment of the region. The chapter examines environmental consequences of resettlement, mechanized agriculture and state farm projects of the Därg in Mätäkäl.

## **Sources and Methodology**

A historical study requires the extensive collection and critical analysis of available primary and secondary sources on the theme under study. Environmental history usually depends on non-traditional sources and an interdisciplinary methodology in examining environmental change. Hence, I have systematically collected geographical and historical

data and critically analyzed and interpreted them in fashioning a narrative regarding environmental change in Mätäkäl.

The sources utilized for this study may be classified into three broad categories. The first category of sources that were most useful for my study are oral interviews. I conducted these interviews during the course of my field study in 2015 and 2016, first from November 23, 2015 to January 4, 2016 and for the second time from July 1, 2017 to August 13, 2017. I tried to identify potential informants in two ways. The first approach was the official route. At the beginning of my fieldwork I had to notify zonal and district officials about my project and secure their permission to travel through Mätäkäl and collect data. I provided these officials with relevant credentials that I took from my host university and offered a short biography to help them understand my project in clear fashion. Besides securing research clearance, I also asked these officials to recommend potential informants on themes related to environmental history. Hence, I was able to meet some of my informants through the government net-work. Some of these informants felt suspicious about my project and were therefore unwilling to be interviewed initially. But through the course of discussion and when they learned that my questions did not have direct relation to the contemporary political issues, they began to understand my interest and began to feel free to talk to me and to be interviewed.

My second method in identifying potential informants involved the personal networks in the community. I traveled nine districts, seven of which are currently found in Mätäkäl Zone of the Benishangul Gumuz Regional State and the remaining two in the Awi Zone of the Amhara Regional State. Language barrier particularly with lowland Gumuz

communities was a challenge in my data collection that forced me to use translators or select informants who can speak Amharic. For informants found in Awi Zone districts, language was not a barrier because I speak both Agaw and Amharic. The challenge in these areas came from government officials who suspected me as a member of opposition party who went to study contemporary political conditions there. Hence, in most cases, I bypassed government lines of communication and contacted local elders personally. All of these districts were part of Gojjam province before 1991.

My centers of interview were the towns of Čagni, Mäntawuha, and Zigäm in Awi Zone and Gelgäl, Pawe, Mambuk, Mankush, Dibati, Bullän and Wombära in Mätäkäl zone. I undertook most of my interview works in two phases, from November 2015 to January 2016 and from July 2017 to August 2017. Both periods coincided with political turmoil in the region as well as across the country. This made local government officials suspicious of my project and led them to check through different ways whether I was a real student or not. One time in fact I was detained by the police in Mankush town for a short period. The police noted that I was a stranger to the area and wanted to know why I am in Gubba. I explained the reason why I was there and showed them a letter written from Mätäkäl Zone administrative office to all districts in Mätäkäl. They then took me to district administrative office and I had to use only government line of communication. Hence, it was very challenging for me to move freely and interview informants particularly in districts found in Mätäkäl zone. To move in Gumuz countryside was especially life-threatening because the Gumuz have negative attitude towards “*Shiwa*” or “red people” a reference to non-Gumuz highlanders. To avoid this risk, I was forced to confine my research to the “safe” towns. In districts that are found under Awi Zone, however, the challenge was not much

serious. My knowledge of Agaw language smoothed many things over and helped me to freely communicate with community members though suspicion from the side of local officials and cadres remained.

I categorized my interview guidelines in to themes to effectively exploit the knowledge and perception of my informants effectively. Hence, the oral data that I collected through interview with elders of my study area was valuable in filling the gaps or to cross-check with written documents. I also got a chance to interview the Imperial and Därg's officials of Mätäkäl *awraja* in Däbrä Markos and Addis Ababa who shared with me their experience relating to environmental information during their stay in Mätäkäl.

I conducted my interviews in good terms with many of my informants except in a few cases in Mäntawuha area where there was problem between adherents of different Islamic sects among Wollo migrants who settled in the area since the 1960s. At the time government forces had intervened to solve the problem between the radical (Wahabi) Muslims and non-radical Muslims who lived in the Mäntawuha area and Čagni town. Hence, potential Muslim informants suspected me of being a government spy and would not accept my request to undertake interviews with them. I did all my best and showed all my credentials to convince them that I was researcher and was not attached to the government but still a few remained resistant to my requests. I interviewed a few elders from Mäntawuha using local mediators. But even these were reluctant when I attempted to record the interviews with a voice recorder.

Mätäkäl is not a homogeneous region but is both geographically and socially diverse. It constitutes lowland, midland, and highland topographies and is inhabited by different

ethnic groups. The lowland is mainly settled by Gumuz except the Pawe area where diverse ethnic groups who came to the area through the resettlement program live. I have tried all my best to represent different ethnic and religious groups in my interview but I could not include as many Gumuz informants as I would have wanted because of political uncertainty that existed in Gumuz areas and the high risk intailed to personal safety.

The second category of sources that I used for my study are archival sources. These include letters, minutes, agreements and various kinds of contemporary reports deposited in different government offices and research libraries located in Addis Ababa and in the provinces. One of these resourceful institutions for my archival work was the National Archives and Library Agency (NALA) in Addis Ababa. The archives in this institution are well preserved and organized. They are categorized in to provinces and issues of subjects and registered in master registers with coded numbers that refer to provinces, regions or *awrajas* and subjects. It is from these master registers that I selected folders related to my field of study and asked archivists for service. Archives of different Ministries of the imperial regime, including the Ministry of Interior are located in this agency. Many of these archival documents relate to political and economic issues. Though documents related to environmental issues were limited, I was able to find some valuable documents for my study that deal with epidemic disease, hunting practices, and famine, relief and rehabilitation programs during the imperial period.

The other important archival deposit for my research was the Däbrä Markos University archival center. The archival center has materials drawn from different offices of the former Gojjam province. These materials are categorized under the names of *awrajas* and subjects they contained and are arranged by folder and file numbers. The folders and files

are registered in master registers/indexes which which is easily accessible to researchers and help them select the folders related to their study. Since I am member of the university as well as the history department, I had better opportunity to know the kinds of available documents and their locations because I had served as officer in this archival center. Thus, I exploited this archive center to very well and found significant documents on agriculture, disease epidemics and wildlife conservation efforts and hunting traditions of the society in my study area

The archival documents in the districts and former *awraja* center, Čagni town, were destroyed during the wars between the Därg and Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Front (EPRP) and in the last years of the Därg period between the government and the later Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) forces. I found some documents from Pawe deposited as “dead files” in a room found in the Pawe administrative office building. Documents are also found in health and agriculture offices but these documents are mostly from the post-1991 period and therefore fall outside of my study period. I found some relevant documents to my study from the “dead files” dumped in the administrative building which deal with health problems of settlers and food crisis that resulted from the collapse of the Därg’s producers’ cooperatives and interruption of agricultural machinery services which had been provided by the Italian Project, SALINI, to the settler communities who were organized into producers’ associations.

The other source of archival documents for my research was the Ministry of Agriculture. Many of the archival documents from this office were destroyed during the relocation of the Ministerial office from Kazanchis to Megenagna. This office took with it to its new

office in Megegnagna only active files and compiled reports and study accounts on different subject which were then placed in the library of the Ministry. These documents provided me with significant information on agriculture, animal epidemic disease, famine in specific regions or country level, relief and rehabilitation activities, efforts to provide legal frame work for hunters and conservation of wildlife diversity, agreements with different development agencies, project plans and evaluations, and state farm projects and evaluation reports. These are organized along subject basis and do not have master register/ index from which to select documents relevant to one's study. Therefore, I had to search for the documents by myself from the shelves on which the documents here deposited on. Though this work is tiresome, I found valuable documents for my research.

The Woldä Meskel Tariku Memorial Archive center was also another archival research center that I searched data for my dissertation. Archives in Woldä Meskel archive center are placed randomly with reference of folders by the name of provinces under the broad category of *Bétä Rest*, Ministry of Interior, Land Administration, and Agricultural section. Folder and file numbers are not arranged properly but arranged by the name of provinces or subject. There are no master registers/indexes hence the researcher is required to skim for the documents he needs from the broad categories mentioned above. Therefore, searching for documents in this archive tiresome and could find some documents after many efforts of try and error. I found here some documents related to the state farm, relief and rehabilitation and resettlement projects of the Därg period. Some of these documents located in a separate building where many of the agricultural documents are found.

In addition to these documents, I exploited the Ethiopian newspapers preserved at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies of Addis Ababa University. These newspapers include *Berhan ena Selam*, *Addis Zemen*, and *Negarit Gazeta* which provided important information for the Imperial and Därg periods on issues related to agriculture, epidemic disease, government development projects, governments efforts to control illegal hunting, famine and resettlement program implementations.

The scarcity of sources on environmental issues was the major challenge for me hence there were cases that I was forced to cite only newspaper information due to lack of other kinds of sources for my analysis. Some documents on ethnic history of my study area and famine problems and consequent resettlement activities are also available in manuscript section of IES. Foreign Office Microfilms of this section also contain information on hunting and slave raiding activities in my study area.

Travelers of the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries also provided descriptions of the physical environment during their visit, wildlife diversity, hunting practices, populations and livelihood strategies in the study area. Some of these travelers who provided important background information on the research area include, Maria Schuver, James Bruce, Charles Beke, Oscar T. Crosby and Robert E. Cheesman.

I have attempted to critically analyze oral testimonies, archival sources, and other documents in the writing of the dissertation. I hope such a comparison, cross-checking and critiquing has helped me overcome some the gaps and biases in the sources. The use of oral sources and variety of written materials generated by different bodies or organizations and travelers has been central to my analysis of environmental change in Mätäkäl. I have tried

to demonstrate the nature of environmental change in my study area that included both humans and natural phenomenon like climate and disease. My central argument is that environmental change in Mätäkäl was not caused by one single factor and was unidirectional. Rather change was the result of the interface between different agencies that included natural factors, human activities and state development encounters. My findings show that the rapid expansion of agriculture at least beginning from the 1940s, settlement and resettlement programs, unrestricted hunting and other multiple social and economic activities explain the manner and rate of environmental change in Mätäkäl that pronounced across the historical periods.

Figure 1: Location of Mätäkäl Study Area

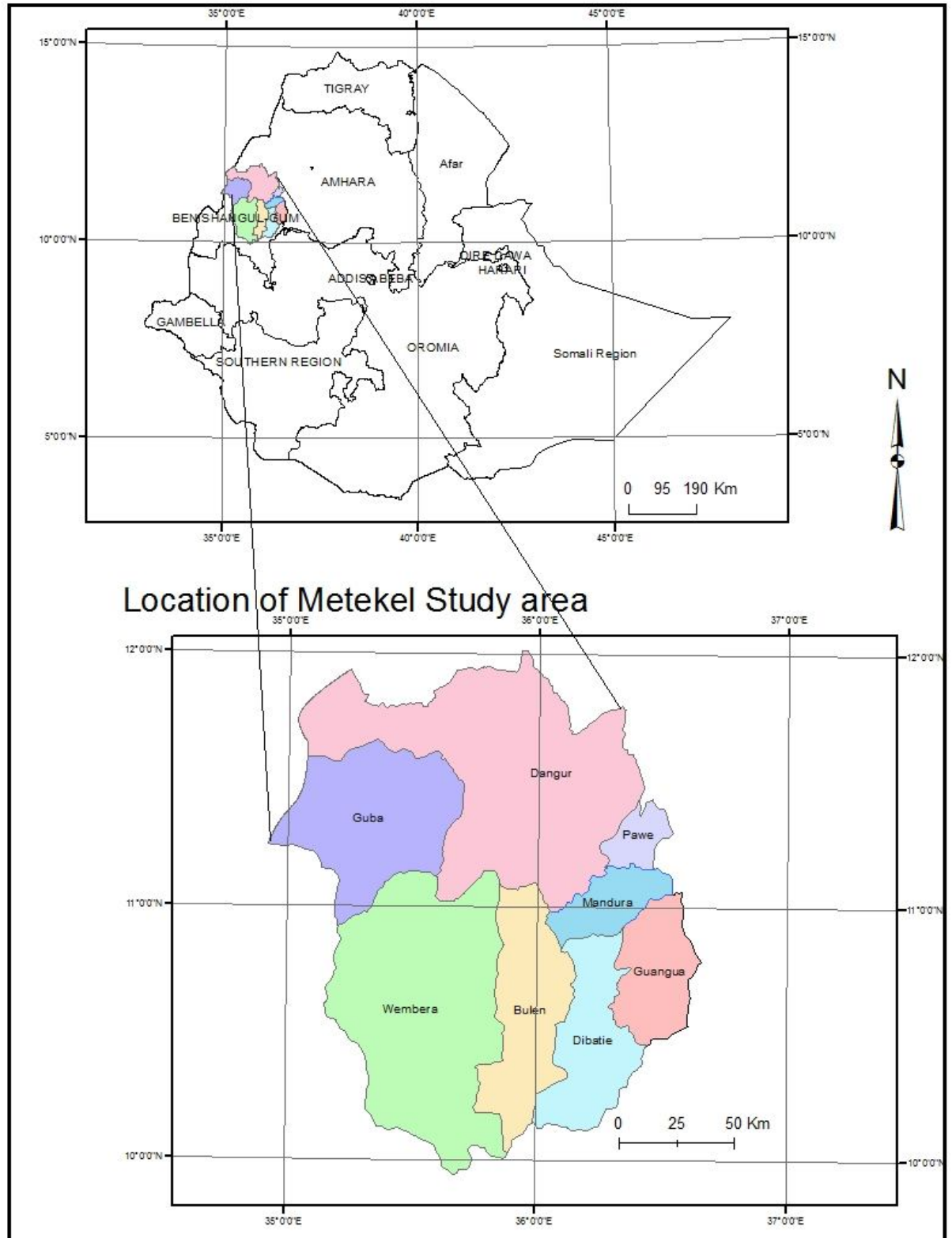


Figure 2. Metekel in Gumuz National Regional State



# CHAPTER ONE

## **MÄTÄKÄL: GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT to 1880s**

This chapter outlines the broad geographical and ecological characteristics of Mätäkäl. It also describes the broad landscape changes that took place in the region before the 1880s. Though the rate of change was gradual, I have tried to demonstrate how peoples' subsistence systems and state intervention were critical agents of environmental change in Mätäkäl before the 1880s. In addition, the chapter draws on available primary and secondary sources to outline the process by which different populations settled in Mätäkäl, developed different subsistence strategies, and interacted with the natural environment before the late nineteenth century. It also examines the nature of state intervention in the region beginning in the Gonderine period and consequent transformations in the socio-economic life of the peoples as well as the environment of the region. Thus, the chapter sets a background and context to understand changes and continuities in the interaction of human populations with the environment of the Mätäkäl region that is a focus of discussion in subsequent chapters.

### **Geographical and Ecological Setting**

Mätäkäl was a region located in northwest Ethiopia that occupied the western half of the pre-1991 Gojjam province extending up to the Sudan border.<sup>1</sup> Its latitudinal and longitudinal

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<sup>1</sup> Tsega Endalew, *Inter-Ethnic Relations on a frontier: Mätäkäl (Ethiopia), 1898—1991* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), p.1

location was 9° 57' to 12° 04' North latitude and 34° 55' to 36° 52' East longitude.<sup>2</sup> The geographical scope of the study is limited to the pre-1991 political boundary of Mätäkäl.

The term Mätäkäl refers to one of the founding fathers of the Agaws of Gojjam (the Seven House Agaw- *Langéta* Awi in Agaw Language).<sup>3</sup> It also refers to clan territory occupied by the descendants of the first founding father, Mitikili, which was located east of the Dura River and encompassed the whole of the present Gwangwa district. During the Gonderine period, Emperor Yohannes I (1667—1682) and later his son Iyasu I (1682—1706) conquered and assimilated the Mätäkäl Agaws. Iyasu the Great particularly promoted *Azazh* Chuhuay, the local chief of the Mätäkäl Agaws, to the position of *Fitawrari* and entrusted him with the conquest of the neighboring Gumuz territories. Using this opportunity, the Agaw elites extended their political influence over the vast Gumuz and Šinaša territories.<sup>4</sup> Hence, using their critical role as intermediaries between the Gonderine state and the Gumuz, the Agaws extended the name Mätäkäl as designations for the vast territories west of the Durra River and even up to some parts of Dangur. However, the territorial size of Mätäkäl under the influence of the Agaws waxed and waned depending on the strength of the central state. During the *Zämänä Mäsafent* (Era of Princes), 1769-1855, Mätäkäl fell either under the control of neighboring Agaws chiefs or regional warlords of Gojjam and Dembya in north Gonder.<sup>5</sup>

Mätäkäl took its final administrative shape after the 1898 conquest of *Negus* Täklä Haymanot and the 1902 boundary delimitation between Ethiopia and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ye Semien Mi'erab Ethiopia Plan Oetena Tsifet Bet, "Mätäkäl Astedader Akababi Ateqalay Getsita (Bahir Dar 1980 E. C), p.4

<sup>3</sup> Tsega Endalew, p.1

<sup>4</sup> Tadesse Tamrat, "Early Trends of Feudal Superimposition on Gumuz Society in Western Gojjam" in International Symposium on History and Ethnography in Ethiopian Studies (November 16—25, 1982), p. 12

<sup>5</sup> Tadesse Tamrat, pp. 13—14

<sup>6</sup> Tsega Endalew, pp. 62--64

However, when *Negus* Woldä Giyorgis was appointed over Agaw Mider and Begemider in 1916, western most district of Mätäkäl, Gubba, was taken away from Gojjam and put under Qwara district of North Gonder.<sup>7</sup> Gubba stayed under North Gonder until 1947. However, as of 1948, Gubba made part of Gojjam once again and stayed under Gojjam province until the fall of the Därg.<sup>8</sup> Thus, this study broadly focuses on the geographical and ecological unit that was shaped by the 1902 boundary delimitation between Ethiopia and Sudan, and the Gojjam province boundary after 1948.

The intervention of highlanders in this region remained slow at least to the 1960s because the region was infested by human and animal diseases. Hence, highlanders shunned off the region from using it for settlement and agricultural purposes. Largescale-highlander intervention began in the early 1960s with the coming of self-sponsored Wollo migrants and settlement around Mantawuha area in Dibati district that was followed by the Därg's conventional resettlement program in the 1980s.

This study area covers about 32,000 square kilometers that got its shape after the 1898 conquest and the 1902 boundary delimitation. It incorporated vast lowland areas of northwestern Ethiopia that was characterized by sparse population density with less than 10 persons per square kilometer. According to the 1984 population and census report, Mätäkäl had only 222,269 total populations, in the region that constituted nearly fifty percent of Gojjam province.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ayenew Fenta, "A Short History of the Awi People" (Senior Eassay in History, KCTE, Addis Ababa, May 1998), p. 29

<sup>8</sup> See the Letter written by Ministry of Interior on Negasse 10, 1939 E.C with ref. No. 29/18/92, addressed to Dejjazmatch Kebede Tessema, Gojjam Teklay Gizat Enderassie, DMUAC, Fol. No. 639, File No.--

<sup>9</sup> Central Statistics office, *Ethiopia: Statistical Abstract* ,( 1984), p. 20; see also citations from Getachew WoldeMeskel, "The Consequences of Resettlement in Ethiopia" in *African Affairs*, Vol. 88, No. 352 (London: Oxford University, July 1989), pp. 362—363.

During the pre-1991 period Mätäkäl was bounded on the east by the highlands of Agaw Mider, which consists of chains of hills west of Fudi Mountain extending from Mässäla to Čajja and Wumbiri areas in the south. The Dindär River in the north also formed a natural boundary between Dangur district of Mätäkäl and Quara district of north Gonder. Sudan in the west and the Abay River in the south formed a boundary between Mätäkäl and Wälläga province.<sup>10</sup>

Altitude in Mätäkäl varied from 600 meters above sea level in Gubba district to 2,731 meters on Belaya Mountain. Mätäkäl has *Woyna Däga* (temperate) and *Qolla* (hot lowland) climatic conditions. About 82% of the region was characterized by hot lowland (*Qolla*) climate and 10% of it by *Woyna Däga* (temperate), and the rest 8% by *Däga* (highland) climatic condition. The hot lowlands of Mätäkäl received an average annual rainfall of 800-1000 mm while the highland regions of Wombära, Guangua, Bäläya and Dangur districts could get rainfall ranging from 1500 to 2000mm. However, the total size of these highland areas is very small, not more than 3%.<sup>11</sup> The temperature in the region varied from season to season with the annual average ranging from 30°C to 35°C. During the dry season (October-January), the temperature ranges between 30°C and 35°C. During the autumn season (February-May), it ranges between 35° and 40°C; and begins to cool down during the rainy season (June-September) that fluctuates between 25° and 30°C. The hot and humid climate of the region made Mätäkäl an ideal breeding ground for different kinds of diseases like malaria, bilharzias, meningitis, and trypanosomiasis. Because of the prevalence of these diseases, highlanders intentionally avoided establishing settlements in the lowlands of Mätäkäl. During the imperial

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<sup>10</sup> Debre Markos University Archive Center (here after DMUAC), The 1970 Awra Report to provincial Administration Fol. No. 163, File No. 278; Getachew WoldeMeskel, "The Consequences of Resettlement in Ethiopia" in *African Affairs*, Vol. 88, No. 352 (July 1989), pp. 362—363; Berihun Mebrate, p. 2

<sup>11</sup> Berihun Mebrate, "Spontaneous Settlement and Inter-Ethnic Relations in Mätäkäl: Northwest Ethiopia" (MA Thesis in Anthropology, Addis Ababa University, June 1996), p. 2; Bazezew Gelaw, "A History of Čagni Town to 1974," (Senior Essa in History, Addis Ababa University, December 1991), p. 1; Getachew, p. 363.

period (1941-1974), Mätäkäl was a place of punishment for different government officials and school teachers who misbehaved towards provincial or central state administrators. For this reason, Mätäkäl was a sparsely populated region until the 1950s when the first self-sponsored Wollo settlers began to settle around Mänta-Wuha area of Dibati district.<sup>12</sup>

The Bäläs River roughly divides the region into two equal parts. The region to the east of the Bäläs extends up to the borders of Agaw Meder and to the south up to the Blue Nile River. This region generally has rugged topographical features and is characterized by relatively highland ecological features. Altitude in this region ranges 1500 meters a.s.l around Čagni town in the Dura valley<sup>13</sup> to 2573 meter a.s.l at the top of the Wombära plateau.<sup>14</sup> The elevation of Gessengesa cliff ranges from 1500m to 2537 m a.s.l. Just above the cliff is the Wombära plateau. The topography of the plateau at the top is relatively flat and has cold climatic condition.<sup>15</sup> Čagni town is also surrounded by hills like Kar to the west, Shumet *Tärara* (Gwangi Mountain) to the north and Mesobit to the southeast.<sup>16</sup>

Climatically, this region is classified as sub-humid and has contrasting very wet and very dry seasons. The highest precipitation occurs during the *kerämt* season, which runs from May to October whereas *Bäga* (dry season) lasts from November to January. The average annual rainfall of the highland ecological region ranges from 1691mm to 1909 mm. The average temperature of the region also ranges from 12°C to 27°C with monthly minimum of 7°C in

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<sup>12</sup> Getachew, p.363.

<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, "Mätäkäl Cattle Improvement Ranch" (Addis Ababa, February 1988), p. 11

<sup>14</sup> Tadesse Worku and Melese Getahun, "Reconnaissance Geology and Drainage, Geochemical Survey of Baruda—Bäläs Area, Northwestern Ethiopia," (Addis Ababa, June 2002). P. 3, see 821-301-10

<sup>15</sup> Tadesse Worku and Melese Getahun, "Preliminary Note on the Geology of Gesengesa Subsheet" (Addis Ababa, February 1998), p. 1., see821-301-07.

<sup>16</sup> Researcher's observation.

December and a monthly maximum of 31°C in April. Relative humidity is quite high from June to October.<sup>17</sup>

Flat lying lowland physical features characterize the second region of Mätäkäl located to the west of the Bäläs River. The Bäläs Valley itself lies within this lowland ecological zone. This vast flat lowland ecological zone to the west of Bäläs River has some peculiar features. On the northern edges of this region are found Belaya Mountain, which rises up to 2731 meters and Dangur Mountain, which has an elevation of 2488 meters a.s.l. In addition, as we have stated above, the Dindär valley separates these highlands from the North Gonder district of Qwara.<sup>18</sup> However, the dominant topographical features of the region are its flat lowlands. The altitude of these flat lowlands ranges from 1000 meters a.s.l at the confluence of the two rivers, Gelgäl Bäläs and Abat Bäläs,<sup>19</sup> to 500 meters a.s.l located at the junction of the Bäläs and Blue Nile Rivers near the border with the Sudan.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the general elevation of this region declines as one goes from north to southwest and east to west.

The climate of the lowland region varies based on altitudinal difference. The temperature in the lowland ecological zone varies from season to season with the annual average ranging from 30°C to 35°C. During the dry season (October-January), the temperature ranges between 30°C and 35°C. During the autumn season (February-May), it ranges between 35° and 40°C; and begins to cool down during the rainy season (June-September) that fluctuates between 25° and 30°C. The relative humidity of this region also ranges from 34 % to 85% that makes the

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<sup>17</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, "Mätäkäl Cattle Improvement Ranch", p. 8.

<sup>18</sup> Ferede Chumburo and Negash Gonfa, "Geochemical and Geological Report of Gelgel Bäläs Area" (Addis Ababa: Geological Survey of Ethiopia, January 2015), pp. 2—4, see 821-301-19; Wolde Sillassie Abbute, *Gumuz and Highland Resettlers: Differing Strategies of Livelihood and Ethnic Relations in Mätäkäl, Northwestern Ethiopia*, (Dissertation in Social Science, Gottingen University, 2002), p. 2

<sup>19</sup> Kefle Gebru, "Land Use, Vegetation types, and Farming System of the Middle Bäläs (Pawi Settlement) area (Gojjam)" (Bahir Dar, October 1987), p.2

<sup>20</sup> Semiem Mi'erab Ethiopia Plan Qetena Tsifet Bet, p. 1.

average annual relative humidity of the region 60%.<sup>21</sup> The highest temperature in the region is usually recorded during April and the lowest during the month of December.<sup>22</sup>

The ecological zones east and west of Bäläs River have also difference in soil characteristics. The ecological zone that is found east of Bäläs is generally characterized by red, brownish-red (latosols) and dark brown soils.<sup>23</sup> These soils were derived from basaltic rocks and have moderate drainage qualities. However, in some flat lying lands and river valleys of this region, the soils have fine textured clay and silt contents. Better-drained soils are red in color and usually found within steeper slopes, and those poorly drained are markedly darker, and found in flat areas and along river valleys.<sup>24</sup>

The region west of the Bäläs River, on the other hand, is principally characterized by black clay soils.<sup>25</sup> These soils create deep cracks during the dry season and while under wet conditions expand rapidly that leads to the closure of the soils pores and a sharp decrease in drainage.<sup>26</sup>

The difference in ecology and climate of the region had resulted in variation in vegetation distribution in Mätäkäl. Vegetation cover of the region is characterized by shrub land, grassland, dense woodland, and moderately cultivated land. The vegetation diversity of the region consisted of acacia, sesa (*Albezzio gumiferra*), acat (*Phoenix reclinata*), bamboo (*oxythentra Abyssinia*) and gum trees (*Boswellia spicies*).<sup>27</sup> Bamboo is the dominant vegetation in the lowlands of Mätäkäl extending up to the border with Sudan. It has different

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<sup>21</sup>Tana Bäläs Project Part I, p. 77; Getachew, p.363.

<sup>22</sup> Tana Bäläs Project Part I, p.76

<sup>23</sup>Ministry of Agriculture, "Mätäkäl Cattle Improvement Ranch" (Addis Ababa, February 1988), p. 13

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*

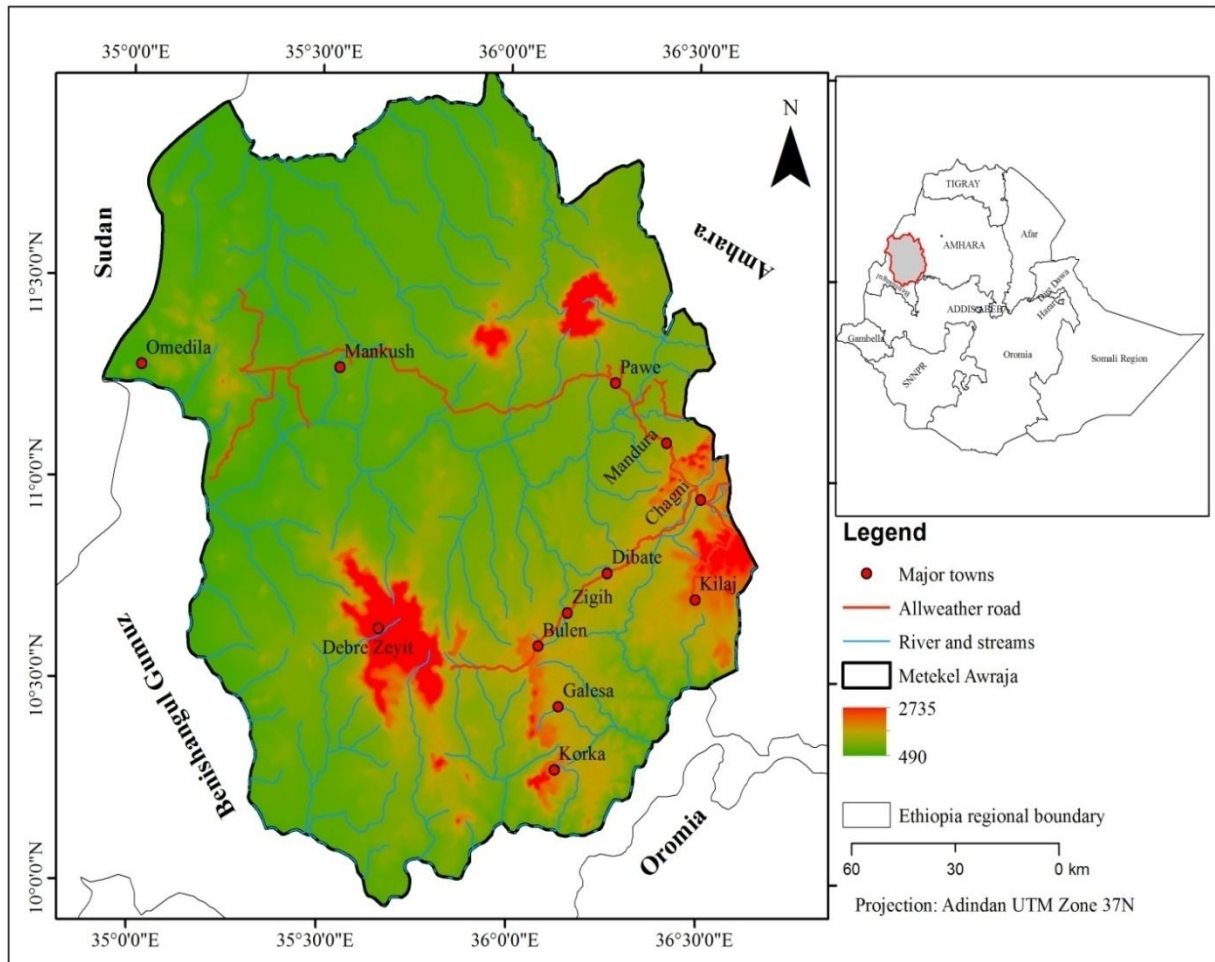
<sup>25</sup> Tana Bäläs Project Part I, p. 87.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*;H. P. Huffnagel, *Agriculture in Ethiopia* (Rome: FAO, 1961), p. 37

<sup>27</sup> DMUAC, Fol. No. 163, No. 278. Compile report of Mätäkäl Awraja to Gojjam province, *Yä Mätäkäl Awraja Abyotawi Enqisqassie*, 1981; Getachew, p.364.

species; however, plain bamboo (*shimäl*) was the bamboo type that predominantly covered lowland parts of Mätäkäl.<sup>28</sup>

**Figure 3. Relief Map of Metekel**



### **Settlement and Subsistence History of Peoples of Mätäkäl to 1880s**

This sub-section deals with peoples' subsistence systems and factors of environmental change before the 1880s. Before the 1880s, Mätäkäl was settled by Gumuz, Agaw, Šinaša and Oromo groups. After the late nineteenth century other groups of people like Amhara, Hadya, Kambata, Tigrayan and others settled in the region. However, the temporal scope of this

<sup>28</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, "Tana Bäläs Project Master Plan 3A, Vol.1" (September 1990), p. 68, D/N338.9, TBP 1990/N

section is limited to settlement and subsistence history of the region before the 1880s and its implication for the physical environment of the region. Thus, it focuses on the above-mentioned four ethnic groups and their economic systems. These ethnic groups occupied different ecological zones in the region that shaped peoples' subsistence systems and technologies employed and were in turn shaped by them.

## **Gumuz**

Before the 1880s, Gumuz groups inhabited the western edges of the Ethiopian plateau stretching between the Nilo-Saharan speaking peoples in the west and Cushitic speaking people in the east. The Gumuz of Mätäkäl lived mostly in the areas to the west of Durra and South of Dindär Rivers. The Gumuz were also found beyond the Ethiopian territory straddling the Ethio-Sudanese border.<sup>29</sup> Traditions about the origin of Gumuz reflect different views. Those non-Muslim Gumuz communities found in eastern Dangur and east of the Bäläs River in the districts of Mandura, Guangua, Dibati, Bullän and parts of Wombära narrate similar traditions of origin. According to this tradition, the Gumuz of eastern Mätäkäl were the indigenous inhabitants of Gojjam extending up to Lake Tana and the Abbay River. They, however, were gradually pushed further west with the settlement of the Agaw in the region. Since their conquest during the Gonderine period, the Agaw had served as the agents the Ethiopian state. The Gumuz were forced to retreat to the hot lowlands to escape the taxation

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<sup>29</sup>Tadesse Tamrat, "Early Trends of Feudal Superimposition on the Gumuz Society in Western Gojjam," in International Symposium on History and Historiography in Ethiopian Studies (November 18—25, 1982), pp.1—2.

and enslavement by Gonderine rulers. Raiding for slaves in the region was common practice until it was prohibited by law and the system was finally abolished in the 1930s.<sup>30</sup>

The Gumuz of Gubba and western Dangur, on the other hand, trace their origin to the kingdom of Sennar in the Sudan. According to this tradition, the Funj kingdom (1500-1821) had occupied Gubba and parts of Western Dangur before the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the Sudan was conquered by the Egyptians, many of the ruling families of Sennar fled to Gubba and lowland parts of Dangur. Hence, the tradition of the region shows that the ancestors of the present Gumuz of the region came from Sudan and settled in Gubba and western parts of Dangur during the time of Funj rule. The ancestors of the Gumuz initially settled in parts of present Qwara district and gradually moved south to Gubba and parts of Western Dangur.<sup>31</sup> James Bruce also supports this tradition when he recounts those members of Funj ruling families who fled to Qwara whenever Turko-Egyptian Arabs increased their pressure on them in the Sudan. Power struggle in the Funj Sultanate was another cause for the flight of Funj ruling families into the region of Qwara. These refugees later established their own Muslim communities within the Qwara district and later moved south and formed western Gumuz clans of Gubba and parts of western Dangur in Mätäkäl.<sup>32</sup>

James Bruce in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century described the Gumuz inhabited regions of Mätäkäl as “a hot woody stripe called *Qolla* that bounded from north to south by the mountains of

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<sup>30</sup> Oral Informant: Tesema Neya, Waki Jani, Yibas Guke, and Dheressa Demere; Kidanemaryam Demilew, “The Shanqella of Mätäkäl: Some Tentative Notes,” (Senior Essay in History, Addis Ababa University, June 1987), pp. 9—10.

<sup>31</sup> Oral Informants: Alheir Mohammed, Sheik Rejeb Algamer Banjaw, and Zahra Mohammed, and Abdul Dene; Kidanemaryam, p. 5; Wendy James, “Notes on the Gumuz: their culture, history, and survival” Paper presented at the Conference on Ethiopian Origins held at the School of Oriental and African Studies (27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of June 1977), p.3.

<sup>32</sup> James Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile, Vol. III* (Edinburgh: n. p., 1970), p. 259; Vol. V, pp. 466—468.

Abyssinia.” He added that the region was “impervious and inaccessible, unless by armed force.”<sup>33</sup> Other travelers who visited the Gumuz inhabited region at different times provided accounts on subsistence strategies and fire technology of the Gumuz communities in Mätäkäl. Different travelers who visited the Dindär valley during 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries provide accounts regarding wildlife diversity and vegetation type of the lowland part of Mätäkäl. James Bruce who traveled to Mätäkäl from Quara up to Fazogli in the Sudan around 1771 stated the presence of abundant forest in the region composed of varieties of trees.<sup>34</sup> Bruce noted that in June and July, the Gumuz country was covered with rapidly growing vegetation and hindered the movement of people. Because of the drainage problem of the soil, the flat lands of the Gumuz region lay under water.<sup>35</sup> According to Bruce, with the beginning of the dry season in October, the Gumuz of lowland Mätäkäl set fire to the woods and dry grasses. They set fire on vegetations twice in the year. The first was at the beginning of October and was intended to open passages for Gumuz hunters and travelers. The second season of burning began in March and continued throughout April. The vegetation burning during this season was intended to provide fresh vegetation growth for their flocks and to prevent, or at least to diminish the ravages of tsetse fly.<sup>36</sup>

Fire was a major component of slash-and-burn agricultural system and hunting practices of Gumuz society in the region of Mätäkäl, Northwestern Ethiopia. Burning the slashed vegetation is as old as their agricultural system. Stephen J. Pyne argues that agriculture

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<sup>33</sup> James Bruce, Vol. II, pp. 696—497

<sup>34</sup> James Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of Nile, Third ed., Vol. 7* (Edinburgh: George Rameay and Company, 1813), pp. 111-- 112; Vol. 6, p. 231.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 614

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, pp. 337—338

without fire is impossible in the shifting cultivators. They cleared plots of lands for cultivation in the hope of burning the slashed vegetation.<sup>37</sup>

Agriculturalists burned their farm and grazing fields because it was difficult for them to carry out farming and herding without fire. Forestland agriculture required fire and fire ignited in the environments where fuel is available. The availability of combustible biomass determined expansion of fire to the neighboring ecological zones. Agriculturalists converted raw biomass into combustibles through slash and girdling that allowed burning and fire expansion to the neighboring areas possible.<sup>38</sup>

As could be traced back from the traditions, Gumuz burnt their cleared farm plots/swiddens between February and April before the beginning of the rainy season. Nevertheless, the fire they set to burn newly cleared farm plots usually turned into wildfire and covered wider areas even extending to highland Agaw settlement areas. Every year between February and April, wildfire was a threat to the people of the region.<sup>39</sup>

There were two fire ecologies in Mätäkäl region that constituted grassland ecology in the highland parts of the region and forest and shrub ecologies in lowland areas. The need and frequency of fire application differed based on these ecological differences. As indicated above, Gumuz prepared farm plots by clearing forestlands and burning after it dried. However, highlanders burnt grasslands to get new pasture growth and to destroy cattle parasites.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Stephen J. Pyne, *Fire: A Brief History* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2001), p. 65

<sup>38</sup> Stephen J. Pyne, pp. 88—89

<sup>39</sup> Oral Informants: Adam Endalew, Asefa Abejehu and Kelemu Bezabih.

<sup>40</sup> DMUAC, Fol. No. 45, File No. ፬፬/፩-85, *sile Den ena Dur Arawit Tibeqa*

The impact of fire on wild animals also varied based on physiological and biological characteristics of animals. Grass fire did not kill large animals except ticks, locusts, and mice.<sup>41</sup> It is difficult to get recorded data on impacts fire on wild animal diversity in the region of Mätäkäl. However, it could be traced back from the local traditions that the Gumuz use of fire was as old as their shifting cultivation which went back beyond 1880s. Elders narrate that firing of forest was one of the major factors that destroyed varieties of wild animals in the region. Oral information indicates that there were different kinds of wild animals in Mätäkäl like elephant, buffalo, giraffe, lion, antelope, greater and smaller kudu, and many other types. These animals are currently either extinct or restricted to small area along Sudan border.<sup>42</sup> However, researchers on forest burning in Africa show that fire has fatal impact on big games. For instance, Clive Alfred Spinage in his work *African Ecology* indicated that burning of forest had killed many kinds of big games beginning from 1869.<sup>43</sup>

Nearly a hundred years after Bruce, Juan Maria Schuver visited Mätäkäl south of the Dindär valley around 1882 and described the region to be thinly forested and covered with anthills covered with fresh grass. Schuver saw fresh grass because he visited the area in June during the rainy season. He noted that the vegetation of the area was mostly scantily leafed and long twigged shrubs that were irritant to human skin. The local people called this type of plant as *Kersh* (Tiger grass) and used it in the making of poison that was used in arrows to kill different animals or even human beings. He stated that the region was sparsely populated and

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<sup>41</sup> Clive Alfred Spinage, p. 319

<sup>42</sup> Oral Informants: Adam Endalem, Assefa Abejehu, Kelemu Bezabih, Alboro Dibaba, Mekuria Adgeh, Sheik Regeb.

<sup>43</sup> Clive Alfred Spinage, pp. 318—319.

that “we travelled through for two and half days without meeting trace of human life.”<sup>44</sup> Gum acacia and incense trees were also dominant vegetation components in Babizenda and Almehal areas of Gubba district.<sup>45</sup> According to Hari C. Dewan and Feshaye Negash, Gubba and its surrounding was known for big tree types locally known as *Diza* or *Guangulis* and date palm. Though sparsely located, *Diza* is still found in areas around Mankush town.<sup>46</sup> The palm tree, which is found in this region, unlike the species found in other parts of Ethiopia is very tall and big sized and has high demand in Sudan.<sup>47</sup>

### **Gumuz Subsistence Strategies and Environmental Implications**

Hunting, gathering and shifting cultivation were the chief subsistence strategies of the Gumuz society. The environment which the Gumuz inhabited was infested with trypanosomiasis and hence unsuitable for cattle rearing.<sup>48</sup> Traditions and traveler accounts show that before the nineteenth centuries the Gumuz of Mätäkäl were largely dependent on hunting and gathering for their livelihood. However, they also practiced shifting cultivation on a small scale. James Bruce who visited lowland parts of Mätäkäl from the side of Qwara stated that the region was unsuitable for human habitation and was only fit for hunting because it was full of thick forests and different kinds of wild animals. The Gumuz people who lived in these lowland

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<sup>44</sup> Wendy James, Gerd Baumann and Douglas H. Johnson (eds.) *Juan Maria Schuver's Travel in North East Africa, 1880—1883* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1996), pp. 198 & 202.

<sup>45</sup> Hari C. Dewan and Fishaye Negash, “Soil Fertility Evaluation of Mätäkäl Resettlement Area” ,P.2.

<sup>46</sup> Oral Informants: Alheir Mohammed, Sheik Rejeb Algamer Banjaw, and Zahra Mohammed; Gubba Distric Communication office, “Tiqit Sile Omedla” Pamphlet, 2007; Ye Hizb Tena Tibqa Minister, Ye Gojjam teklay Gizat ye 1959 E. C Tena Report, the picture of Diza Tree and photos taken during Emperors trip from Omedla towards the interior part of Ethiopia are documented within this report, see DMUAC, Fol. No.080, File No.456,

<sup>47</sup> Oral Informants: Alheir Mohammed, Sheik Rejeb Algamer Banjaw, and Zahra Mohammed; Gubba Distric Communication office, “Tiqit Sile Omedla” Pamphlet, 2007

<sup>48</sup> Kidanemaryam, pp. 32—33

areas therefore were dependent for their life sustenance on hunting and gathering.<sup>49</sup> Parts of Mätäkäl which were inhabited by the Gumuz was endowed with rich natural resources. It was covered with dense forest that hosted abundant wild animals. Thus, killing wild animals for meat was a common tradition for the people of Mätäkäl. Hunting was social activity for the Gumuz of Mätäkäl. They went hunting in groups and shared the spoils according to the rules and regulations of the society.<sup>50</sup>

Gumuz followed different hunting tradition from the neighboring Agaw, Amhara, Šinaša and Oromo. They did not select animals to be killed. They hunted all types of animals for their meat except hyena, lion, fox and vulture. The Gumuz used fire as an important tool for hunting. They set fire on the forest that they supposed wild animals found within it. When animals got out of the forest, the Gumuz hunters chased and killed them.<sup>51</sup>

The chief instruments for Gumuz hunters were locally made spears (*muha*), bows and arrows (*Tahqa*), knives (*chaga*) and sticks (*Gumbea*). Guns were not known in the Gumuz community before the nineteenth century.<sup>52</sup> Hence, the Gumuz of Mätäkäl used different types of traps to kill wild animals. This kind of hunting was different from chasing and killing wild animals from the forest. Killing wild animals using traps did not require mobilizing groups. Instead, people made special types of traps and put them along the major paths of wild animals. One of the traps of the Gumuz community was known as *keyo*, which was prepared from strong rope. In areas where the *keyo* was set, people splashed human urine to attract wild animals. While grazing over the splashed urine, the *keyo* caught wild animals either on their

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<sup>49</sup> Bruce, Vol. III, 1840 edition, pp. 259—261

<sup>50</sup> Kidanemaryam Demilew, p. 32.

<sup>51</sup> Informants: Adam Endalew and Abeyou Engida

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35

legs or their neck. Then, the owners of *keyo* arrived and killed them.<sup>53</sup> The other type of Gumuz's traditional trap was known as *alkamaja*, which was made from iron and had the capacity to kill big animals like lions and leopards. The other technique of hunting for the peoples of Mätäkäl was using *mendo*. This method of hunting was made by preparing wooden bed that could carry heavy loads of stone and trappers hanged meat inside the bed. When wild beasts pulled the meat from the bed, the stone load over the bed fell down and killed the game.<sup>54</sup>

It was difficult to hunt big game animals like elephant, buffalo, rhinoceros and the like using traditional weapons before the introduction of guns to the region in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The most important technique used to kill these wild animals was identifying the roads through which these animals passed in the forest. Then, hunters prepared a number of ditches and planted sharp strong woods or sticks inside the wells dug to kill big game and covered these with grass and small branches of trees. When these big animals passed through this paths, they fell into the wells and stabbed by planted sharp woods and killed by them easily or the people finished them off using spears and stones.<sup>55</sup> Generally, group hunting among the Gumuz of Mätäkäl was carried during the dry season mainly from February to May but individual hunting using traps and other methods did not have time restriction. They killed wild animals whenever they wanted meat.

Gumuz tradition of hunting or killing all kinds of animals was a major factor for the destruction of biodiversity from the region. During the dry season usually they used fire to

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<sup>53</sup> Informants: Amsalu Täfäri and Berihun Embiale.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Informants: Alboro Dibaba, Mekuriaw Adigeh, Demilew Bemano, Ejjeta Awi, and Mäkonnen W/Giorgis; Charles T. Beke, "Abyssinia: Being Continuation of Routes in that country" in *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, Vol.14 (1844), p. 9. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1798047>.

chase out wild animals from the forests. In most cases this fire turned into wild-fire that led to destroy large tracts of lands. Hence, killing of animals and the use fire for hunting purpose was one of the causes of the environmental change in Mätäkäl in the pre-1880s period.<sup>56</sup>

According to the Gumuz tradition the labor division was exercised since earlier times. Females and children were active participants in hunting small game. They used different traps, which they called *bagullamba* that were made to suit small game hunting. Children and females collected rats (*buwa*), snakes (*bora*) and other smaller types of animals using this type of traps. The traps were very small and prepared from wood. They also used miniature bows and arrows for small scale game hunting.<sup>57</sup> According to the Gumuz tradition, femals also participated in all kinds of agricultural activities except clearing forests. Clearing was a major activity of men. Besides upbringing children, digging, weeding, harvesting, fetching water, collecting firewood, food preparation for family and carrying all kinds of things was the duty of females. Men did not carry anything except their traditional weapons like arrows and agricultural tools. Hence, Gumuz females endured heavy burden of the family.<sup>58</sup> This tradition was not contemporary but inherited from their earliest ancestry.

The other supplementary subsistence system of the Gumuz of Mätäkäl in the pre-1880s priod was gathering wild edible fruits and herbs. As we can understand from the traditions of Gumuz society, females and children usually collected fruits and herbs for individual home consumption. The favorite sources of food for Gumuz were *wayka* (which looks like hot pepper) and *lenkuata* (the bark of a tree, which has sticky character). Children and females also collected herbs such as *Kemea*, a long grass with very long roots that was used for food

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<sup>56</sup> Informants: Alboro Dibaba, Mekuriaw Adigeh, Demilew Bemano, Ejjeta Awi, and Mäkonnen W/Giorgis

<sup>57</sup> Kidanemaryam, p. 36; Informants: Adam Endalew, Abeyou Engida and Bewkewt Belay.

<sup>58</sup> "Yä Shanqella Behérésäb Tarik" (A History of Gumuz nationality, brought by 1985 Campaigners to IES, No. 1935), pp. 5-6

preparation.<sup>59</sup> The Gumuz prepared soup from *lenkuata* and *wayka* which was used to soften their bread and porridge which was made from sorghum and maize flour whereas *kemea* was the favorite food for both Gumuz and Šinaša communities.<sup>60</sup> Gumuz also prepared sauce for their porridge from beans (*guaguya* in Gumuz), and different fruit and root crops like *oppa*, *wayika*, *guashta* and *andeha* in Gumuz language and from different types of leaves. The Gumuz also ate different root types locally known as *wunna* and *etta*, pumpkin (*mattiya* or *patuha*), and bamboo shoot (*wajja*).<sup>61</sup> Some of these food items were found in the forest naturally while others like pumpkin and *oppa* were simply planted in the forest with little land preparation. Gumuz used *Oppa*'s fruit for the preparation of sauce.<sup>62</sup>

From the Gumuz tradition, it also seems that Gumuz society practiced shifting cultivation on small scale in pre-1880s period. This system of agriculture dominantly practiced in humid and sub-humid tropics, especially in the regions where rural population density is low. Shifting cultivation is ecological friendly agricultural system that depends on the natural processes of organic matter and nutrient cycling to restore the fertility of soils that declined during cropping. Forest soils usually decline rapidly during the short period of cultivation. Shifting cultivators do not used chemical fertilizers or manure for restoring soil fertility instead they shifted their plots of land.<sup>63</sup> The major characteristics of shifting cultivation are temporary or periodic cultivation, rotation of cultivated fields and plots, slashing and burning of vegetation,

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<sup>59</sup> Oral Informants: Alheir Mohammed, Sheik Rejeb Algamer Banjaw, and Zahra Mohammed; Kidanemaryam, p. 36

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Albert O. Aweto, *Shifting Cultivation and Secondary Succession in the Tropics* (Ibadan: University of Ibadan, 2013), p. 16.

fallowing plots to restore soil fertility and the use of simple tools like machetes, axes, hoes, and digging sticks for land clearing and cultivation.<sup>64</sup>

Wolde Sillassie Abbute describes the Gumuz slash-and-burn system of agriculture as swidden farming. Swidden farming is a form of agriculture in which forest is cut down and burnt to create open space for crop cultivation. Farmers abandoned this plot of land after short period of cultivation on it. The Gumuz used swidden or slash-and-burn agriculture not only as a system of farming but also as a natural resource management system.<sup>65</sup>

Slash-and-burn agriculture has long history that appeared during the Neolithic period and gradually expanded into different parts of the world.<sup>66</sup> Slash-and-burn/Shifting cultivation was dominant agricultural activity in Africa until the introduction of colonial agriculture at the turn of twentieth century. At the beginning, colonialists declined the shifting cultivation as backward agricultural system but gradually understood as worthy system to adapt to environmental challenges of Africa.<sup>67</sup> The Neolithic period agriculturalists used polished stone tools and different tools made from wood. The modern shifting cultivators substituted these stone and wood tools by different kinds of metal tools.<sup>68</sup> The Gumuz of Mätäkäl used different kinds of metal tools for their shifting cultivation system. People exploited their environment using these tools but it is difficult to trace when and how they began to use metal tools. Local

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>65</sup> *Woldesillassie Abbute, Gumuz and Highland Resettlers: Differing Strategies of Livelihood and Ethnic Relations in Mätäkäl, Northwestern Ethiopia*, Dissertation in Social Science (Gottingen: University of Gottingen, 2002), p. 37.

<sup>66</sup> Marcel Mazoyer and Laurence Roudart, *A History of World Agriculture: from the Neolithic Age to the Current Crisis*, James H. Membréz, tran. (London: Earthscan Sterling, VA, 2006), p. 103

<sup>67</sup> Clive A. Spinage D.Sc, *African Ecology: Benchmarks and Historical perspectives* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2012), pp. 346—349.

<sup>68</sup> Marcel Mazoyer and Laurence Roudart, p. 103

elders trace that the Gumuz used metal tools made by Gumuz artisans a long time ago. Still present, the Gumuz used different kinds of metal tools made by their artisans.<sup>69</sup>

Gumuz agricultural tools include *gawud* for cutting and clearing; *ghaa* for cutting and chopping; *chaga* for clearing, harvesting and gathering vegetables; *tebba* for digging and cultivating soil; *gomba* for digging soil and edible roots. The Gumuz also used sticks to carry things, which they called *endenga*. They hung a net made of rope on carrying stick and put gourd/calabash and basketry(*mankuban*) containers inside the carrying-net cords known by the Gumuz as *sii'aya*. Elders trace that this was a long time tradition of the Gumuz community that transmitted from generation to generation.<sup>70</sup>

Gumuz practiced shifting cultivation in wooded environments that composed matured trees, shrubby or bushy thickets, and other types of vegetations. Selection of a site for cultivation inside the forest was not random but was rather based on their local knowledge. The criteria for site selection included type of vegetation, well drainage and colour of the soil and slope of the area (gentle slope is preferable). The Gumuz farmers preferred an area covered with well-grown and mature vegetation. Open and grassy areas were not preferable for shifting cultivation because the land became compact and harder for hoe cultivation and it was susceptible to weed invasion. The Gumuz farmers also identified the fertility of the soil by observing the color of soil and its drainage capacity. According to their knowledge, deep black soils were/are not preferred for cultivation. After selection of a site for cultivation, farmers put

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<sup>69</sup> Oral Informants: Alheir Mohammed, Sheik Rejeb Algamer Banjaw, Zahra Mohammed, Abdul Dene, Yibas Guke, Tesema Neya, Waki Jani

<sup>70</sup> Oral Informants: Alheir Mohammed, Sheik Rejeb Algamer Banjaw, and Zahra Mohammed; Woldesillassie, p. 82.

signs on the selected forest area in order to communicate to other farmers who were engaged in similar activity that their particular plot were taken.<sup>71</sup>

Clearing of the selected sites took place in September and October. Clearing carried out by communal labor party with the preparation of necessary food and drink services for the participants in the labor party. The clearing party armed with *chaga*, a cutlass like instrument carried by each Gumuz farmer, the *gäwd* (machete or short-looped and single-eye bladed sickle), and *ghaa* (axe like instrument) for cutting and chopping. Clearing did not include extraction or pulling out the stumps and cutting big trees. The Gumuz did not cut big trees because they believed that cutting big trees would cause the anger of *miss-jaa* (spirit of a tree), which would lead to devastation of crops in the field. They also left out the stumps of cut trees to allow quick regeneration of trees when fields were left fallow. A Gumuz farmer prepared three or four plots of land for one cultivation season. The sizes of the plots were usually small because they could not clear extensive lands using simple tools like.<sup>72</sup> Farmers gave sufficient time for cleared trees and undergrowth vegetation to dry. They burnt the cleared vegetation approaching the rainy season, usually in March and April. When the rain began to drop, Gumuz farmers prepared ash covered land using hoes for crop sowing.<sup>73</sup>

The Gumuz sow sorghum on the first virgin plot prepared through clearing. For the second round, they sow millet or sorghum again on the same plot. For the third round, they sow sesame or cotton based on a peasant's need. Gumuz do not cultivate more than three times on a single plot. Thus, after the third round of cultivation, this plot was left out to become fallow and

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<sup>71</sup> Oral Informants: Yibas, Tesema, Waki, Dheressa Demera, Abdu Dene, Alheir, Sheik Regeb, and Abeyoou; Getachew Woldemeskel, "The Consequences of Resettlement in Ethiopia," in *African Affairs* Vol.88, No.352 (Oxford University Press, July 1989), p. 371, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/722691>; Woldesillassie Abbute, p. 80.

<sup>72</sup> Oral Informants: Yibas, Tesema, Waki, Dheressa, Abdu, Alheir, Sheik Regeb, and Abeyoou

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

regeneration of forest. In its place, a farmer prepares a new plot/swidden/ through clearing and burning part of a forest and repeats, the above process of cultivation and shifting of crops for three round.<sup>74</sup> Farmers state that after the third round, a plot cultivated three times would grow weed (*minda* in Gumuz language) and lost its productivity. Thus, the farmer moved again to another place, clearing a new plot, and repeating the same process. Through this process, Gumuz farmers created different layers of fallowed land and generations of forest. A farmer cannot return to the first plot before ten years. A plot needs ten to fifteen years fallow period for maturation for the second round clearing and preparation for cultivation. However, the length of fallow period is declining from time to time because of population increase and agricultural expansion.<sup>75</sup>

When farm plots became distant from settlement areas, groups of Gumuz farmers shifted their settlement area to unexploited forest area within their clan territory. They stayed in the new settlement area up to fifteen years until the deterioration of farmlands or forests near their settlements. In addition to deterioration of farmlands, there were also different factors that forced the Gumuz to shift their settlement to other areas. These include outbreak of disease, security problems like war between clans, conflicts with neighboring non-Gumuz communities, and the recommended actions of *Gafia*.<sup>76</sup>

Gumuz farmers cleared a plot of land each year, and each year they left a plot of land that finished the third round cultivation to become idle land or fallow. They used a plot of land for a

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> I.E.S. MS, No. 1933, p. 2

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*; I.E.S. MS, No. 1933, p. 2

short period that is three-cycle cultivation but leave fallow or idle for a long period that reaches up to ten to fifteen years or more.<sup>77</sup>

Scientific research supported the Gumuz traditional method of maintaining soil fertility. Marcel Mazoyer and Laurence Roudart argue that burning of brushed woods on the farm plots enriches the nitrogen and organic matter content of the soil. Clearing of vegetation cover and preparation of land for cultivation allows reheating and aeration of surface layer that accelerated mineralization of soil. However, these minerals were lost quickly from the soil through leaching and denitrification. Thus, subsequent cultivation of a plot exhausts mineral and organic content of soil and productivity declines as well. On the second and third round cultivation, yield becomes too low and thus, farmers abandoned the plot.<sup>78</sup> The other factor that contributed for rapid loss of soil fertility is climatic condition of a region. In hot humid climatic regions, soil fertility declines rapidly, within three or two years. This condition forced shifting cultivators to shift their farm plots after short periods of cultivation seasons.<sup>79</sup>

To allow rapid regeneration of vegetation cover, shifting cultivators do not remove roots, tree stumps and boulders. For rebuilding soil fertility, the wooded idled portion of the rotational cycle must last long enough to produce large amount of biomass in order to provide substantial quantity of ashes when cleared and burnt. Scientific research results show that when idle period lasts about twenty years, the regenerated forests become quite strong, and after slash-and-burn operation, the soil's fertility develops very high. However, when the idling lasts less than ten

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<sup>77</sup>Dessalegn Rahmato, "Some Notes on Settlement and Resettlement...." pp.125—127; Berihun Mebrate, "The Gumuz: Are They Shifting Cultivators?" in *Proceedings of 16<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Svein Ege, Harald Aspen, Berhanu Tefera and Shiferaw Bekel, (eds.) (Trondheim, 2009), pp. 350—351.

<sup>78</sup> Marcel Mazoyer and Laurence Roudart, p. 112; C. R.W. Spedding, *An Introduction to Agricultural System, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition* (London and New York: Elsevier Applied Science Publishers Ltd., 1988), pp. 115—116.

<sup>79</sup> C. R. W. Spedding, p. 117

years, the reforests for the second time clearing becomes thin, the litter and ashes less abundant, the fertility of soil not high, and weeds abound. Consequently, the production yield is less.<sup>80</sup> Generally shifting cultivation in Gumuz community a long time tradition that could be traced back beyond 1880s, however, the scale of shifting was limited because food items to be gathered were abundant. The dependence on shifting cultivation increased when gatherable and huntable food items gradually became scarce. As I have discussed above, shifting cultivation was accompanied by slash and burn of plots hence different kinds of species of plants destroyed by fire and the new vegetation grown this plot after it left fallow would never be the same to the original vegetation. The practice of setting fire to burn a slashed plot would turn into wildfire and destroy larger forestlands and made wildlife to flee or be killed. Hence, shifting cultivation gradually changed the physical environment of Mätäkäl.

The other important subsistence system of the Gumuz was raising animals like goats and chicken, which were raised for meat and for exchange at the market. As could be noted from the local traditions and medieval period historical documents, raising goats and chicken was part of Gumuz subsistence economy. Raising many goats was also used as social status marker.<sup>81</sup> Another important domestic animal for Gumuz was chicken. The Gumuz bred chicken for meat, egg, and sale. In addition to food and sale, they used goats and chicken for sacrifices in traditional ritual systems.<sup>82</sup> Taddesse Tamrat suggested the wealth that Gumuz had in goats since they were forced to pay their tribute in goats when King Yishak (1413—1430)

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<sup>80</sup> Marcel Mazoyer and Laurence Roudart, p. 113; C. R. W. Spedding, p. 118.

<sup>81</sup> Oral Informants: Alheir Mohammed, Sheik Rejeb Algamer Banjaw, and Zahra Mohammed; Kidanemaryam Demilew, "The Shanqella of Mätäkäl: Some Tentative Notes" Senior Essay (Addis Ababa University, June 1987), p. 15; Wolde Sellassie Abbute, *Gumuz and Highland Resettlers: Differing Strategies of Livelihood and Ethnic Relations in Mätäkäl, Northwestern Ethiopia* (Göttingen University, March 2002), p.89.

<sup>82</sup> Oral Informants: Alheir Mohammed, Sheik Rejeb Algamer Banjaw, and Zahra Mohammed

campaigns to Mätäkäl to subdue Gumuz and Šinaša peoples of the region.<sup>83</sup> Hence, from this historical account we can understand that the Gumuz tradition of goat and chicken rearing as supportive subsistence strategy has had a long history in the region.

The Gumuz community had positive attitude towards the forests in their surroundings. The Gumuz natural resource management was tied to their belief system; they believed that natural resources are the best gifts of *Yama* (supreme deity). This view was associated with the Gumuz community that are found east of Beles River who were/are traditionalists. Many of the Gumuz community living west of Beles up to Sudan border are Muslims since the second half of nineteenth century hence their concern towards forests differed from the eastern Gumuz. They did not associate forest management with their belief but the value they could generate from the forests.<sup>84</sup>

According to Gumuz tradition, *Yama* has omnipotent power under which all spirits (*Missa*) exist or function. Thus, *Yama* obliges them to use resources wisely and pass it to the next generation properly or without depletion. For instance, the spirit associated with trees or forest is called *Missa-jaa* (tree spirit). This spirit prohibits people from cutting trees without due reason. Cutting trees without ritually justified reason (for firewood or construction) resulted in a curse by a tree spirit that led to death of people or destruction of their livelihood sources. Gumuz also have another spirit associated with earth named as *Missa-indeya* (earth's spirit).<sup>85</sup> This spirit dictates community members to properly utilize the soil and other resources on the land. *Miss-indeya* prohibits clearing vegetation without due reason and over utilization of soil. The

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<sup>83</sup> Taddesse Tamrat, "Early Trends of Feudal Superimposition on Gumuz Society in Western Gojjam" International Symposium on History and historiography in Ethiopian Studies (November 18—25, 1982), pp. 5—6

<sup>84</sup> Oral Informants: Mekonnen Guki, Senbet Selamb, Dheressa Demera and Abiyou Engida: Wolde-Sillassie Abbute, *Gumuz and highland Resettlers*, p. 98.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

Gumuz considered clearing of vegetation from the earth's surface as taking-off clothes from the human body.<sup>86</sup> When asked, why the Gumuz burned their forests every year the elders' response was to get fresh grass and plants by destroying the dead or dried ones but not to destroy the land cover or forests. Hence, they did not consider burning of forests every year from February to April as wrong deed.<sup>87</sup>

The Gumuz had deep indigenous knowledge on how to manage their natural resources. Their environment was endowed with different vegetation types that were composed of tree species, shrubs, grasses, and herbs adapted to various topographical features and soil types.<sup>88</sup> These forests and vegetation types provided the Gumuz community with their livelihood supplements. They produced food from different kinds of plants and animals available in wilderness. The Gumuz used different parts of plants like buds, young-tender leaves, fruits, roots, and inner parts of the bark as a source of food. Furthermore, forests and vegetations hosted different kinds of animals that they hunted to supplement their livelihood and the Gumuz collected honey for food and market available in the forests in wilderness.<sup>89</sup> They also produced traditional medicines from forest and vegetation species. Thus, forests and vegetations were the sources of everything for the Gumuz community so that they strongly dedicated to the preservation of the eco-systems of their surroundings. The Gumuz ecological management systems tied with their belief systems.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*; Wolde Sillassie, p. 102; Bogale Aligaz, "Conflict Resolution Among the Gumuz Communities: *Mangima* Institution in the Twentieth Century," (M. A. Thesis in History Bahir Dar University, 2013), pp. 3—4.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

## Agaw

The Agaw were dwellers of north and north-central Ethiopian plateau even before the rise of the Aksumite state. Agaws had served as the state's commercial agents during the Aksumite period.<sup>91</sup> Thus, Aksumite rulers sent Agaw governors as their special agents to bargain for gold in the area called Sassu.<sup>92</sup> Different writers gave different geographical locations for this place name. For instance, Wainwright related Sassu with Fazogli in the Sudan. However, Tadesse Tamrat suggested this place to be located in Mätäkäl, west of Sigadi, the seat of the Mätäkäl Agaws until the 1940s.<sup>93</sup> Hence, Tadesse's suggestion seems plausible than Wainwright's because Fazogli is very distant from Agaw inhabited area to act as middlemen.

Traditions indicate that Agaws inhabited northern and eastern Gojjam at least as far back as the Aksumite period. The Agaws of Gojjam descended from the *langata Awiya* (the Seven Houses of the Agaws) who came from Lasta in the north. They included Ankesha, Azena, Banja, Chara, Kwakera, Mätäkäl and Zigam. The other Agaw clans like the Bil (Belaya), Dangili (Dangla), Gwagusi (Gwagussa), and Tumhi (Tumha) were probably late comers to the Gojjam and were not considered as the founding fathers of Agaw Meder.<sup>94</sup>

The seventeenth century Portuguese missionary to Ethiopia, Manuel De Almeida reported that Agaw lived in Gojjam bordering the "Ballous [Gumuz] and Gongas [Šinaša]." According to

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<sup>91</sup> Edward Ullendorff, *The Ethiopians: An Introduction to Country and People*, third edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 37; Frederick J. Simoons, *North West Ethiopia: Peoples and Economy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1960), p.12; N. K. Saxena, *Ethiopia through the ages* (London: B. K. Saxena M.A. and Mand Kishore Saxena, B.Sc., 1968), p. 52

<sup>92</sup> G. A. Wainwright, "Cosmas and the Gold Trade" in *Man* Vol.42, No. 30 (May—June, 1942), pp. 52—53; see also *Christian Topography*, p.52

<sup>93</sup> Tadesse Tamrat, "Early Trends of Feudal Superimposition on Gummuz Society in Western Gojjam" in *International Symposium on History and Ethnography in Ethiopian Studies* (November 18—25, 1982), p.3

<sup>94</sup> Tsega Endalew, *Inter-Ethnic Relations on a Frontier: Mätäkäl (Ethiopia), 1898—1991* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), 27

him, the Agaw occupied ten to twelve districts in Western Gojjam.<sup>95</sup> Mätäkäl was part of Agaw Meder and the name itself was taken from one of the seven founding fathers, Mitikili. Jerome Lobo also reported the presence of two groups of Agaws in Gojjam at the beginning of the seventeenth century. One group were those who accepted Christianity, and the other group were traditionalists.<sup>96</sup>

The major subsistence system of the Agaws of Mätäkäl or Gojjam as a whole were cattle herding, crop cultivation and trade. The Agaws in Gojjam were great herders of cattle. Their environment was suitable for cattle breeding and was largely covered with forest.<sup>97</sup> Due to their adaptation to the forest environment and association of their life with forest resources, the seventeenth century Portuguese missionaries identified the Gojjam Agaws as “the men of forests”.<sup>98</sup> Cattle were not only a means of livelihood to the people but also a source of prestige to the owners. The number of cattle they owned determined the social status of the Agaw of Mätäkäl. Individuals who owned more than a thousand cows had special status within the community.<sup>99</sup> Such individuals organized a special ceremony once every year to demonstrate their wealth publicly.<sup>100</sup> Jerome Lobo described this condition as follows:

...They[Agaws] have a very particular custom which obliges everyman that hath a thousand cows to save every year one day’s milk of all his herd, and make a bath with it for his relations, entertainingthem afterwards with a splendid feast. This they do so many days each year as they have thousands of cattle; so that, to express how rich any man is,

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<sup>95</sup> Manoel De Almeida, *Some Records of Ethiopia, 1593—1646*, C. F. Beckingham and G.W.B. Huntingford (trans.) (London: Hakluyt Society, 1954), p. 16.

<sup>96</sup> Jerome Lobo, *A Voyage to Abyssinia*, Samuel Johnson (tran.) (Lond: Sir John Hawkins, 1789), p. 110

<sup>97</sup> Royal Chronicles of Abyssinia, Appendix E, p. 514

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> Jerome Lobo, p. 70.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

they tell you he bathes so many times.<sup>101</sup>

At the ceremony, the elders of the community bestowed the individual who washed his body with milk with the title of *butta*, which means “very wealthy man”.<sup>102</sup> An individual who held the greater number of ceremonies of washing his body with milk gained a high social position and recognition within the community.<sup>103</sup>

The amount of tribute the Agaws of Mätäkäl paid to the state also indicates the resource endowments of the region. The 1696/7 report of tribute from Agaw Meder shows that the Agaw provided about 100,000 cattle tribute annually to the Gonderine kingdom. The rate of tribute in cattle was calculated on the basis of one cattle per ten. However, this tribute had declined to about 1,500 cattle by 1770’s.<sup>104</sup> Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the wealth of the peoples of Agaw Meder and Mätäkäl showed a marked decline because of constant wars between the Agaw and Oromo who settled on their territories crossing the Blue Nile from the south during the eighteenth century. The Agaw also retreated to the south and west from the surroundings of Lake Tana because of constant war with the Gonderine emperors throughout the seventeenth century. The confrontations of this period were not that much devastating; rather people moved southwards to the interior for strategic purposes

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<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.69-70

<sup>102</sup> Oral informants; Yeneabat Fenta, Grazmatch Tadesse Jembere, and Baynessagn Kebede; The same word among the Oromo referred to the ceremony of power transition in the *Gada* system. However, it became difficult for the researcher to verify whether Agaws borrowed the word “Butta” from the Oromo or not. This power transition celebrated every eight years with great feast see Mohammed Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia: A History, 1570—1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 12

<sup>103</sup> Oral informants; Yeneabat, *Grazmatch* Tadesse, and Baynessagn,

<sup>104</sup> Richard Pankhurst, *A Social History of Ethiopia*, p. 79; Jerome Lobo, p. 70.

because the interior parts were largely covered by forest that hindered the movement of enemy and had mountains and caves that the Agaw used to hide their females, child and cattle.<sup>105</sup>

However, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, pressures on the Agaw people became serious. Different officials who were assigned as tax collectors and regional lords of Damot fought to control the rich resources shared tribute collected from Agaw. Thus, these factors diminished the amount of tribute sent to Gonder during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>106</sup> The Agaws became tributaries of Damot after their defeat in 1769 at the Battle of Banja that took the lives of their seven chiefs. Thus, the Damot rulers shared part of the tribute that had been sent to Gonder with new officials of Damot who were appointed over them as tax collectors.<sup>107</sup>

Largescale cattle herding in the regions of Agaw Meder and highland parts of Mätäkäl before the 1880s had an impact on the landscape of the region. Agaw oral traditions trace that forests were usually opened up by cattle when they repeatedly used forests to feed on and their movement through it. Cattle and other animals browsed undergrowths inside the forests and hence gradually turned the forests into grazing fields and short grass meadow. The lowland environment where there was no cattle breeding, grasses grew tall and forests were covered with thick undergrowths.<sup>108</sup>

In addition to cattle breeding, agriculture was important livelihood strategy for the Agaws of Mätäkäl. Agaws occupied relatively highland ecological zone which was suitable for agriculture which came next to cattle breeding as the economic base of society during the

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<sup>105</sup> Richard Pankhurst, *An Introduction to Economic History*, p. 116.; Bruce, Vol. III, p. 257.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192

<sup>107</sup> Bruce, Vol. III, p 374.

<sup>108</sup> Informants: Mekuriaw Adigeh, Fentahun Yismaw and Adam Endalew

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As we understand from the list of tribute items in the seventeenth and eighteenth century and list of commodities transported to Gonder from the Agaws of Gojjam, the items were dominantly related with cattle breeding and forest products. Agaws from south of Lake Tana provided the city of Gonder with cattle, honey, butter, wheat, hides, wax and other commodities. It was only wheat that was listed as produce of plow agriculture.<sup>109</sup> This shows that crop production among the Agaws of Gojjam was limited and was used largely for local consumption. Though their land was largely suitable for crop production, people preferred to raise cattle. Agaw also produced different kinds of barley like *temej*, *saldimi*, *kumashi* and oat at the top of the plateau lands and millet in the lowland areas, and were used only for local consumption. It seemed that other types of crops were not known in the region by the time and climatic condition suited these crops.<sup>110</sup>

During this period, the region was largely covered with dense forest that hosted different kinds of wild animals, which repeatedly destroyed farm-fields. Big and small wild animals such as pig, wart-hogs, buffaloes and monkeys which moved in herds and individually posed a big challenge for farmers.<sup>111</sup> Pigs and wart-hogs destroyed crops at night time whereas monkeys and buffaloes damaged crops during the day time. Hence, farmers raised their crops mostly different types of barley and wheat by struggling with these crop destroyers. Buffaloes moved in large herds and were one of the enemies of crop production. Buffaloes were not only a threat to farms but they also entered villages and dismantled huts.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Bruce, Vol.III, p. 736; Vol. IV, 27

<sup>110</sup> Informants: Kebede Bayleyegn and Mekuriaw Adigeh; see also for cultivation of millet *Royal Chronicles...*, p. 514

<sup>111</sup> Informants: Kebede Bayleyegn, Mekuriaw Adigeh, and Adam Endalew.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

Besides crop production, Agaws used their indigenous knowledge for the exploiting the resources of the region. They used an herb locally known as *moc-moco* to preserve butter fresh from putrefaction in the course of the long distance travel to sell it at the market of Gonder in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>113</sup> Honey was another important source of subsistence for the peoples of Mätäkäl. According to Jerome Lobo, honey was wildly abundant in the forest, especially in hollows of trees and holes in the ground.<sup>114</sup> Such honey was usually identified by a honey-bird called locally as *Moroc*. This bird had a unique instinct for discovering honey found in the hollows of trees and for communicating this to humans. The *Moroc* showed a special sign sung jumping from one tree to another to passengers on the road side and took individuals who knew her skill to a place where the honey was located or stored.<sup>115</sup>

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries people collected honey not only for consumption but for sale at the market. It was also an important item for tribute payment. During the Gonderine period, many of the districts found in Agaw Meder paid tribute in honey. Some of these districts are Ankäša, Quakura and Azena but Zigäm and Mätäkäl paid in gold.<sup>116</sup> In addition to market value and tribute, honey and butter were items reserved for special presents to the king and regional lords of the time. Agaws during the Gonderine period presented to the king at Gonder four thousand *däbras* of honey. *Däbra* was a large earthen vessel that could hold about sixty pound of weights and used for measuring honey. The amount of honey paid to the king at Gonder declined to one thousand *däbra* after the death

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<sup>113</sup> Bruce, Vol. III, pp. 736—737

<sup>114</sup> Jerome Lobo, p. 70.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*; p. 71; See also *Royal Chronicles...*, p. 514

<sup>116</sup> Bruce, Vol. III, p. 739

Iyasu II in 1755 because many lands in Agaw Meder and Mätäkäl were allocated to private individuals who shared the local tribute collected with the state.<sup>117</sup>

Hunting was also an important economic and social practice exercised by the Agaws of Mätäkäl. Mätäkäl was one of the leading hunting grounds in Ethiopia. The Agaw had different motives to engage in hunting. Before the commercialization of ivory, buffalo and rhinoceros horns at the international market in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half the 19<sup>th</sup> century due to occupation of neighboring countries by colonial powers, these items had high demand in the local markets. The Agaw of Gojjam had traditions of making cups from the buffaloe horns (*colba*) and horns of rhinos.<sup>118</sup> They also made different ornaments and parts of different materials like *woläba* (gloss) and handles of knife, sword, spear and *mäkuomya* (stick for monks and nuns). Thus, the Gumuz hunters hunted these big animals for sale at markets that they bartered them with different commodities of the Agaw.<sup>119</sup> Hunters wore the mane of lion as symbol of bravery and its nails were used for preparing ornaments called *adduda* for their wives and for themselves, and *erban*, *tälsom* and *dree* that used only for females. These were items of decoration used by wives of hunters and themselves. It was not allowed to wives of other men who did not kill big games. And fly-whisk (*chira*) of giraffe was used to prepare hang-strings for different ornaments of wives of hunters.<sup>120</sup>

The motives of hunting for Agaws and local elites were different from the Gumuz who emphasized hunting for subsistence. The Agaw of the region associated hunting with social privilege and as a test of bravery. It was also favorite sport of the ruling elites of northwestern

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<sup>117</sup>Richard Pankhurst, *An Introduction to Economic History*, p. 192; *Bruce*, III, p. 740

<sup>118</sup> Informant: Kebede Bayleyegn.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

Ethiopia. For instance, during the Gonderine period, Iyassu the Great (1682—1706) descended to the Gumuz lowlands and organized hunting-matches.<sup>121</sup> The king himself and his high state officials attended these matches. The participants in the hunting-match were young nobility members who were interested in displaying their military skills in arms, horses and equipage skills to the king and other state officials. The scene of this hunting was held in the lowland parts of the region where big game animals like elephants, rhinoceros, lions and buffaloes abounded.<sup>122</sup>

The game animals were forced out of the forests by footmen and dogs, and driven towards the plain areas where the young nobility members awaited for their prey. The hunters launched attack on the game animals using horses, long spears or javelins, and swords. The king and state officials observed this theatre sitting on horseback or raised top-land areas to identify brave and skillful hunters. Thus, the nobility members distinguished themselves in the free fight with big game animals singly or in groups based on the size and strength of the animals.<sup>123</sup> Successful hunters brought to the king's tent and presented to him parts of the slain beasts as a trophy. These included the head and skin of the lion, private parts of an elephant (tail, teeth, tendon and other parts), tail and horn of buffalo and horn of a rhinoceros. Taking out the teeth of an elephant was one of the challenges that tested the masculinity of hunters.<sup>124</sup> Since elephants' teeth were the king's perquisites that every successful elephant hunter had to present these to the king. The king's craftsmen turned ivory into round rings and bracelets. After the completion of hunting-match, acknowledgment ceremony was held where the king presented ivory rings and bracelets as certificate to the successful hunters. The king

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<sup>121</sup> James Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile*, Vol. 2, p.541

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

granted territories for administration to these successful hunters based on number of rings and bracelets they possessed. However, the grade of hunters was differentiated based on species of game animals they hunted. The hunters of elephant and lion were given priority.<sup>125</sup>

Traditions in Mätäkäl show that Iyassu the Great used to camp in the village of Chehauy II, chief of the Agaws, at Sigadi with his companions, and went to the lowlands to hunt elephant and rhinoceros. He himself was a distinguished hunter of big game animals. He had established close relationship with Chihuay. Iyassu took Kifläyesus, one of Chihuay sons, to Gondär who later became famous *Qené* teacher at Gonder.<sup>126</sup>

This hunting tradition of seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Gonderine court was also deep-rooted among the local people of Mätäkäl. Hunting for trophy was the most favored sport among Agaws, Šinaša, and Oromo peoples of Mätäkäl. Hunting for trophy had great social significance within the community of the region. It was a source of prestige for the rural population and prestige and appointments in the royal courts.<sup>127</sup>

Big game animals hunted for trophy were specific and limited. Trophy hunting did not include every wild animal. Wild animals hunted for trophy included elephant, lion, buffalo, rhinoceros, giraffe and wolf. The killers of these animals had different rankings and positions in the community, particularly during any type of social gathering hunters had special places. There was difference in rank between the hunters themselves. In Wombära area, priority was given to lion and elephant hunters whereas among the Agaws of Gwangwa, Zigäm, and Dangur areas priority was given to wolf hunters. Their reason was wolf killed big animals like

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 542

<sup>126</sup> Informant: Kebede Bayleyegn; see also James Bruce, Vol.3, p. 432.

<sup>127</sup> Informants: Kebede, Alboro, Mekuriaw Adigeh, and Assefa Abejehu; Bilaten Geta Mahteme Sillassie Wolde Meskel, *Zikre Neger* (Addis Ababa, Megabit 5, 1962 E. C.), p. 341

elephant easily and in addition wolf was considered as bad enemy to human beings. Killing wolf was considered as destruction of man's enemy.<sup>128</sup>

Trophy hunters among the Agaw of Mätäkäl followed their own rules and regulations. As hunting was a group activity, each group member shared the days of the week as trophy day. On one's trophy day, this individual had the responsibility to lead the attack and injure first the targeted animal using spear and sword; then group members collaboratively killed the animal. The trophy was given to the first person who injured the target. This tradition was continued until the last person's trophy day of the group members. The trophy days of members was fixed in advance before they went to the forest for hunting. There were days on which hunters could be unsuccessful in killing trophy animal; was considered misfortune for the day's owner.<sup>129</sup>

Before the 1880s, Agaws in Mätäkäl understood their surroundings in different ways. For instance, Agaws in the highland parts of Mätäkäl considered abundant forests in their surroundings as a threat to their life and economic activities because dense forests near their villages hosted dangerous animals like lion and it was therefore difficult for people to move from place to place freely because of the threat from wild beasts.<sup>130</sup> Mekuriaw Adigeh narrates this threat as follows "Our residence was surrounded by forest. Herds of big wild animals like buffalo, deffasa, antelope, kudu and others grazed with our cattle. Lions ate our cattle as they wanted. It was difficult to defend them. Even children could not move far away from villages because wild beasts like tiger and lion killed them so that people lived a life

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<sup>128</sup> Informants: Kebede, Mekuriaw, Alboro; see also Wildlife conservation and Development Authority, "Ye Itopia Dur Arawit Ke Tilant eske Zarie "(Ginbot 1970 E.C), Kifle Hulet, Ye Itaopia Ye Dur Arawit Habt, p 345 for information about Wolf's superiority over other wild animals.

<sup>129</sup> Informants: Kebede, Alboro, Mekuriaw and Amsalu.

<sup>130</sup> Oral Informants: Mekuriaw Adigeh and Fentahun Yismaw

under threat.”<sup>131</sup> This was not the only problem for the community living near forests. There were also many crop destroyers that lived inside the forests like pigs, wart-hogs, and monkeys. Pigs and wart-hogs destroyed crops at night time whereas monkeys during the day time so that farmers harvested their crops struggling with these crop destroyers.<sup>132</sup> For this reason, people wished clearing of forests from nearby areas but the population density was very low to clear away forests from villages. Thus, the rate of forest removal in the region was too slow during 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. People expressed their hope that population would multiply and the forest decimated. Elders expressed this during their blessing ceremonies at any social gatherings as follows:

**ምካይ ካዌና ዊዳይምኻና አቕ ታራ ዜራስታ ማቲሳይምኻና።**<sup>133</sup>

This is translated as:

Let the ax destroy the forest, and may humans multiply like seeds of Teff (famous food crop in highland Ethiopia.)

From this societal view we can understand two things. One is that forests were extensive that surrounded the settlements of the people and the second is the population density was very low which could not check the expansion of the forests from the peoples settlement areas. The negative attitude towards forests developed probably after the eighth century when Agws became Christians because before the eighth century the Agaw people were traditionalists who believed in trees and streams. Hence, people feared cutting trees because they venerated it as possessor of spirits. Furthermore, before the eighteenth century when Agaws were fighting with expansionists of the Gonderine kingdom, they considered forests as shelters from the enemy as Almeida and Jerome Lobbo described well. Jerome Lobbo identified

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<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> Mekonnen Wolde Giyorgis.

Agaws as the “men of the forest.”<sup>134</sup> Hence, pre-17<sup>th</sup> century, the attitude of Agaws towards forest was comparable with the attitude of the Gumuz and the Šinaša.

Competitions between regional lords of the time to control resources of the Agaw inhabited areas in Gojjam had also significant contribution in transforming physical environment. Regional lords cleared forests for military operations and lootings during the time of war weakened the economic power of the Agaws which in turn forced them to expand plow agriculture at the expense of forests. During the Era of Princes, to have control over rich resources of Agaw Meder and Mätäkäl became a bone-of-contention between Damot lords and Awi chiefs. In 1805, *Däjjatch* Elias of Agaw Meder with the support of *Däjjatch* Gwalu of Gojjam proper defeated the famous lord of Damot, *Däjjatch* Zewdie. Zewdie was defeated and fled to Ammuru, South of the Blue Nile. Nevertheless, he returned soon with huge Oromo force, launched attack against *Däjjatch* Elias in 1810, and defeated him. After the defeat of Elias, *Dejjatch* Zewdie became overlord of Agaw Meder. However, the rulers of Gonder saw Damot expansion into Agaw Meder as a threat so that in same year, 1810, Ras Gugsa, the guardian of king of kings at Gonder, marched against Zewdie and captured him.<sup>135</sup>

In the 1840s, a threat against Agaw Meder came from Goshu Zewdie of Damot. Goshu once again wanted to incorporate Agaw Meder in to his territory. However, the people of Agaw Meder under their leader *Azazh* Wossen Tessema successfully opposed Goshu’s attempt at incorporation. In the 1850s, Tedla Gwalu of Gojjam proper invaded Agaw Meder. The Agaws of Gojjam under their leader Mersha Negeidu fought against Tedla’s forces until 1863 when

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<sup>134</sup> Manoel De Almeida, *Some Records of Ethiopia, 1593—1646*, C. F. Beckingham and G.W.B. Huntingford (trans.) (London: Hakluyt Society, 1954), p. 16; Jerome Lobo, *A Voyage to Abyssinia*, Samuel Johnson (tran.) (Lond: Sir John Hawkins, 1789), p. 110; Royal Chronicles of Abyssinia, Appendix E, p. 514

<sup>135</sup> Fentahun Birhane, “Gojjam, 1800—1855,” (Senior Essay in History, H.S. I. U. May 1973), p. 13.

Emperor Tewodros II came with his forces and fought against Tedla Gwalu's forces. The combined forces of Agaws and Emperor Tewodros defeated the forces of Tedla at the battle of Injibara, particularly at a place called Ba'ata.<sup>136</sup> Traditions report the severity of this battle as "blood flooded the ground just like water."<sup>137</sup>

Beginning from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the desire of the ruling class to raise revenue from tribute collection intensified. Military elites decided to settle within community of conquered societies to ensure effective administration, loyalty of communities, and tribute collections. For instance, *Negus* Tekle Haimanot embarked on territorial expansion in Western Gojjam up to the Sudan border after his defeat by the forces of Menelik at the Battle of Embabo in June 1882. His officials established military garrisons in highland Wombera region beginning from 1882. The establishment of military colonies in the peripheries of Mätäkäl was intended to increase resource exploitation in the region. The rich resources of Mätäkäl that existed up to Sudan border attracted Tekle Haimanot's forces to have direct control over the region.<sup>138</sup>

## **Šinaša**

The early history of Šinaša (Boro-Šinaša according to elders) is obscure and difficult to document. Though Šinaša elders claim an origin for the group from Israel, no written source substantiates this myth of origin. Rather, some writers argue that they were one of the original peoples of Ethiopia. For instance, Harold C. Fleming states that Šinaša were one of the groups of Gongga people who had established a powerful kingdom in southwestern Ethiopia before 16<sup>th</sup> century. This kingdom extended from southern Gojjam to the southern limits of the

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<sup>136</sup> Ayenew Fenta, "A Short History of the Awi People," (Senior Essay in History, Kotebe College of Teachers Education, May 1998), p. 28; Bizualem Birhane, "Adal Ababa Tenna: Negus of Gojjam and Of Kaffa, 1850—1901" (Senior Essay in History, H. S. I. U., May 1971), p.5.

<sup>137</sup> Ayenew, p. 28.

<sup>138</sup> Tsega, "Oromo of Wombera---", pp. 52—53

western highlands. The 16<sup>th</sup> century Oromo expansion weakened and divided the Gonga kingdom into different groups. The southern group was represented by the Kaffa people while the Šinaša people represent the northern group.<sup>139</sup> Peter Garrestson also states that the Gonga people lived along the sides of the Blue Nile extending up to the Ethiopian escarpment long before the reign of Susenyos (1607-1632). In the seventeenth century, their settlement area was restricted to areas west of the Durra River in southwestern Gojjam.<sup>140</sup>

Šinaša are one of the ethnic groups of Mätäkäl who live in the districts of Bullän, Wombära and parts of Dibati. They were the original people to Gojjam like the Agaws. Susenyos made repeated raids against the Šinaša people that lasted from 1607 up to 1618. However, his forces could not completely conquer Gongaland.<sup>141</sup> Before their settlement in their present territories in Mätäkäl, Šinaša lived in parts of Damot and Agaw-Meder. Tadesse Tamrat suggested that the settlement of Šinaša had settled east and west of Zingini River in the present territories of Damot, Bure-Shindy, Shashina, Gumar, Azena, Gum-Eyésus and Zigäm bordering the Gumuz and Agaws of Mätäkäl. Demographic and political pressures since 16<sup>th</sup> century pushed them further to the west to the territories they occupied at present.<sup>142</sup> The early Christian slave raiding and the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries expansion of Oromo into Gojjam pushed the Shinaha people to present territories, west of the Durra River. They, in turn, pushed the Gumuz further in to the lowlands. Defeating Gumuz, Šinaša occupied territories in Mätäkäl

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<sup>139</sup> Harold C. Fleming, "Kaffa (Gonga) Language" in *The Non Semetic Languages of Ethiopia*, M.L. Bender ed. (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1976), p.351.

<sup>140</sup> Peter P. Garretson, "The Gonga: The People of the Ethiopian-Sudanese Frontier," in *Africa* (Rome), *Anno 44, No. 4* (December 1989), p.657. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40760438>.

<sup>141</sup> Garretson, pp. 657—658.

<sup>142</sup> Tadesse Tamrat, "Ethiopia in Miniature: The Peopling of Gojjam" in Papers of the 12<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Ethiopian Studies (Michigan State University, September 5—10, 1994), p. 961.

like Dengeb, Bullän, Gongo, Dorra Jalla, Wogdi, Gessengessa, Wombära, and some parts of Gubba and Dangur.<sup>143</sup>

In the 1640s, the Gonga people refused to send tribute in slaves to the emperor at Gonder and continued to lead their relative autonomous life. In 1688, Iyasu I made his great expedition beyond the limits of Gonga land and raided territories further west that included the areas of present Wombära region. In 1703, he again raided the Gonga (Šinaša) region, killed people indiscriminately, and looted their animals.<sup>144</sup> After centuries of successful resistance against Ethiopian rulers and the neighboring Agaws, the Oromo coming from the south defeated the Gonga (Šinaša) people. The Šinaša resisted Oromo expansion into their territory. Nevertheless, in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Oromo drove them out from the hills that surround Dura River and Wombära highlands and pushed into the lowland areas.<sup>145</sup>

The Šinaša dominated territories that lay between Dabus and Didessa Rivers who established their capital at Tulu Yambel. At the time of the Oromo expansion to Wälläga, a king of Gonga kindom named Bisqano offered strong resistance against the advancing Mecha Oromo.<sup>146</sup> In addition to their resistance against the expanding Oromo, the Gonga people were known for their agricultural practices in the region of Wälläga. They grew different types of crops in the highland parts of the region and held annual religious ceremony called Yero.<sup>147</sup>

Robert E. Cheesman stated how Oromo conquered the Kitar region of Wombära in two rounds of campaigns. During the first campaign, Šinaša had defended their fortification at

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<sup>143</sup> Jira Mekuria, pp. 5-6.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p.658.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p.659

<sup>146</sup> Tesema Ta'a, "The Oromo of Wälläga,...", p. 18

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19

Kitar hill and thus defeated the advancing Oromo under their leader Abba Dulla, Dulla Ancho.<sup>148</sup> Four generations after their first defeat, Oromo came back again well organized and stormed the Kitar region. The second Oromo expedition to conquer Wombära came under their chief, Abba Dulla Jelo Wabi. They launched attack against Šinaša fortification at Kitar hill from three directions. Consequently, the Oromo defeated the Šinaša and drove them out from the Kitar area to the lowland parts of Wombära.<sup>149</sup>

Shifting cultivation was one of the subsistence strategies of Šinaša before the 1880s. Šinaša inhabited both highland and lowland regions of Wombera together with the Gumuz before settlement of Oromos in the region.<sup>150</sup> Šinaša's shifting cultivation was based on cooperative labor work which was coordinated and led by community leader known as *Dawa Nasho*. There was no plow agriculture among the Šinaša and performing agricultural activity on individual or family bases was not allowed. Hence, community members that numbered twenty to thirty were organized in one group and carried out all agricultural processes that included clearing, land preparation, sowing and harvesting cooperatively. Any group member who violated the community law faced severe punishment that included the removing of the roof his house during the rainy season and no one could cooperate to rebuild his house unless the deviant himself pleaded for excuse and compensation payment.<sup>151</sup>

Šinaša cleared plots or swiddens in the forest and burnt cleared area in February. They dug the burnt farm plots in a group labour known as *Dawa* when the rain began to drop. Communal labor was also very important among the Šinaša. Clearing, digging, harvesting, and

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<sup>148</sup> Tsega Endalew, Dissertation, p. 31.

<sup>149</sup> Robert E. Cheesman, *Lake Tana and the Blue Nile: An Abyssinian Quest* (London and Edinbrough: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1968), p. 350.

<sup>150</sup> Oral Informants: Dheressa Yadeta, Assefa Damtie, Kenaw Gobena; The Tsega Endalew, "Oromo of Wombera: A Historical Survey to 1941" (MA Thesis in History, Addis Ababa University, June 1997), p.28

<sup>151</sup> Informants: Demlew Beyene, Ejjeta Awi and Haffa Bekie

constructing new houses were carried out through groupwork (*Dawa*). Šinaša people elected a leader of *Dawa* from the group members and this *Dawa* leader was known as *Dawa Našo*. The Major agricultural tool of Shinasha was *Gässon* or *Pallé* in their language.<sup>152</sup>

Šinaša followed similar pattern of Shifting plots and crop rotation with the Gumuz communities. Nevertheless, they differed in crop cultivation pattern. The first choice for the Šinaša to sow in newly prepared farm plot through clearing was Millet whereas for the Gumuz the first choice was sorghum. During the second year cultivation season, they sowed either *Mérra* (white sorghum) or *Bobbé* (red sorghum). For the third round cultivation, they planted cotton. After third round cultivation on a single plot, they left fallow for more than ten years to return to second round clearing of the first plot. Their settlements also shifted with farm plots based on the distance of the plots from their homesteads.<sup>153</sup>

The other subsistence strategy of the Šinaša people was cattle herding. Before the 1880s, the Šinaša possessed large number of cattle like the Agaws of Mätäkäl. Though they occupied intermediate landscape between tsetse fly zone and highland parts of Wombera, the Šinaša people bred a large number of cattle. Elders claimed that their knowledge on traditional medicine enabled them at least to restrict widespread cattle diseases in their locality. The Šinaša used different kinds of livestock medicines which elders mentioned as drinkable, paintable or put on bodies of cattle. In addition, controlling the movement of cattle to tsetse infected ecological zones and vegetation management like burning dry grasses and opening up thick under growths of bushes and forests were part of their traditional knowledge that

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<sup>152</sup> Oral Informants: Alboro, Haffa, Demilew, Ejjeta, and Fasil Tewachew; Abeba Anno and Addisu Adamie, *Ye Boro-Shinasha Bihereseb Achir Tarik ena Bahilawi Essetoch* ( Short History of Boro-Shinasha Nationality and Cultural Values) (Assossa: TG Advertisement and Publication Works, 2007 E. C), pp.56—57.

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

enabled the Šinaša people to possess large numbers of cattle.<sup>154</sup> This practice was common among precolonial communities of East Africa. For instance, different communities in Tanzania possessed large numbers of cattle despite the prevalences of cattle diseases in their localities. The chief disease control mechanisms among these communities were using fire and bush clearing. Peasants destroyed tsetse and tick inhabitants like bush, dense tree covers and long grass that provided favorable condition for vectors and parasites breeding. Although this method did not eradicate disease-bearing tsetse, farmers were successful in limiting the frequency of bovine disease occurrence in epidemic form.<sup>155</sup>

Hunting was also important element of subsistence economy of the Šinaša people in Mätäkäl. According the Šinaša elders, wild animals that roamed in herds like cattle were abundant in their environment. Buffaloes and antelopes grazed in the meadows with their cattle.<sup>156</sup> Šinaša hunting techniques and motives were particularly similar with Gumuz hunting traditions purposes and hence need not be repeated here.

Šinaša social and cultural institutions gave special value to the preservation of forests. They had a special tradition known as *Nymigma*, responsible for reserving forests.<sup>157</sup> According to this tradition, parts of the forest were kept reserved for social and cultural purposes. Šinaša had the tradition of punishing criminals by elders' council. This council had responsibility to investigate crimes committed in the society and when the criminals were found it condemned

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<sup>154</sup> Informants: Alboro Dibaba, Fasil Tewachew, Filate jirata and Haffa Bekie

<sup>155</sup> James L. Giblin, "The Precolonial politics of Disease Control in the Lowlands of Northeastern Tanzania" in *Custodians of the Land: Ecology and Culture in the History of Tanzania*, Gregory Maddox, James L. Giblin and Isaria N. Kimambo, eds. (London: James Currey Ltd, 1996), pp.136-137; See also Helge Kjekshus, *Ecology control and Economic Development in East African History: The Case of Tanganyika, 1850-1950* (London: James Currey Ltd.,1996), pp. 153-154

<sup>156</sup> Informants: Alboro Dibaba, Fasil Tewachew, Filate jirata and Haffa Bekie

<sup>157</sup> Oral Informants: Demlew Beyene, Ejjeta Awi and Haffa Bekie.

them in the public gathering and decided to stay in the local forests until the criminals completed the terms of sentence that ranged from three to seven years based on the type of the crime. Hence, forests were served for the Šinaša as the prison houses.<sup>158</sup> Cutting trees from such reserved forests was strictly prohibited in Šinaša culture. Elders cursed those individuals who cut trees from reserved forests and elders' council of a community or wrong deeds was much feared action by the members of community.<sup>159</sup>

Hence, Šinaša had cultures that suited with physical environment. They had institutions or belief systems that positively shaped or encouraged preservation of their environment. Tim Ingold states this situation as “culture provides the building plan, nature is the building.”<sup>160</sup> The Šinaša had the traditions of preserving their local environment. However, these cultures began to lose its value after the 19<sup>th</sup> century because of the intervention of other cultures and state ideologies. As Sutton and Anderson stated, not only is the role of culture but environment as well constantly changing. Thus, environment fails to dictate its role against cultural depreciation and changes in the environment itself.<sup>161</sup>

The lowlanders in general had a positive view on the forest preservation in their surroundings. They considered this as a place for extracting natural resources like honey, wild fruits, hunting animals and other resources from nearby areas. Particularly, for Shinasha and Gumuz the availability of forest in the nearby areas meant many things for them. Forests had

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<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 41.

<sup>161</sup> Mark Q. Sutton and E. N. Anderson, *Introduction to Cultural Ecology, second edition* (New York, Toronto: Alta Mira Press, 2010), p. 15.

social and economic values as a shelter, hiding places during conflicts and sources of supplementary resources for their livelihood.<sup>162</sup>

### **Oromo Settlement in Mätäkäl**

During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Oromo youths had experience in the southern frontiers of Wombära in southern part of Mätäkäl when they crossed the Abbay for hunting purposes. Killing big-game animals was a requirement to get married for the Oromo youths and to get respect and recognition in the society.<sup>163</sup> Young hunters from Wälläga therefore crossed the Abbay into Gojjam (Wombera) chasing big game. The hunters stayed in the area for weeks and months searching for big game and returned to Wälläga when they had gotten their trophy.<sup>164</sup>

These temporary hunting forays to parts of southern Wombära eventually led some Oromo groups to decide to settle permanently in the region. There were two major routes of Oromo movement from Wälläga into Wombära. The first was the eastern route, which started from the regions of Hibantu and Limmu and was mainly directed to Dangab and other parts of eastern Wombära. The second was the western route and started from the districts of western Wälläga like Bojji, Gidami, Mandi, and Nejjo areas and was directed to western parts of Wombära that extended up to the plateau of Wombära.<sup>165</sup>

The Oromo of Hebantu and Limmu began crossing Abay for settlement in the Dangab region of eastern Wombära beginning from the end of the seventeenth century. Oromized Šinaša groups like Hindibo and Hindobo who had their kith and kin north of Abbay directed the Oromo movement to the Dangab region. These Šinaša groups met earlier Šinaša settlers in

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<sup>162</sup> Oral Informants: Fasil Tewachew and Demilew Beyene

<sup>163</sup> Informants: Kebede Bayleyegn, Amsalu Täfäri , Dheressa Yadeta

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*; Tsega, p. 31.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

eastern Wombära region.<sup>166</sup> Following these Oromized-Šinaša groups, some Oromo clans crossed the Abbay and occupied fertile lands in Dangab. These early settlements became the stepping-stone for further planned Oromo settlements and expansion towards the north.<sup>167</sup>

The largescale Oromo settlements in the Dangab region took place towards the end of the eighteenth century. *Abba duula* Gaaggaa Deedde organized and led the Oromo of Hebantu to settle in Dangab region. They took the greater parts of Somboo Sire, Dimtu, Qorqa, Galessa and Canco regions of eastern Wombära. These late comers further strengthened the earliest settlers and continued their expansion into Berber and westwards into the highlands of Wombära.<sup>168</sup>

The western parts of Wombära were occupied by different groups of Oromo who came from the districts of Bojji, Gidami, Mendi, and Nejjo of western Wälläga. At first, a group of sixty warriors locally identified as *Gachana Jatama* was sent to Wombära across the Abbay under the leadership of *Abba Duula Ancho*.<sup>169</sup> These warriors crossed the Abbay following footprints of wild animals. They founded a fordable site on the Abbay which they named as *Melka Ancho* (Ancho's ford) after the name of their leader, which is still known by this name. When this warrior group entered Wombära, it set up *godo dula* (lit. "war huts") at a place called Dagma Rigata from where they undertook expeditions in southern Wombära. This first vanguard group found the region suitable for settlement, which they reported back to their home country Wälläga.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Tsega, "Oromo of Wombera...", p. 31.

<sup>167</sup> Tsega Endalew, *Inter-Ethnic Relations on a Frontier: Mätäkäl (Ethiopia), 1898—1991* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), p. 30.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

The first Oromo settlements in western Wombära took place around 1733 but large-scale settlements that included highland plateau took place towards the end of the eighteenth century. When the Oromo moved into Wombära, the region was largely covered with dense forest and was home to different kinds of wild animals.<sup>171</sup> The second and largest campaign of conquest of the whole of western Wombära was organized by a new *Abba duula* named Jilo Wabbi. The principal Oromo clans like Amumma, Aroji, Babbo, Gidda, Iggu and Manasibu participated in the second round of campaigns to conquer Wombära. The above-mentioned Oromo clans formed a league where each clan had its own chief but overall leadership was provided by *Abba duula* Jilo.<sup>172</sup> The Šinaša resisted successfully the first round of Oromo advance into the highlands of Wombera. However, the second round of Oromo campaigners came in large numbers and were well-organized force under Jilo Wabbi and in consequence, Šinaša were totally routed.<sup>173</sup>

After Jilo's victory over Šinaša, large-scale Oromo settlement began in the western part of the highlands of Wombära. Different Oromo clans under the leadership of their respective *Abba dulas* moved into Wombära. Some of these Oromo clans included Amumma, Gidda, and Manasibu.<sup>174</sup> After the Oromo victory in Wombära, the leader of this strong Oromo force, Jilo Wabbi, went back to Wälläga and remained there but the other Oromo clans under their respective leaders came under their respective *Abba duulas*. Thus, Amumma under its *Abba*

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<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, p.36; Informants: Kebede Bayeleyegn and Dheressa Yadeta

<sup>172</sup> Robert E. Cheesman, *Lake Tana and the Blue Nile: An Abyssinian Quest* (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd, 1968), P., 350, Tsega, *Inter-Ethnic Relation....*, p. 31.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

*duula* Mole Seggo, Gidda under Necho Oda, and Manasibu under Gole Abbayi divided western and highland plateau Wombära among them.<sup>175</sup>

After consolidating their occupation over Wombära, the Oromo embarked on further expansion towards eastern Mätäkäl and parts of AgawMeder. Their attempt to expand towards the east by crossing the Durra River brought them into conflict with the Agaw groups. Several frontier skirmishes took place between the Agaw and Oromo in the districts of Zigäm and Gwangwa throughout the 1870s and 1880s. These conflicts ended when *Negus* Täklä Haymanot annexed Mätäkäl in the 1890s. Those Oromos who settled in the territories of Agaw lost their language and cultural identity and became either Agaw or Amharic speakers. On the other hand, the identity and culture of Oromo groups in the districts of Wombära and Dibati remained intact.<sup>176</sup> Cattle herding and hunting constituted important subsistence strategies of the Oromo in Mätäkäl in pre-1880s.<sup>177</sup>

For the Oromo of Mätäkäl, particularly trophy hunting had an old tradition that led to the depletion of big game animals from the region. Returning home without trophy was considered as shameful and therefore Oromo hunters stayed in the hunting areas for weeks or months searching for trophy. If they returned home without trophy cultural songs that defamed them were waiting. There were even accidents that hunters lost their life fighting with beasts or because of disease in hot lowlands.<sup>178</sup> For Oromo youth of Wombära, returning with trophy was a prerequisite to get married otherwise it was difficult to get wife.<sup>179</sup> The

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<sup>175</sup> Tsega, "Oromo of Wombera...", p. 35.

<sup>176</sup> Tsega, *Inter-Ethnic Relations...*, p. 31.

<sup>177</sup> Tsega Endalew, "Oromo of Wombera....", pp. 35—36

<sup>178</sup> See *Zikre Neger*, pp. 341—342, for more information on the challenges of hunters

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

triumphant young Oromo returned back home with the trophy song that he sang to the girl he intended to marry as follows:

ኡቱ ከላላ ሂንሃመቲን  
ኡቱ ባላላባሲን  
ኡቱን ጨፌ ሂንሃመቲን  
ኡቱን ሺጌ ሂንሃመቲን  
ፍግም ጎዴ ዳባዴን እልምጎዴ ያባዴን።<sup>180</sup>

Before strewing green grass on the floor of my house  
Before the growth of beard  
Before embracing a girl  
I went for hunting while I was young and  
Came killing a beast.

All these cultural pressures and insults against those who did not involve in hunting pushed to go hunting and animals. The tradition of hunting in the region of Mätäkäl was exercised using traditional tools like spears, swords and traps. Firearms were not known in Mätäkäl before 1880s.<sup>181</sup>

### **Conquest by the Gonderine State and its Environmental Consequences**

The wars of conquest and Christianization missions against the Agaws of Gojjam during the Gonderine period were one of the factors for the environmental change in the region. Christianization brought about gradual attitudinal changes among the Agaw towards their environment. Forests were also cleared for the purpose of military operation during the campaign. Furthermore repeated military campaigns against the depleted the resources of the people and hence gradually transformed the livelihood systems of the people from cattle herding to plow agriculture.

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<sup>180</sup> Informants: Bidika Yaddeta and Dheressa Yaddeta

<sup>181</sup> Informants: Sheik Rejeb Algamer and Kebede Bayleyegn.

Following the establishment of the Gonderine kingdom, the Christian kings launched series of expeditions against the Agaw living around Lake Tana and its surroundings. At the time, the area of Agaw settlement extended from Dengleber in the northwestern parts of Lake Tana region to Bure in the southern part of Gojjam. Because of constant war with Christian kings, the Agaw were forced to evacuate the lowland parts of Lake Tana. The vacant space created because of the war was soon filled by colonies of Djawi Oromo during the reign of Susenyos.<sup>182</sup> The Emperor settled these Oromo to assist his forces during the war that was going on in the regions of Gojjam and Gonder<sup>183</sup> against rebels who rejected his decree of Catholicism as state religion in Ethiopia and territories, which opposed the expansion of Christianity like Agaws of Gojjam and Gonder.<sup>184</sup>

The nature of the physical environment of the interior parts of Agaw Meder enabled the Agaws to defend themselves from the Gonderine rulers. Their area was covered with dense forests and had many caves in which the Agaw hid their families and in some cases could even accommodate their animals. During times of warfare with their enemies, Agaws entrenched themselves within the dense bamboo forest. Pursuing them inside the forest posed a great risk to the enemy. They were armed with bows and arrows, large shields made of buffalo skin and short spears locally known as *kafeta*.<sup>185</sup>

Better-organized campaigns against the Agaw of Gojjam started during the reign of Susenyos (1607—1632). The Agaws inhabited the mountainous parts of Gojjam that was covered with

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<sup>182</sup> James Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile*, Vol. 3, p. 257.

<sup>183</sup> Almeida, *Some Records of Ethiopia*, p. 54

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> Bruce, Vol.3, p. 257.

dense forests.<sup>186</sup> Movement in the dense bamboo forests was a great challenge to Susenyos' army. The Portuguese missionaries who traveled with Susenyos' forces described the forests as 'labyrinth' that was difficult to break through. During the war, the Emperor's forces constructed roads by clearing forest cutting down large trees. However, this was done at great risk from the Agaws who were entrenched inside the forest and armed with bows and arrows, and spears.<sup>187</sup> Clearing forests in times of war was a common tradition in Ethiopia. Whenever chiefs waged war against other chiefs or in the process of conquering another group of people "trees were cut down ruthlessly and burnt down with sad waste."<sup>188</sup>

These wars of conquest of Agaw Meder and Mätäkäl reached its climax during the reign of Yohannes who conquered each Agaw territories. These wars devastated not only human life and property but also the natural environment. For instance, in 1669 Yohannes I (r. 1667-1682) summoned all conquered Agaw "tribes" from Sikut, Sekela, Qizhe[Gish], Dangla, Kawkwra, Chara, Timhwa, Achefer and Anbessa Gamma and ordered the people to cut down trees and open up roads to make accessible Agaw land to the soldiers of the king. During the reign of Yohannes I, the Agaws of Agaw Meder accepted Christianity and whom local tradition traced him as *tsadiku* (Saint) Yohannes. The local tradition narrates that Yohannes I was a true Christian who did a lot to Christianize Gojjam Agaws. Hence, traditions commemorate his deeds in the region.<sup>189</sup>

The nature of the terrain occupied by the Agaws played significant role in continued resistance to the state. Zigam, a district in the southern part of Mätäkäl inhabited by the

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<sup>186</sup> Clay, Royal Chronicle, p.514.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> E.A. Wallis Budge, *A History of Ethiopia, Nubia, and Abyssinia* (Oosterhout: Methuen and Co. Ltd, 1966), p. 132

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.* p. 14

Agaws, remained rebellious against the Gonderine kingdom to the last years of Iyasu I or Iyasu the Great (r. 1682-1706). Iyasu and his predecessors had made repeated military campaigns against Zigam but they have not been able to subdue the people of this region. This region had a considerable number of mountain ridges at the center of the district that divided the area roughly into two, which was used as a strategic instrument to control the advance of the enemy.<sup>190</sup> People usually put scouts on the mountain tops to observe the movement of the enemy. When the scouts saw the movement of an enemy, they sounded alarm through shouting so that the people retired with their flocks to the mountains and caves where Agaws usually used natural fortresses during the time of war.<sup>191</sup>

Furthermore, the area was covered with brushwood, stiff bamboos, thorny acacia, several short shrub kinds that was interspersed with *kantuffa*—a thorny plant species, which grew thick and in abundance in the region. Only the local communities knew the paths through this difficult environment. Local people set up ambushes in this environment when they heard the first alarm and inflicted heavy damage against the enemy.<sup>192</sup> When the local people heard the first alarm, they drove their cattle to the mountain tops, lodged their wives and children in the caves. There were even large cavities that used to hide cattle around the mountain tops.<sup>193</sup> After such preparation men went down to the lowest parts of the dense thickets to launch attack against the advancing enemy. The enemy became an easy prey to the local people while marauding in this unknown physical environment. However, in May 1689, Iyasu the Great launched a surprise attack against Zigam where he found unprepared local people and their cattle in the plain fields. He killed the people indiscriminately and enslaved many children and

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<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 448.

<sup>191</sup> James Bruce, Vol. 2, p. 431

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

women, and looted thousands of cattle. Subsequently, Zigam fell under the control of the Christian Kingdom.<sup>194</sup> Generally, forests were natural allies for the Agaws during the time of wars besides their provision of resources needed for their livelihood. As I stated above, Jerome Lobbo called them as “men the forest.”<sup>195</sup>

The incorporation and Christianization of the Agaw of Mätäkäl and Agaw Meder transformed their lives. Agaws lost their autonomous status and became tributary to the Gonderine kings. Agaws of Gojjam paid tribute to the Gonderine state in cattle. The rate of taxation was a cow in ten every three years. Each individual Agaw possessed thousands of cattle so that paying one cattle out of ten did not put considerable burden on them.<sup>196</sup> This rich resource made Agaw Meder a bone of contention between the rulers of Gonder and Damot. In 1769, Damot forces under leadership of Fasil Woragna, launched attack on Agaw Meder. A bloody battle took place at Banja where seven Agaw chiefs like Ayamico, Nanna Georgis, Zeegam Georgis, and four others chiefs who had great influence in the region and had close ties with Gonderine ruling family were slain in the battlefield. *Ras* Michael’s force from Gonder reached Banja after total defeat of Agaws.<sup>197</sup>

Gonderine rulers were on the side of Agaws during their constant war with Damot rulers. When the king at Gondär heard the news about the battle of Banja, he ordered *Ras* Michael to undertake speedy march against Fasil, the ruler of Damot, to prevent the utter destruction the Agaws, which Fasil was undertaking by the time repeatedly.<sup>198</sup> The Agaws had been reduced

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<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 448—449.; see also Bruce, Vol.3, pp. 735—736

<sup>195</sup> Jerome Lobo, p. 110

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.373—374, 734—735

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 389

to absolute poverty by Fasil after the battle of Banja.<sup>199</sup> Bruce reported the significance of Agaw to Gonder as “The cause of the Agaws was the cause of Gondär, or famine would else immediately follow.”<sup>200</sup> This quotation tells us that Gonderine kings were dependents on the resources of Agaws and this resources exploitation was one of the factors that gradually changed physical environment of Mätäkäl and Agaw Meder. It was for this reason that the Gonderine rulers wanted to keep away Damot rulers from the land of Agaws. However, the the king’s forces under *Ras* Michael could not capture Fasil who had fled to Bizamo across the Nile to reinforce his power with Oromo forces. Upon his return back, Fasil proclaimed as “Fasil is the governor of the Agaw, Mécha, Gojjam, and Damot; prosperity to him, and long may he live a faithful servant to the king our master.”<sup>201</sup> They accepted and gave recognition to Fasil’s proclamation in order to avoid bloody war between them.<sup>202</sup>

After the defeat of Agaws in 1769 by Damot forces, two forces were operating in the resource exploitation of Agaw inhabited areas. These were Gonderine rulers and Damot. Thus, Fasil, the ruler of Damot, began to share the tributes collected from the country of Agaws with Gonder that drastically decreased the amount of tribute sent to Gonder. These wars were usually accompanied by lootings and clearing forests for military operation that depleted the resources of the Agaws particularly the cattle wealth of the people declined drastically.<sup>203</sup>

Before the eighteenth century, Gojjam Agaws were powerful ethnic group who could raise more than four thousand cavalry force at a time and a large number of infantry. However, several unsuccessful battles, and continuous conflicts with expanding Oromos diminished

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<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 573

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 375

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 467

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 471

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 740.

their strength.<sup>204</sup> James Bruce described that the wealth of Agaws was greater than their military power where rulers at Gonder and neighboring regions depended for cattle, honey, butter, wheat, hides, wax, and a number of such articles. More than a thousand and five hundred pack animals loaded with commodities moved to Gonder town on every market day. Rulers wanted to integrate Agaws not military power or share power rather to maximize tribute generated from their region.<sup>205</sup>

At the beginning of nineteenth century, the newly Amharized Damot people became a serious threat to identity of Gojjam Agaws. They waged constant war to control Agaw Meder. Damots began claiming as far as Injibara as their territory. As a result a protracted conflict took place between Agaws of Gojjam and Damots.<sup>206</sup> This conflict continued throughout the Era of Princes when Gojjam was divided into three regions: Gojjam Proper, Damot, and Agaw Meder, each with its own competing local lord. Throughout the course of the war of the period, rulers at Gonder provided support for Agaws. Intensive civil war broke out in Gojjam with death of *Talaku Ras* Hailu in 1795, the founder of the ruling house of Gojjam.<sup>207</sup> This warfare between regional lords of Gojjam came to an end when *Ras Adal Tesema* later Negus Täklä Haymanot unified the three regions: Gojjam Proper, Damot, and Agaw Meder in 1874 and became overlord of the whole region of Gojjam. Hence, Agaws fell under the Gojjam rulers.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, p.735

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 736.

<sup>206</sup> Ayenew Fenta, "A History of the Awi People" (Senior Essay in History Addis Ababa, Kotebe College of Teachers Education, May 1998), p. 24; Chekol Tessema, "Ye Ethiopia Tarik" (Manuscript reserved in Awi Zone Department of Information and Culture), p. 12

<sup>207</sup> Fentahun Berhane, "Gojjam, 1800—1855" (Senior Essay, H. S. I. U, May 1973), p.4

<sup>208</sup> Paul Fischer, "Gojjam's Political History, 1881-1932" in History Miscellanea 18 (January 29, 1975), pp.

As mentioned above, destruction of environment or clearing, looting resources of rebel localities or regions was the tradition of Ethiopian rulers. The wars that waged against Agaw Memeder and Mätäkäl from the reign of Susenyos to rise of Ras Adal Tessema which lasted for more than two hundred sixty years destroyed natural resources of the region and significantly changed environment of the region. Dense forests were cleared and opened up for military movement. People lost their rich cattle wealth to repeated lootings of royal and other invading forces.

Generally, this chapter demonstrates environmental change in Mätäkäl before 1880s and factors responsible for this change. Mätäkäl occupies lowland and midland ecological zones in northwestern Ethiopia and inhabited by different groups of people. The lowland ecological zone was largely inhabited by the Gumuz and partly by the Šinaša, and midland parts of the region were inhabited by the Agaw, Šinaša and Oromo in pre-1880s. Based on ecological difference, these groups of people practiced different subsistence strategies. Hunting, gathering and shifting cultivation were major subsistence systems of the lowlanders (Gumuz and partly Šinaša). These economic systems in this part of Mätäkäl were major factors of environmental change because the lowland communities used fire as a major instrument for their hunting and shifting cultivation system. The regeneration of vegetation on the slashed and burnt environment never be the same to the original vegetation type. In addition to biodiversity destruction, the use of fire for hunting purpose usually turned into wildfire that covered larger forest lands.

Agaw, Šinaša, and Oromo ethnic groups in the midland and highland environment were mainly sedentary cattle herders and practiced crop cultivation on small scale level. The people

of this region were owners of large number of cattle in pre-1880s period and hence cattle herding was one of the factors that shaped the landscape of the region.

State encapsulation and warfare were also other factors for environmental change particularly in Agaw inhabited part of Mätäkäl in pre-1880s. Before the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Agaws were followers of traditional religion who considered forests as shelters during a war with an enemy and source of their livelihood. The 17<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese missionary member, Jerome Lobo, described the Agaws as “Men of the forest.” After their Christianization beginning from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Agaws began to change their attitude towards their environment and began to consider forests as a threat to their life and hence showed interest to remove forests from their immediate settlement areas. Christianization was followed by resource exploitation through taxation and military looting. Military operations that continued in the Agaw inhabited areas to the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century transformed physical environment of Agaw Meder and Mätäkäl. There was clearing of forests for the purpose of military movements and repeated lootings of resources of the region that declined the wealth of Agaws and brought about environmental change.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **MÄTÄKÄL IN THE AGE OF ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTERS AND RECOVERY, LATE 1880s to 1900**

The period from the 1880s to the turn of the century was a time of environmental catastrophe and struggle for local populations in Metekel who adopted various strategies to survive and recover from the crisis. The fundamental cause of this catastrophe was the outbreak of a rinderpest epizootic in the region in 1888 that finished off cattle and hoofed wild animals. Buffaloes, antelopes, waterbuck species were destroyed by this plague. People lost their livestock and hence could not plough their fields. The people in northwestern Ethiopia were already worn out by the regional wars that greatly weakened them and made them vulnerable to famine. Yohannes IV's campaign to Gojjam in 1888 was in particular devastating to the people in this case. The environmental catastrophe that hit the region at the end of the 1880s and early 1890s altered greatly social and economic life of the people of Mätäkäl and Gojjam as a whole. Consequently, severe famine broke that ravaged the life of the people from the region of Mätäkäl. This famine resulted in major changes in economic and social life of the people, which led to the violation social norms to extent of eating socially and religiously prohibited items. Famine stricken people became susceptible to various kinds of disease. The combined effect of famine and disease resulted in adverse changes in the demography of the region.

To overcome this catastrophe, people adopted different survival strategies. Those who survived the disaster turned from cattle herding and crop cultivation to gathering different kinds of wild fruits, roots, and herbs. Migration to unaffected areas south of the Blue Nile

was also taken as a survival strategy. Many people from eastern Gojjam and Damot regions migrated to the regions of Wälläga and Kaffa.

The recovery from these social and economic crises took over a decade. Particularly, the late 1890s and early 1900s were years of recovery in the economic and social life of the people. People gradually rebuilt their livestock resources through looting and purchase from less affected regions to the south of the Blue Nile. Consequently, people's agricultural practices using draught animals revived since late 1890s.

With the revival of the economy, the state began to extend its tentacles into the region to ensure political centralization. In order to increase its revenue, state agents encouraged development and expansion of plow agriculture in the region. The gradual expansion of plow agriculture resulted in change in the physical environment of the region.

### **The Great Famine and its Consequences**

Disasters are extreme failures of economic and social life of the people which usually occur due to natural and human induced factors. Epidemics and drought are some of the natural factors that could result in disaster whereas anthropogenic disasters include ecological damage by human activity, wars, and terrorism.<sup>1</sup> The environmental disaster that ravaged Ethiopia at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century was caused by a combination of natural and human induced factors. From the natural factors epidemic diseases and climate change were the most important while regional and trans-frontier warfare were the major human factors behind peoples' vulnerability. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, rinderpest devastated extensive swathes of territory in Eastern and Southern Africa killing large numbers of cattle

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<sup>1</sup> Angus M. Gunn, *Encyclopedia of Disasters: Environmental Catastrophes and Human Tragedies*, Volume 1 (London: Greenwood Press, 2008), pp. XXIV, XXX--XXXI, Li

and wild ungulates. The destruction of cattle by rinderpest severely affected livelihood strategies of pastoral and plow agricultural communities in Africa. This led to the outbreak of fatal famine in different parts of Africa. The destruction of livestock and wildlife also changed the ecology of vast areas of the African continent.<sup>2</sup> It was during this time that severe environmental catastrophe broke out in Ethiopia.

In Ethiopia, the major causes of the Great Famine or *Kefu Qän* (1888—1892) were regional warfare and rinderpest epidemic that finished off the cattle from the region. The year 1888-9 was excessively hot and dry in Ethiopia that favored rapid spread of rinderpest. The excessive dry conditions sparked off the outbreak of the epizootic in Ethiopia.<sup>3</sup> Before the outbreak of famine, the armies of Emperor Yohannes IV looted Gojjam that lasted from August 1888 to February 1889. The reason behind this had to do with power politics and especially the conspiracy that *Negus Täklä Haymanot* entered with Menilek against the emperor.<sup>4</sup> In January 1887, the Mahdist forces under the leadership of Amir Muhammad Wad Arbab invaded the western part of Gondär, burnt the Monastery of Mahbärä Sillassé, and killed many of its monks. When Emperor Yohannes heard about the Mahdist attack on Gonder, he ordered *Negus Täklä Haymanot* of Gojjam to fight the invading forces in Gonder. *Täklä Haymanot* won victory over them and drove them out of Ethiopian territory.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> C. A. Spinage, *Cattle Plague: A History* (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2003), PP. 3-4

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 504

<sup>4</sup> Afeworq Gebreyesus, *Dagmawi Menilek: Neguse-Negest Ze Itopiya* (Rome, 1901), pp.49—50; Heruy Wolde Sillassie, *Ye Itopiya Tarik: Ke Negeste Saba Eske Talaku Adwa Dil* (Addis Ababa: Central Printing Press, 1999), p.170;

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*; see also Tekle Iyesus WaqGera, *The Goggam Chronicle*, Girma Getahun (ed.& trans.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p.169

However, the Mahdist army reinforced itself and came back a year later in January 1888 to avenge its defeat of 1887. The Mahdists invaded Gonder under Abu Anja. *Negus* Täklä Haymanot returned to Gonder accompanied by his soldiers that estimated to be 80, 000 to face the Mahdists who had numerical advantage which estimated to be 100, 000 soldiers.<sup>6</sup> *Negus* Täklä Haymanot was defeated at the battle of Sar Wuha and lost many of his nobility. His daughter *W/ro* Mintewab was taken captive in the battlefield and his son *Ras* Bezabih escaped capture narrowly.<sup>7</sup>

*Negus* Täklä Haymanot was disappointed with Emperor Yohannes for leaving him alone to encounter the heavy Mahdist force without support and the heavy losses he incurred. When *Negus* Menilek heard of the news of defeat of Täklä Haymanot's army, he traveled to Gondär to assist him. However, he arrived in Gonder after the total defeat and disarray of Täklä Haymanot's forces in the hands of the invading forces.<sup>8</sup>

Soon after this Menelik and Täklä Haymanot met in Gojjam and discussed the regional security problems and their relations with the emperor. The two kings criticized the Emperor for his independent dealings with Egypt by the mediation of the British without consulting them. Thus, they agreed not to obey him as of May 9, 1888 and not to send their tribute to the Emperor. Since Täklä Haymanot did not have sufficient weapons, Minilek gave him two cannons with 50 cartridges and 200 guns with five thousand bullets.

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<sup>6</sup> Tekle Iyesus, *Ye Itopia Tarik*, Sergew Gelaw (ed.) (Addis Ababa: Birhan ena Selam Printing Press, 2002), pp. 159—161;

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*; See also Tekle Iyesus, *Goggam Chronicle*, pp. 173—176

<sup>8</sup> Tekle Iyesus, *Ye Itopia Tarik*, p. 163; Tekle Iyesus, *Goggam Chronicle*, p. 178; Steven Kaplan, "Kifu-Qen: The Great Famine of 1888—1892 and The Beta Israel (Falasha)," *Paideuma: Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde*, ed. 36, Afrika—Studien II (1990), p. 69.

Furthermore, the two agreed to assist each other in the event of attack by the emperor. Menelik then crossed to Shoa after he concluded this agreement with Täklä Haymanot.<sup>9</sup>

The agreement between his two vassals angered the emperor and forced him to punish their insubordination. The emperor decided to proceed first to Gojjam because *Negus* Täklä Haymanot was weakened by the war with the Mahdists and hence did not pose a serious challenge to him. Yohannes' forces that estimated to be 125, 000 soldiers passed through Simen, Telemt, Bäläsa and Gaynt looting the peasants of these districts on their way to Gojjam.<sup>10</sup>

When the Emperor reached Qerannio, in Mota, *Negus* Täklä Haymanot heard the news and decided to defend himself by positioning himself with two thousand soldiers at the impregnable mountain top of Jebella Amba. Unable to break Tekle Haimanot's fortress, the Emperor became angry and ordered his soldiers to loot Gojjam. These soldiers took off everything they found in the land that was worth taking. They even took the properties which the people hid inside churches and killed people, burnt the houses of peasants, slaughtered cattle indiscriminately.<sup>11</sup> Emperor Yohannes' soldiers destroyed agricultural fields of peasants. They fed their horses, mules and donkeys with immature crops in the field. The soldiers forced peasants to cut down unripened crops to deprive the people of Gojjam the sources of food supply.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Heruy Wolde Sillassie, *Ye Ityopia Tarik* (Addis Ababa, n.p., 1999), p. 173

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*; Afework Gebreyesus, p.51; See also Heruy Wolde Sillassie, *Itiyopia na Mätamma: Ye Atse Yohannes Tarik Be Achiru* (Addis Ababa: Itiyopia printing press, 1910 E.C), p. 11

<sup>11</sup> Afework Gebreyesus, p.51; Getachew Haile, "Rehab ena Tesbo be Ityopia" in *Dirq ena Tennie be Ityopia* (Washington D.C, 2010), p. 13; Bilaten Geta Heruy Wolde Sillassie, *Ye Ityopia Tarik* (Addis Ababa, n.p., 1999), p. 173; Abdussamad H. Ahmad, Peasant Conditions in Gojjam during the Great Famine, 1888—1892" in *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 20 (November 1987), p. 3; Afework Gebreyesus, p. 52

<sup>12</sup> Tekleyesus, *Ye Itopia Tarik*, p. 164; Tekleyesus, *Goggam Chronicle*, p. 180; see also Afework Gebreyesus, p. 54.

Emperor Yohannes' army invaded Gojjam in August 1888 and stayed in the area until February 1889 when they proceeded to Mätamma passing through Agaw Meder. The deployment of more than one hundred thousand soldiers, about 100,000 strong infantry and 20,000 cavalry, for about six months in one province utterly devastated and impoverished people of Gojjam. According to *Alaqa Lamma Hailu*, the people of Gojjam were the first to migrate to other parts of the country even before the outbreak of the famine of the *Kifu Qen*.<sup>13</sup> Before Yohannes' destructive campaign, the cattle population of Gojjam was very large and hence there was shortage of pasture. Thus, the extensive regional political and military instability that preceded the great famine aggravated the region's social and economic problems. Yohannes' invasion decimated the cattle wealth of Gojja deepening peoples' vulnerability to environmental shocks. The majority of Gojjam population was already reduced to starvation by Yohannes' six month military depredation.<sup>14</sup>

Yohannes' destruction of Gojjam was worsened by the 'attendant cattle disease' that followed his invasion. The cattle disease that broke out in Hamassén in Eritrea in May 1888, reached Tigray in June 1888 and passed down destroying cattle from Lasta and Bégémeder, and it reached Gojjam in September following Yohannes' military campaign.<sup>15</sup>

Different writers have offered differing views regarding the source of the rinderpest epidemic. For instance, Bairu Tafla in his *Aşme Giyorgis and his works* connects the origin

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<sup>13</sup> Mengistu Lemma, *Metsehafe Tizita ze Aleqa Lemma Hailu Wolde Tarik* (Addis Ababa: Berhan ena Selam Pring Press, 1959 E. C), p. 143.; Hiruy Wolde Sillassie, *Ye Itopia Tarik*, p. 173; Shibru Tedla, p. 131; Afework Gebreyesus, p. 54.; See also Bairu Tafla, *Atseme Giyorgis and His Work: A History of the Galla and the Kingdom of Shoa* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH, 1987), p.797; Tekle Iyesus Waqjera, *The Gojjam Chronicle*, p, 182

<sup>14</sup> Tekle Iyesus Waqjera, *The Gojjam Chronicle*, p. 188.

<sup>15</sup> Mengistu Lemma, p. 95; Donald Crummey, *Farming and Famine: Landscape Vulnerability in Northeast Ethiopia, 1889—1991*, James McCann, ed. (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin press, 2018), p. 9.

of the rinderpest to the Italian soldiers who occupied the Ethiopian territory since 1885 and were short of meat.<sup>16</sup> Thus, they imported infected cattle from Arabia. While the Italians drove these cattle from Massawa to Saati, *Ras Alula* ambushed the Italian contingent on their way and destroyed it. He brought the imported cattle to Asmara. These cattle diffused the disease to other cattle in and around Asmara and from there to Tigray and down to other regions.<sup>17</sup> According to Richard Pankhurst, on the other hand, the Italian businessman and shipowner Lamberto Andeoli was responsible for facilitating the outbreak of cattle disease in Eritrea. Andeoli was a contractor, importer and purveyor (supplier of commercial goods) for Italian soldiers around Massawa. Cattle were one of the items of supply for the soldiers. Some of the cattle he brought to Italian soldiers at Massawa, probably from India, in 1887 were infected with the disease. *Ras Alula* brought these cattle to Asmara after the defeat of the Italian contingent at Dogali on 7 January 1887 thereby facilitating their quick spread across the region.<sup>18</sup>

*Aläqqa Lemma* on the otherhand has argued that the Italians deliberately introduced infected cattle in Eritrea in order to weaken the power of *Ras Alula* and Emperor Yohannes. He noted that they sent a few infected cows to Hamassen and added them to other herds of cattle in the area.<sup>19</sup> A few days after this event, the cattle disease spread to other cattle in the region of Hammassén and destroyed cattle within a short period of time; from there they spread quickly southwards to Tigray and other regions at an alarming speed. This disease that broke out in Hamasén in May 1888 reached Gojjam in September destroying

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<sup>16</sup> Bairu Tafla (ed. And trans.), *Asma Giyorgis and his Work: History of the Galla and the Kingdom of Shoa* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH, 1987), p. 803

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Richard Pankhurst, *The History of Famine and Epidemics in Ethiopia prior to the Twentieth Century* (London: H. & L. Communications Ltd., 1985), pp. 58—59; Crummey, p.9

<sup>19</sup> Mengistu Lemma, p. 100

cattle from the regions of Tigray, Lasta, and Bégémeder.<sup>20</sup> C. A. Spinage on the otherhand stated that the infected cattle were allegedly imported from India by an Italian called Andreoli.<sup>21</sup> *Alaqa* Aşma Giyorgis also indicated the spread of the cattle disease southward from Sabarguma (near Saati) to Gojjam with Yohannes' forces.<sup>22</sup> Though Bairu and *Aläqa* Lemma forwarded different views on how rinderpest of 1888 began, whether it was deliberate or accidental, this disease originated from Italian occupied territories of Ethiopia and disseminated to other territories south of Eritrea.

The symptoms of rinderpest in Gojjam were seen beginning in September 1888 but mass death of cattle began in October. Within next two months, the disease had spread throughout Gojjam and destroyed cattle that survived the depredations of Yohannes' invading army.<sup>23</sup> The rinderpest killed almost all oxen, cows, and ungulate wild animals. Though there is no strong local tradition or written documents on the death rate of wildlife for the period, some elders in Mätäkäl reported that besides cattle the plague took off all grazing wild animals.<sup>24</sup> Powell-Cotton who visited Gojjam soon after the Great Famine period reported that the rinderpest had destroyed the buffalo in the province of Gojjam which had been roaming in large herds before the outbreak of the rinderpest.<sup>25</sup> Spinage also quoted from from the accounts of Baird as follows regarding the impact of the rinderpest on wild game: "Buffalo which used to roam in hundreds over this country are almost extinct, nor I did not see any sign of hartebeest which are also said to have been

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> C.A. Spinage, *Cattle Plague: A History*, p. 501

<sup>22</sup> Asma Giyorgis, "Ye Galla Tarik" Part two, p. 73, MS, IES 380b

<sup>23</sup> Mengistu Lemma, p. 100

<sup>24</sup> Informant: Mekuriaw Adegeh; Mekonnen Wolde Giyorgis and Adam Endalew also have related information

<sup>25</sup> P. H. G. Powell-Cotton, *A Sporting Trip Through Abyssinia* (London: Rowland Ward Ltd, 1902), pp.230-234

common: both have been carried off by rinderpest. Only game seen was reedbuck.”<sup>26</sup> From East African accounts of the period, the kind of game that suffered from the rinderpest included hartebeest, giraffe, buffalo, wildebeest and eland.<sup>27</sup>

The mass death of the livestock was even exhausting for the owners to skin the dead cattle. Vultures, hyenas, ravens and foxes lost desire to eat the dead bodies of animals. Herds fell down dead everywhere along the roads, in the bushes, meadows, and villages and thus emitted stinking odour everywhere because vultures and hyenas refused to eat the corpses. Even goats and sheep were not spared from the disease.<sup>28</sup> Donald Crummey and Steven Kaplan stated that the death rate of cattle on average was 95 percent, which was a crucial factor for the loss of agricultural production in the country that precipitated famine.<sup>29</sup>

Mätäkäl as part of Gojjam faced a similar fate. The people in the highland parts of Mätäkäl were largely dependant on livestock for their livelihoods. They lost not only milk and meat but also their sources of cash and agricultural labor. The destruction of cattle by the rinderpest strongly affected peoples’ livelihood system. Plough agriculture was totally paralyzed and people were forced to leave their land fallow.<sup>30</sup>

The destruction of cattle also affected economic interdependence between neighboring peoples of Gojjam and Gondär. The pastoralists of Fogera in the neighboring region of Gondär had exchanged their livestock with agricultural produce from Agaw Meder. The

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<sup>26</sup> C. A. Spinage, *Cattle Plague: A History*, p. 505

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 510-515; see also C. Van Onselen, “Reactions to Rinderpest in Southern Africa 1896-97” in *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (1972), p. 473

<sup>28</sup> Tekle Iyesus Waqjera, *The Gojjam Chronicle*, p. 187; Richard Pankhurst, *The History of famine and epidemics*, pp. 62—63; Tekleyesus, *Ye Itopia Tarik*, p. 169

<sup>29</sup> Donald Crummey, *Farming and Famine*, p.9; Steven Kaplan, *The Beta Israel (Falasha) in Ethiopia: From Earliest Times to the Twentieth Century* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1992), p.145

<sup>30</sup> Informants: Mekuriaw Adigeh and Adam Endalew; see also Richard Pankhurst, *History of Famine and Epidemics*, p. 70

destruction of cattle by the rinderpest affected severely the interdependence between Agaws of Gojjam and Fogera cattle herders.<sup>31</sup> The effect of rinderpest on the Fogera people was even severe than the neighboring agricultural communities because they were dependant on livestock resources.<sup>32</sup>

Below I present two traditions that depict conditions in Mätäkäl during the Great Famine period. My informants narrated information that was passed on to them from their grandparents. The first of the oral narratives is an account by Adam Endalew who described conditions in Matakal as follows:

የሴት አያቱ እና ወንድ አያቱ ሲናገሩ ከሰማሁት የማስተወሰደው፤  
ረሃቡ ከመከሰቱ በፊት የከብት በሽታገባና ከብቱን በሙሉ ጨረሰው፤  
ተከትሎም ድርቅ ሆነ፤ በእግዚያብሔር ትዕዛዝ የመጣ እንጂ እንደዚህ  
ዓይነት ችግር ተከስቶ አያውቅም ይሉ ነበር። የከብት ማለቅና ድርቅን  
ተከትሎ እጅግ አሰቃቂ ረሃብ ሆነ፤ ሰው የሚበላው ሲጠፋ ሙርኝና  
መቅመቆ አበባ ፍሬ እየሸመጠጠ እንደጤፍ እየፈጨ መብላት ጀመረ፤  
ያም አልጠቀመውም። የከብቱ ቆዳ እስኪያልቅ ሰው ቆዳውን እየቀቀለ በላ፤  
ቆዳው ሲያልቅ ከከብት ቆዳ የተሠራ መጫና ሌላ ከቆዳ የተሠራ ሁሉ  
ቀቅሎ በላ። እዲያም ሆኖ ብዙ ሰው በረሃብ አለቀ። ከረሃቡ በተጨማሪ  
በየመንገዱ የሞተውንና ቀባሪ ያጣውን ራሳ ሲበላ የነበረው አወሬ  
ቁሞ የሚሄደውን ሰው አድኖ መብላት ጀመረ። ቀን በየመንገዱና ሌሊት  
ቤት እየሰበረ ብዙ ሰው አወሬ በልቶ ጨረሰው። ሴት አያቱ ስትናገር አምስት  
ወንድሞች ነበሩኝ፤ አምስቱንም ወንድሞቼን ናሌሎች ቤተሰቦቼን ረሃቡና  
አወሬ ጨርሶብኝ እኔ ብቻ ቀረሁት ለኝነበር። ረሃቡ ከገደለው አወሬ  
የጨረሰው ሰው ይበልጣል ይባላል። ሴት አያቱ የሞተችው በ125  
ዓመቷ ነበር። ወንድ አያቱም ስለረሃቡ ሁኔታ ሲናገር ከጎደኞች ጋር ሆነን  
ወደጫካ እንሄድና ዛፍ ላይ ወጥተን ጨስ የሚጨስበትን መንደር  
እንፈልጋለን። ጨሱ የሚጨሰው ምግብ ሲያበስሉ መሆኑ ስለሚታወቅ  
ካገኝን ቤቶቼን ተከፋፍለን ጨሱ ጋብ ማለት ሲጀምር እሩጠን ሂደን  
የተዘጋጀውን ምግብ ቀምተን እንበላ ነበር ይላል። አንድ ቀን አለ ወንድ አያቱ

<sup>31</sup> Richard Pankhurst, "The Great Ethiopian Famine of 1888—1892: A News Assessment" in *Journal of History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, Vol. XXI, No. 2 and 3 (April 1966), p. 108; see also Richard Pankhurst, *History of Famine and Epidemics*, p. 70

<sup>32</sup> Richard Pankhurst, *History of Famine and Epidemics*, pp. 69, 73

አንድ ኃይለኛ አበጃ ላፈው የሚባል ባደኛዮ ጋር አንድ ቤት እሩጠን ስንገባ ሴቲዮዋ እኛን አይታ የያዘችውን ምግብ በሙሉ በአፋ ከተተችው፤ አበጃ ጉረሯዋን ይዞ የጎረሰችውን እንድትተፋው አድርጎ የተፋችውን አንስቶ በላው። ዘመኑ እጅግ አስከፊ ነበር ይልከበር ወንድ አያቴ።<sup>33</sup>

This is what I remember from what my grandmother and grandfather told me about the famine. Before the outbreak of the famine, cattle disease broke out and finished off all the cattle. This was followed by drought. People believed that this catastrophe which had never happened before with such devastating magnitude could have only happened by god's order. Following the destruction of cattle and the drought, severe famine broke out. When people could not find edible items they were forced to collect the seeds *murign* and *mocmocco* and ground these like *teff* and consumed them. However, this did not help them much. Furthermore, people ate the skins of cattle by boiling them. Materials, which were made of skin like traditional loading-cord or strap and other house utensils were boiled and eaten. Even then lots of people perished because of the famine. In addition to famine, wild beasts that used to eat fallen human corpse along the roadsides and fields attacked those who survived. Wild beasts attacked and ate lots of people during the day time on the road and at night breaking into homes. My grandmother told me that she had five brothers and that all five of them and her other relatives perished due to the famine and attack by wild beasts and that she was the only survivor. Those who died as a result of the attack by wild beasts were said to be more than those who died of the famine. She died at the age of 125. My grandfather also said that he and his friends climb trees and look out for homesteads from which smoke came out. Since we knew that the smoke was the sign of the preparation of food, after a brief lull we would rush out to these houses and share the food with the families. One day, my friend Abeje Lafew and I saw the smoke coming from a house. As we rushed in, the owner of the house saw us and put in all the food in her hand in her mouth. Abeje took hold of her throat and forced her to spit out the food. He then picked it up and ate it. My grand parents passed through such an evil time.

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<sup>33</sup>Informant: Adam Endalew Gebrie, interviewed on Hidar 14, 2008 E.C at his residence in Čagni Town at 01 Qäbäle. By the time of interview, he was 82 years old. He born and grew in rural areas of Mätäkäl and Bagan to live in Čagni Town since 1948. He served at different positions of government office. He is currently pension.

Another informant named *Ato* Mekuriaw Adigeh from southern region of Mätäkäl, Zigäm sub-district, narrated the experience of his grandmother during the Great Famine period in the region as follows:

አያቱ የከብት በሽታገብቶ ከብቱን በጨረሰ ጊዜ ገና የበኩር ልጅዋን ወልዳ እንደተነሳች መሆኑን ስትናገር ነበር። በዚህን ጊዜ መጀመሪያ የከብት በሽታ ገብቶ ከብቱን ሁሉ ጨረሰው፤ ከዚህ ተከትሎ ለአምስት ዓመት ያህል እርሻ ማረስ አልተቻለም በመሆኑም አስቸጋሪ የረሃብ ዘመን ሆነ፤ ሰው በደማ ቆፍሮ ቢዘራ እንኳን አይጥ፤ አምበጣና ሌሎች ተባዮች ገና በቡቃያነቱ እየፈጁ ገበሬው እህል ማምረት አልቻለም ነበር። በመሆኑም እህል የሚባል ነገርን አይን እንኳን የሚታይ ጠፋ፤ ሰው ሙርኝና ሌሎች የሣር ዓይነቶችን ዘር እየሸመጠጠ እንደጤፍ እየፈጨ ለመብላት ተገደደ። ይህም ቢሆን በበቂሁ ኔታ ስለማይገኝ ረሃቡን ለመቋቋም አላስቻለውም፤ ሰው ሕይወቱን ለማትረፍ የተገኘውን ቅጠላቅጠልና ሥራሥር እንዲሁም በሐይማኖትና በባህል የተከለከሉ የምግብ ዓይነቶችን ሁሉ ያለምርጫ ለመብላት ተገደደ። እንዲያም ሆኖ ብዙ ሰው በረሃብና በበሽታ ምክንያት አለቀ። ከዚህ ሁሉ የከፋው ደግሞ የዱር አወሬዎች የሰውን ልጅ ማጥቃት መጀመራቸው ነው። ሰውን እያደኑ የሚበሉ አወሬዎች በረከቱ፤ በተለይ ሱሊ የሚባል አወሬ በጠራራ ፀሐይ ሰውን እያደኑ መብላት ጀመረ። መጀመሪያ ሱሊ በየመንገዱና በየሜዳው እየሞተ ቀባሪ ያጣውን የሰው እሬሳ ይበላ ነበር። በኋላ ግን ቁሞ የሚሄደውን ሰው እያደኑ መብላት ጀመረ፤ ቀን በየመንገዱና በየሜዳው ሰውን እየገደለ መብላት ጀመረ፤ ሌሊት ሰፈር ገብቶ በርና ጣራ ሁሉ ሳይቀር እየሰበረ እየገባ ብዙ ሰው እንደጨረሰ አያቱ ስትናገር ነበር። በመሆኑም ሰው ሕይወቱን ለማትረፍ ጠንካራ ቤት፣ ንጉሥና ሌሎች መከላከያ መሣሪያዎች ካላቸው ሰዎች እየተጠጋ ሌሊቱን በቡድን ያሳልፍ ነበር፤ ቀኑንም በቡድን ሆኖ ካልሆነ በጠናጠል ለመንቀሳቀስ አስቸጋሪ ነበር። እርሻ ስለቀረና የሚግጠው ከብት ስለጠፋ አካባቢው ሁሉ በደንና በረጃጅም ሣር ተሸፍኖ ስለነበር አወሬ ሰውን ለማጥቃት ምቹ ሁኔታ ፈጥሮለት ነበር። ስለሆነም አወሬ ብዙ ሰው እንደጨረሰ ይነገራል። ከአምስት የመከራ ዓመታት በኋላ ከሞት የተረፈው ሰው አባይን እየተሻገረ ከብት ገዝቶ እያመጣ ቀስበቀስ ማርባትና እርሻ ማረስ ስለጀመረ የመከራው ዘመን ቀስ እያለ እያለፈ እንደሄደ አያቱ ስታጨውተኝ ነበር።<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup>Informant: Mekuriaw Adigeh, interviewed on November 26, 2015 at his village in Gohanage Qäbäle in Zigem district. He is about 96 years old and associates his age with the last periods of Emperor Minilek II and coming to Power of Lij Iyassu.

My grandmother said that she was a young woman who had just given birth to her first child the cattle plague broke out and finished the cattle. When disease finished the cattle, people could not farm their fields for five years. Thus, severe famine broke out in the region. People tried to cultivate crops using the hoe but pests finished it while it was at shoot stage in the field. It became very difficult to get crop to see with the necked eye. Thus, people were forced to collect seeds of different grass types like *murign* and others to prepare food by grinding it like *teff*. Even these grasses were not sufficiently available to allow the people to withstand the famine. To save their lives people ate all kinds of available leaves and roots as well as culturally and religiously proscribed food without choice. Even then lots of people perished because of famine and disease. What even worse was that wild beasts started attacking humans. Wild beasts that preyed on humans became numerous. Especially, a beast called *Sully* started preying on human in broad daylight. Initially, *Sully* used to eat only human corpse laying on the road without being buried. Later, however, it began attacking live people and eating them. It attacked people by day time along the roads and in the fields. My grandfather said that *Sully* broke into homes at night through the door and roof and killed lots of people. Thus, people sought protection from individuals who were well-armed with swords and spears, and have strongly built and well-protected houses. They also passed the night in groups in well-protected houses and moved the daytime in groups as well. Because of absence of agricultural activity and cattle for grazing fields the land was changed into dense forests and was covered with tall grass species which created an ideal situation for attack by beasts. After five years of hardship, those who survived the famine crossed Abbay and returned with cattle. My grand mother said that people therefore started to breed stock and farming and the difficult days started to wane.

Both narratives tell us what happened in Mätäkäl when the people lost their livestock resources. Many combined factors complicated the lives of the people. When they attempted to cultivate crops using hoes, croppest became widespread hence production was very difficult. Hence severe famine broke out. People became gatherers to overcome the challenge of famine. However, while people were struggling human disease broke out and

took many people. The surviving people were still physically weakened by the combined effects of famine and disease. Hence, wildbeasts attacked easily the famine and disease stricken population. Wildbeasts, which could not find prey in the forests targeted humanbeings for their food and they killed and ate people. People became targets of wildbeasts both during the day and at night time.

As shown above by the selected two cases studies from relatively highland parts of Mätäkäl, environmental catastrophe and its consequences were comparable to the experience in neighboring regions of northwestern Ethiopia. For instance, Steven Kaplan's study of the period of the Great Famine among the Beta Israeli (Falasha) communities of Gonder shows that people in the region suffered from absence of food. According to Kaplan, food was available only in the forests so that the life of human beings became like animals that depended on picking and eating leaves and fruits in the forests.<sup>35</sup>

Another important environmental catastrophe that led to deterioration in the life of human beings in the period 1888-1889 in combination with rinderpest was the excessive hot and dry weather. In 1888, failure of rain caused a large proportion of crops to perish in the field burnt up by the sun.<sup>36</sup> Dry weather was general throughout the country. Hence, crop failure in the regions of Gojjam, Bagemder and Tigray reduced people to misery. This climate change was attended by locust and caterpillar invasion as early as January 1889 that

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<sup>35</sup> Steve Kaplan, "Oefu-Qen: The Great Famine of 1888—1892 and The Bete Israel (Falasha)" in *Paideuma: Mitteilungen Zur Kulturkunde, Bd. 36, Africa—Studien II* (1990), p. 70

<sup>36</sup> Steven Kaplan, *The Beta Israel (Falasha) in Ethiopia*, p. 145; Richard Pankhurst, *The History of Famine and Epidemics*, p. 67; Timothy Fernyhough, "Social Mobility and Dissident Elites in Northern Ethiopia: The Role of Bandis, 1900—'69," in *Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa*, Donald Crummey, ed. (London: James Currey, 1986), p. 157

depleted meager remains of the harvest. Caterpillars appeared in mass that destroyed not only crop types but also most types of grass species.<sup>37</sup>

Harvest failure in the region of Mätäkäl was not only due to cattle plague but also because of the invasion of the region by different crop pests, which happened parallel with the cattle plague. The invasion of locusts and caterpillars resulted in unfortunate combination of disaster that complicated the life of peasants in the region. Though the land was fertile, peasants could not cultivate crops using hoes because of pests. This condition further aggravated the scarcity of food that resulted in acute famine in the region.<sup>38</sup> The combination of cattle plague and invasion of crop pests further frustrated peasants in Gojjam, which made them hopeless.<sup>39</sup>

The agricultural failure and the problem of pests during the Great Famine period was also experienced in Eastern and Southern parts of Africa. For instance, Charles Ballard's study in South Africa shows that peasants suffered from locust invasion of their agricultural fields. The destruction of crops by locust resulted in peasants' malnutrition, indebtedness and migration to other areas. Women, children and the elderly were the primary victims of famine.<sup>40</sup>

The belief that people associated the destruction of cattle with the 'end of the World' also had strong impact on the life of the people. Priests and monks preached that "The end of

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*; see also Richard Pankhurst, *Famine and Epidemics*, pp.69—70, 99; See also Donald Crummey, *Farming and Famine: Landscape Vulnerability in North East Ethiopia, 1889—1991*, James McCann, ed. (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2018), pp. 9, 14.

<sup>39</sup> Informants: Adam Endalew, Mekuriaw and Mäkonnen Wolde Giyorgis; Pankhurst, *Famine and Epidemics*, p. 81

<sup>40</sup> Charles Ballard, "The Repercussions of the Rinderpest: Cattle Plague and Peasant Decline in Colonial Natal" in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 19, No.3 (1986), pp. 428-430

the world has come.” Such combined catastrophes of cattle destruction and pest invasion were referred to as conditions that could only happen by the order of God. Hence, people refrained from working or cultivating by saying, “What do we work for? We shall die tomorrow any way.”<sup>41</sup> In some parts of Gojjam, people were confused at the beginning by the magnitude of the catastrophe and priests even excommunicated those people who attempted to cultivate land using horses and donkeys by saying cultivation of land using “unclean animals” was not allowed by God. They claimed that this catastrophe happened because of God’s anger on human deeds.<sup>42</sup>

Emperor Menilek also stated that this catastrophe came because of peoples’ negligence to God’s orders in his decree for public prays. Richard Pankhurst quoted Menilek’s decree for public prayer as follows:

When the cattle disease began [he declared] I made a decree Ordering pray to God; but you, O people, did not take my words seriously and gave up praying. The cattle are all dead and when you worked the land with the hoe, locusts and Caterpillars ate up the crop. All this happened because we did not pray enough. Now the disease has turned to mankind and has begun to destroy it. What now do you think will happen to you? When the people of Nineveh prayed for three days the fire stopped. It is not only thanks to the good God, but also thanks to the people that mercy is given. Now let priests and old people pray saying ‘by the grace of God.’ I pray that your heart and mouth both make penitence. I tell you this since it is convenient that I am the guide of the people whom God has given me, but not because I believe that you will do it. Henceforth I take

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<sup>41</sup> Bairu Tafla, *Atseme Giyorgis and His works: History of the Galla and the Kingdom of Shoa* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH, 1987), p. 807

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

no more responsibility for you.<sup>43</sup>

The cattle plague and failure of agriculture resulted in dramatic price rise in Mätäkäl. Farmers and well-to-do members of society believed that cattle would never be replaced and therefore concealed grains and refused to bring it to the markets. Thus, cereals disappeared from the market. The price of a *qwelbit*, (a small unit of traditional measure approximately equivalent to a kilo), of grain became one Maria Theresa Thaler. Formerly one Maria Theresa Thaler could buy one or two *chan* (largest measure of unit approximately equivalent to a hundred kilo).<sup>44</sup> The general absence of supplies in the region led to acute famine. Particularly, poor peasants and land owning peasants in Gojjam became the first victims of famine because they had no reserve. Furthermore, plunders of Yohannes' forces had already impoverished larger population in Gojjam that left the majority of the population with no capacity to overcome the problem of famine even for a short period.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, starvation became acute problem in Mätäkäl and in other regions of Gojjam. People were forced to eat without exception all kinds of leaves, hides of cattle and living and dead animals. Parents sold, abandoned and even killed their children when they were unable to feed them.<sup>46</sup> People in Mätäkäl were forced to enter into self-enslavement even to get the skin of cattle. The wealthy people who had many cattle collected many skins from their dead cattle, stripped them into pieces and then ground them to prepare food. Poor people, however, did not have these to eat. Thus, the poor were forced to enter into different

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<sup>43</sup> Richard Pankhurst, *The History of Famine and Epidemics*, p. 99

<sup>44</sup> Informants: Mekonnen Wolde Giyorgis, Mekuriaw Adigeh; see also Afeworq Gebreyesus, p. 64

<sup>45</sup> Mengistu Lemma, p. 143;

<sup>46</sup> Informants: Fentahun Yismaw, Mekuriaw, and Adam; Mengistu Lemma, *Metsehafe Tizita ze Aleqa Lemma*, p. 143

agreements with owners of many skins to get one or two skins in order to save their lives. This contractual agreement was expressed in the traditional saying “ለአንድ ቆዳ አምስት ዓመት ተገዛ.”<sup>47</sup> (Meaning for one skin a person became a labor servant for five years).

The famine had a major demographic impact on Mätäkäl as well as the whole of Gojjam. Many people died because of combined effects of famine, disease and wildlife attack. As Ato Mekuriaw stated in the above case study, people were found dead in Mätäkäl along roads, in the field and in the forests. The tradition of burying dead bodies was abandoned because of high death rate and loss of strength to carry out the burial service on the part of the living.<sup>48</sup>

One of the consequential effects of the famine in Mätäkäl and other parts of Gojjam was the outbreak of epidemic disease, which accelerated the death rate in the region. The major cause for the outbreak of epidemic disease was deterioration of sanitary conditions in residential areas and absence of selection in feeding system because the famine forced people to eat whatever was available.<sup>49</sup> The existence of large numbers of unburied corpses in settlement areas led to deterioration in the sanitary conditions of the living environment. Swarms of flies that fed on putrefying corpses also covered the bodies of living human beings. The eating of decayed matter and other non-clean food had detrimental effects and contributed to the outbreak of disease.<sup>50</sup> Hence, famine victims who were physically enfeebled lacked resistance and became easy prey to different kinds of diseases. Smallpox,

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<sup>47</sup> Oral Informants: Adam Endalew, Mekuriaw Adigeh, Assefa Abejehu. This is common traditional saying among the Agaw of Agaw Meder and Mätäkäl but many did not know how it developed.

<sup>48</sup> Informants: Mekuriaw and Adam; See also Tekle Iyesus, *ye Itopia Tarik*, pp. 169—170

<sup>49</sup> Afewerq Gebre Iyesus, p. 170

<sup>50</sup> Richard Pankhurst, *The History of Famine and Epidemics*, p. 86

typhus, cholera, and dysentery were the most common diseases swept the large areas and carried off huge number of people.<sup>51</sup>

Though there are no figures available on the demographic effects of mass deaths from the combined attack of famine and disease, elders in Mätäkäl state that many villages were left without human beings or remained with very few individuals.<sup>52</sup> Richard Pankhurst and Steven Kaplan estimated that one to two-third of population died during the Great Famine period. Famine and the consequent disease depopulated many parts of the country. Many remained without inhabitants because of the calamities of cholera and survivors left their regions in search of subsistence. Even in the post-famine period, some regions like Begemeder remained short of labour to cultivate the land.<sup>53</sup> According to Kaplan, the death rate in Begemder and Lake Tana region was as high as 75 percent that depopulated the region severely and hence agricultural laborers were imported from other areas even decades after the Geat Famine period. Artisans who depended on manual labor were already vulnerable to famine disappeared from the region even long years after recovery.<sup>54</sup>

Another important effect of the famine in Mätäkäl and neighboring regions of Gojjam was migration and looting of less affected areas. In Mätäkäl, Gumuz who were hoe cultivators were less affected by the rinderpest though they suffered from locust invasion. The Gumuz inhabited lowland region of Mätäkäl which was also better forested where different kinds of natural resources like wild fruits, honey and other items of food were available.<sup>55</sup> Many

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<sup>51</sup> Spinage, p. 1062; See also Richard Pankhurst, "Great Famine...Part Two", P. 271.; Donald Crumme, pp. 23—24

<sup>52</sup> Informants: Adam, Mekuriaw and Assefa Abejehu

<sup>53</sup> Steven Kaplan, "*kifu-Qen.*", P.71; R. Pankhurst, *The History of Famine and Epidemics*, p.89;

<sup>54</sup> Kaplan, *The Beta Israel...*, pp. 147—148;

<sup>55</sup> Informants: Adam and Abeyou Engida, Abeyou's father Engida Tessema well-known Agaw elder who had better knowledge and experience in the history of Mätäkäl region.

people from the regions of Agaw Meder and Damot fled to Mätäkäl to have access to these rich natural resources. Highland Agaws from the eastern parts of Mätäkäl and Agaw Meder moved deep into Gumuz territories during this period, and settled in highland territories of Gumuz like Dangur and Belaya.<sup>56</sup> Thus, Agaw settlers in these areas gave the names of their original homelands to commemorate their birthplaces or districts like *Ankēs-ho* (settlement area of people who came from Ankäša district from Agaw Meder) and *Métékél-ho* (settlement area of people who came from Mätäkäl Agaw areas) and settled in the highlands of Dangur district.<sup>57</sup>

The provincial ruling class of Gojjam also used the resources of Mätäkäl in order to cope with the devastating impacts of the famine. For instance, *Nigus* Täklä Haymanot sent his soldiers to Gumuz inhabited region of lowland Mätäkäl in order to save them from the destructions of the famine. Täklä Haymanot's soldiers stayed in the region looting crops of Gumuz community and collecting the natural resources of the region. At the beginning, soldiers campaigned to Mätäkäl under the command of *Nigus* Täklä Haymanot himself but later Täklä Haymanot left Mätäkäl for Jimma.<sup>58</sup>

Lowland Mätäkäl was less affected by the environmental disaster of the period compared to its highland parts because the lowland populations were not cattle herders. The Gumuz were hoe cultivators. However, like their counterparts in the highlands they suffered from invasion by crop pests. Though the lowlands of Mätäkäl were endowed with resources and

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<sup>56</sup> Abdussamad, P. 9; Informants: Adam, Abeyou and Mekriaw.; see also Richard Pankhurst, *The History of Famine and Epidemics*, p. 93

<sup>57</sup> Informants: Adam, Abeyou and Mekriaw

<sup>58</sup> TeKLe Iyesus, *Ye Itopia Tarik...*, p. 169

were less affected the Great Famine, they had to endure the man-made disaster that came as a result of plundering expeditions organized by highland populations.<sup>59</sup>

Migration to other parts of the country became a survival strategy for peoples from Damot and eastern parts of Gojjam. In February and March 1891 considerable groups of people from Damot and other parts of Gojjam migrated south of the Blue Nile to Kaffa and other parts of Oromo lands to escape the famine. The Gojjame migrants to areas south of Blue Nile included higher officials of the region, soldiers and other elite members with their retainers.<sup>60</sup> Täklä Haymanot's soldiers targeted for looting Kulo and Konta areas of Kaffa region. Tekle Iyesus stated the condition of looting in the region as “...ከዚያ ወዲህ ወታደር በጎራዴወ. እየመነጠረ ተጎዘ፤ በኩሉና በኮንታ ወራሪ እየሰደደ ከብት እገፈፈ. እያመጣ ሥጋ እንደ ጎመን ሆኖ ተሰላቸ።”<sup>61</sup> Another Shoan correspondent, named Yosef Neguse stated the condition of looting in Kaffa in his letter to Alfred Ilg as “ንጉሥ ተክለሃይማኖት ከፋን ጨርሰዉ ሻንቅላ ደረሱ።”<sup>62</sup> (meaning *Negus* Täklä Haymanot reached the country of “Shanqella” after finishing off Kafa.) This was to indicate Tekle Haymanot's expansion towards areas of Kulo and Konta inhabited regions. Hence, those elites and soldiers of Gojjam who migrated to Kaffa survived the destructions of famine and disease by looting

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<sup>59</sup>see Getachew Haile, “Rehab ena Tesbo Be Itopia”, pp. 27—28; *Tekle Iyesus, Gojjam Chronicle*, p. 187.

<sup>60</sup> Pankhurst, *The History of Famine and Epidemics*, p. 98; Tekle Iyesus, *Ye Itopia Tarik*, pp. 174—175; Tekle Iyesus, *Gojjam Chronicle*, pp. 193—194; See also Abdussamad H. Ahmad, “Peasants Conditions in Gojjam during the Great Famine, 1888-1892,” in *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 20 (November 1987), p. 10.

<sup>61</sup> Tekle Iyesus, *Ye Itopia Tarik*, p. 174

<sup>62</sup> Yosef Neguse's letter to Alfred Ilg, 14 September 1891, in Bairu Tafla, *Ethiopian Records*, p. 115

less affected areas to the south of the Blue Nile. In 1891 *Negus* Täklä Haymanot himself stayed in Kaffa for about 10 months.<sup>63</sup>

The ravages of rinderpest had similar consequences in other Eastern African countries. Helge Kjekshus study shows that the rinderpest destruction of Masai herds deprived the people their daily food supply and caused severe famine among the Maasai. The Maasai abandoned their villages and took refuge with neighboring agricultural communities.<sup>64</sup> Kjekshus shows us that the condition of the Maasai in was comparable with the life the people in Mätäkäl and Gojjam as whole in 1890s. He quoted from the report of Baumann as

There were skeleton-like women with the madness of Starvation in the sunken eyes, children looking more like frogs than human beings, ‘warriors’ who could hardly crawl on all fours, and apathetic, languishing elders. These people would eat anything, dead donkeys were delicacy to them, they would not reject bones, skins, and even the horns of slaughtered cattle....They were refugees from Serengeti, where the famine depopulated the entire districts....<sup>65</sup>

Environmental change was another important effect of the Great Famine of 1888-1892 in Mätäkäl. Because of the destruction of cattle and failure of agricultural practices, the environment of highland regions of Gojjam including parts of Mätäkäl was covered with thickets, bushes and grass that completely engulfed men and the only surviving pack animals like horses and donkeys.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, no agricultural activities or cattle to graze land were found in the region for about five years. Disease and Famine finished the

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<sup>63</sup> Tekle Iyesus, *Ye Itopia Tarik*, pp. 176—178; Tekle Iyesus, *Gojjam Chronicle*, pp. 195—200

<sup>64</sup> Helge Kjekshus, *Ecological Control and Economic Development in African History: The Case of Tanganyika 1850-1950* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1977 & 1996), p. 129

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 129—130

<sup>66</sup> Tekle Iyesus, *Ye Itopia Tarik*, p. 170.; Richard Pankhurst, *The History of Famine and Epidemics*, p.90; Getachew Haile, p. 28

inhabitants from many localities and hence the landscape became very sparsely populated. The former grazing lands and agricultural fields were turned into tall grasslands and bushlands. Forests which had been opened up by cattle were covered by thick undergrowths after the destruction of cattle by the rinderpest.<sup>67</sup>

The Great Famine also transformed the entire balance of nature in the region of Mätäkäl that changed greatly the natural prey-predator relationships in the surrounding environment. In Mätäkäl, the change of environment into forests became threats to human life because wild beast reigned in the region. Big carnivore wild beasts targeted human beings after the disease wiped out their preys from the surrounding environments. The cattle disease of 1888/9 destroyed not only cattle but also wild ruminants from the forests. According to oral sources, a wild beast locally known by the name *sully* was the great enemy of human beings in Mätäkäl during the Great Famine period.<sup>68</sup> Probably, the name *sully* by the Agaw was a reference to cheetah as different written sources indicate. Getachew Haile, for instance, in his work *Rehabna Tennie Be Itopia*, stated the attack of wild beasts against human beings as follows: “ወሶሽማኔ የሚባል አወሬ በነብር ኢየተመሰለ ቤት ኢየቀደደ ብዙ ሰው በላ፤ያን ጊዜ ወሶሽማኔው የቆመውን እንጂ የሞተ አይበላም ነበር።”<sup>69</sup>

Steven Kaplan also reported about wildlife attack against human beings in his study. According to him, hyenas, leopards and lions were the dominant inhabitants in some parts of Gojjam and Gondär. These wild beasts attacked men in open daylight and people ceased to sleep at night for fear of them.<sup>70</sup> Hence, people were forced to move in groups to defend themselves from attacks of wild beast during the course of food gathering and fetching

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<sup>67</sup> Informants: Mekuria, Adam and Mäkonnen Wolde Giyorgis

<sup>68</sup> Oral Informants: Assefa Abejehu and Mekuria Adigeh

<sup>69</sup> Getachew Haile, p. 28.

<sup>70</sup> Steven Kaplan, “Kifu Qen:...”, pp. 70—71

water. They tried to defend themselves from these dangerous wild beasts particularly the *sully* building strong and well-defended houses and moving from place to place in groups.<sup>71</sup> They built strong and many rounded fences in their residence areas but it was difficult to defend the *sully* because it broke fences, gates and even roofs, and entered into houses to eat human beings.<sup>72</sup>

Though there is no study or oral tradition that shows the relationship between disease and bush and forest expansion in my study area during the period of the great famine in Mätäkäl, Kjekshus' study in East Africa shows that destruction of cattle by the rinderpest and population decline due to famine and disease in 1890s led to bush and tsetse to spread. The depopulation of humanbeings and cattle during the Great Famine period allowed the vegetation cover to expand because there was no contest for space with humans or livestock. Hence, bushes, dense tree cover, and long grasses expanded which provided favorable habitats for tsetse, ticks, and other kinds of vectors.<sup>73</sup>

The Great Famine of 1888-1892 had also political repercussions on peripheral regions of Gojjam. The economic dislocations of the famine period forced *negus* Täklä Haymanot to expand to the then 'no-man's land' on the western frontier of Gojjam. During the famine period, Täklä Haymanot campaigned to Mätäkäl to plunder the peoples of the region in order to feed his starved soldiers. Thus, part of his soldiers survived the problems of famine by the booties looted from the region of Mätäkäl. The rest soldiers and elites of Täklä

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<sup>71</sup> Oral Informants: Assefa Abejehu and Mekuria Adigeh

<sup>72</sup> Informants: Fentahun Yismaw and Adam Endalew

<sup>73</sup> Helge Kjekshus, pp. 161-166; William Beinart and Lotte Hughes, *Environment and Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 189—191; see also James L. Giblin, "The Precolonial politics of Disease Control in the Lowlands of Northeastern Tanzania" in *Custodians of the Land: Economy and Culture in the History of Tanzania* (London James Currey Ltd., 1996), pp. 136—137

Haymanot campaigned to south of Blue Nile to Kaffa with permission of Emperor Menilek where Täklä Haymanot himself stayed for about 10 months.<sup>74</sup>

After the Great Famine, in order to rebuild the regional economy and establish effective control over frontier territories to the west, Täklä Haymanot intensified military campaigns in Mätäkäl. Consequently, he conquered Wembera in 1898 and established military garrisons at Belaya region of Dangur district under responsibility of Yigzaw Chuffa who expanded his influence up to district of Gubba.<sup>75</sup> Huge force and religious men accompanied the 1898 campaign of Täklä Haymanot to Mätäkäl where he established administrative center at Däbrä Zäyt on the plateau of Wämbära. Hence, Mätäkäl fell under the effective control of Täklä Haymanot's administration.<sup>76</sup>

### **Strategies of Survival and Recovery**

During the Great Famine period, people in Mätäkäl and elsewhere in Gojjam adopted different coping strategies to overcome the crisis of the period. One of the coping strategies was people's attempt to plow their agricultural fields using the existing pack animals to substitute the labor of oxen. However, these animals were limited in number and place. Particularly, horses were available in Agaw Meder region but were scarce in the remaining parts of Gojjam. Furthermore, training and breeding the horses to overcome scarcity took a lot of time. Thus, attempts to use pack animals for plowing the land could not check the

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<sup>74</sup> Tsega Endalew, *Inter-Ethnic Relations and Interactions*, p. 61; Richard Pankhurst, *The History of Famine and Epidemics*, p. 103; see also Alessandro Truilzi, "Nekemte and Addis Ababa: dilemmas of provincial rule" in *Southern March of Imperial Ethiopia: Essays in History and Social Anthropology* (London: New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 60

<sup>75</sup> Tsega Endalew, P. 63; Abdusamad H. Ahmad, "Gojjam: Trade, Early Merchant Capital and the World Economy, 1901—1935" (Dissertation in History, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1986), pp. 62—63

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

food crisis in the region of Gojjam.<sup>77</sup> For instance, the horse plow tradition that started in Agaw Meder during the Great Famine period remained the peculiar culture of the Awi people in Gojjam even to this day.<sup>78</sup>

Nevertheless, for lowlanders in Mätäkäl gathering became the chief means of survival. The people of Mätäkäl where the environment was covered with dense forest and sparsely populated turned to gathering and hoe cultivation.<sup>79</sup> Local traditions claim that the Great Famine in Mätäkäl continued for about five years and food shortage in the region reached its minimum level. To overcome the challenges of famine, people were forced to eat wild seeds and fruits, which were not edible during normal times. Particularly the Agaw of Mätäkäl traced the period of Great Famine as *Mékéry Améta* that means “period of evil days.”<sup>80</sup> People collected seeds of *muregn*, Agaws called it *emini* (a type of wild grass whose seed seems *teff*) and seeds of *moc-moco* (a type of flowering plant which produce fine seeds after dropping its flower). They ground these seeds and prepared *Enjära* or bread from its flour.<sup>81</sup> Mätäkäl region had vast virgin land that cultivated by hoes without need of oxen. The region was also rich in different types of wild fruits and honey that saved the lives of people from the famine. It was for this reason that soldiers of Täklä Haymanot and

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<sup>77</sup> Abdussamad, pp. 5—6

<sup>78</sup> Ayenew Fenta, “A History of Ankasha Worada, Western Gojjam, 1935—1991” (MA Thesis in History, Addis Ababa University, June 2010), pp. 33—37

<sup>79</sup> Oral Informants: Mekuriaw Adigeh, Mäkonnen Wolde Gebriel, and Fentahun Yismaw

<sup>80</sup> Oral Informants: Abeyou Engida and Adam Endalew: these informants grew with their grandparents and have a lot of stories about the period Great Famine. Adam’s grandmather died when she was 125 years old. Adam learned a lot stories of the past from his grandmather and father. Abeyou’s father, Engida Tessema was also known Agaw elder in traditional or oral history of Gojjam Agaws. He was resident of Mandura district until his death recently.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

peasants from neighboring highland districts invaded Gumuz territories in the western part of Gojjam province.<sup>82</sup>

Thus, the peoples' alternative for survival was gathering wild fruits, leafs and roots for consumption. The types of wild leafs consumed by the local people during the Great Famine period were *boyya* (I could not get equivalent name in Amharic or Awingi), bamboo shoot and different types of roots and fruits. They boiled these food items and ate it mixing with honey.<sup>83</sup> According to Šinaša and Gumuz elders, *méšaa* type of wild grass which grasshoppers did not eat was also used by the people. The seed of *méšawas* collected and ground on a stone mill and its flour was used in preparing bread that was consumed with honey. Honey was abundant in the forest in the natural openings of big trees. The problem was dangerous wild beasts which targeted human beings. The attack from wild beasts inhibited free movement of human beings to gather food items from the forests.<sup>84</sup>

The famine problem for the people who settled in the remote eastern parts of Mätäkäl was severe because forest cover in these parts was limited. Therefore, the wild food items that could be gathered from the land were limited. People in these parts were forced to eat skins of their dead cattle. They had collected skins of cattle when the rinderpest killed their cattle.<sup>85</sup> Thus, the people in eastern parts of Mätäkäl and Agaw Meder cultivated crops using horses and donkeys as draught animals that saved the lives of the people in this region. Horses were widely used as draught animals in Highland Agaw Meder but donkeys used as draught animals in lowland areas where cattle could not survive because of the

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*; see also Getachew Haile, p. 27

<sup>83</sup> Oral Informants: Albarro Dibaba, Chinqaro Tsinno: they are known Šinaša elders in Bullän subdistrict of Wombera and Yibas Guke who is known Gumuz elder in Mandura area. Yibas has more information on oral history of Eastern Gumuz group of Mätäkäl

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

trypanosomiasis problems.<sup>86</sup> In Gwangwa and Zigäm districts of Mätäkäl where horse could not survive because of trypanosomiasis, donkeys became chief draught animals at least until the recovery of cattle in the region.<sup>87</sup>

## **Livestock Restoration**

The chief mechanism in the restoration of the livestock resources in Gojjam after the end of the Kifu Qän were through looting and exchange. In Damot and Eastern Gojjam, looting was a major strategy for restoring and rebuilding wealth. People who migrated from eastern and central parts of Gojjam to regions located south of the Blue Nile with the soldiers of *Negus Täklä Haymanot* returned home with looted cattle. For instance, *Negus Täklä Haymanot* himself returned with thousands of cattle from Käffa and distributed in charity about 1500 of these to the people of Därräbé in east Gojjam.<sup>88</sup> The rate of distribution was one cow for each group of three people. Soldiers of Täklä Haymanot yoked up after their return with looted cattle from south of the Blue Nile.<sup>89</sup>

However, full recovery of the people from the economic crisis and rebuilding of their cattle wealth took quite some time. Oscar T. Crosby observed that cattle in the region were very scarce when he visited Wombera, southern part of Mätäkäl, in 1900. According to Crosby, people in Wombera pulled wooden ploughs by hand. He also observed only a few cattle in the market which were brought from south of Blue Nile by traders.<sup>90</sup> It was challenging even for regions, which had access to cattle markets to rebuild their livestock wealth because the price of cattle had reached its maximum level. The price of a cow ranged from

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Mekuriaw, Assefa Abejehu and Fentahun Yismaw

<sup>88</sup> Tekle Iyesus, *Gojjam Chronicle*, p. 200

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Oscar T. Crosby, "Notes on a Journey From Zeila to Khartum" in *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (July 1901), pp. 52—53, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1775763>

25 to 40 dollars during the post famine period whereas its value was from 2 to 4 dollars during the pre-famine periods.<sup>91</sup>

People in Agaw Meder and Mätäkäl depended on the market to build up their livestock wealth.<sup>92</sup> The people of these regions restored to normal economic and social life after 1900s. People began breeding cattle by buying from regions found south of the Blue Nile.<sup>93</sup> Gojjam had long established trade ties with the Oromo lands found to its south at least beginning from the nineteenth century. The long distance trade between southwestern Ethiopia, Gibe States and northern Ethiopian passed through Gojjam. When *Ras* Adal was crowned as *Negus* of Gojjam and Kaff in January 1881 with new royal name Tekle Haymanot, he promoted the peaceful flow of trade in his territory. He built his prestige and wealth with resources coming from Kaffa. Bure was the chief market that connected merchants from Southwestern Ethiopia with merchants in Gojjam and from the north. Merchants of Agaw Meder and Mätäkäl bought and sold commodities in Bure. However, this trade was disrupted for at least three years during the Great Famine. It was re-established in 1900 with great effort by *Negus* Tekle Haymanot.<sup>94</sup> In the post famine period, the chief items of trade for Agaw Meder and Mätäkäl merchants from Bure were cattle which came mostly from south of the Blue Nile.<sup>95</sup>

The other trade route that connected Wellega with Mätäkäl was through Wombera. The Oromo of Wombära particularly played great role in bringing cattle from their kith and kins

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<sup>91</sup> Richard Pankhurst, *The History of Famine and Epidemics*, pp. 105—106

<sup>92</sup> Informants: Mekuriaw, Assefa Abejehu and Mäkonnen Wolde Giyorgis

<sup>93</sup> Oscar T. Crosby, "Notes on a Journey from Zeila to Khartoum" in *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Geographicalj, July 1901), pp. 50—53.

<sup>94</sup> Abdussamad H. Ahmad, "Trade and politics in Gojjam, 1882—1935" (MA Thesis in History, Addis Ababa University, August 1980), pp. 15—22

<sup>95</sup> Informants: Mekonnen Wolde Giyorgis, Fasil Tewachew and Mekuriaw Adigeh

in Wälläga and distributing these in parts of Agaw Meder and Mätäkäl through sale in the markets. Consequently, the Agaw of Mätäkäl re-emerged once again as cattle breeders because the highland environment of Mätäkäl was suitable for animal breeding.<sup>96</sup>

This chapter has discussed the 1890s environmental catastrophe in the region of Mätäkäl, its impact and process of recovery. The catastrophe occurred because of combined factors which happened almost simultaneously. These factors included regional war, rinderpest, climate change, pest invasion and diseases. These factors in combination caused havoc in livestock and human life of the people in Mätäkäl. Livestock destruction and agricultural failure resulted in severe famine. To survive famine, the people of Mätäkäl tried to use a variety of survival strategies that included gathering wild seeds and fruits, hoe cultivation and using pack animals for plowing. This catastrophe resulted in death of human beings, cattle and ungulate wild life in highland parts of Mätäkäl. The depopulation of human and animals led to environmental change in the region. Bushes, forests and grasslands expanded which in turn increased the threat from dangerous wildlife to the surviving human population. After nearly four years of suffering, the people of Mätäkäl began to recover from the impacts of the catastrophe because of the gradual introduction of cattle from the regions south of the Blue Nile.

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<sup>96</sup> Oral Informants: Mekuriaw, Fentahun, Alboro Dibaba and Fasil Tewachew

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **STATE CENTRALIZATION, MARKET EXPANSION AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE IN MÄTÄKÄL, 1900s to 1940s**

The preceding chapter has examined the environmental catastrophe that hit Mätäkäl in the late 1880s to early 1890s and its demographic and environmental consequences with a special focus on the highland parts of Mätäkäl. Matakäl's various populations have begun the process of recovering from the impacts of this disaster by the turn of the century. This chapter discusses the process of state centralization along the northwestern frontiers of Ethiopia including Mätäkäl region in the period 1900s to 1940s and its environmental consequences. In particular it addresses the issue of how the recovery of the agricultural economy in the highland parts of Mätäkäl led to increased demand for agricultural labor in the region. This labor was acquired through coercive means and especially by state-sponsored slave raids. These raids depopulated the Gumuz population with attendant social and environmental consequences.

The chapter also tries to show how hunting was intensified in Mätäkäl beginning in the immediate post-Adwa years. The military class of Gojjam and Gonder were active participants in the big game hunting and slave raiding in the lowland parts of Mätäkäl. These activities depopulated human and wildlife population from the region that left the area sparsely populated and hence allowed the expansion of bush and forestland.

The period from the 1900s to 1940s in Mätäkäl was characterized by centralization of the state and penetration of the market economy. This effort of the central state coincided with encroachment by neighboring colonial powers that were interested in controlling

commercial activities along their border with Ethiopia. Hence international market system began to flourish. Great Britain and France signed commercial treaties with Ethiopia in 1902 and 1897 along the western and eastern sides of the country respectively to participate in the expanding commercial activities of the region. The establishment of bank in 1905 and railway system that reached Dire Dawa in 1902 also further promoted commercialization of the national economy.

The western and northwestern lowland peripheries were not suitable for the settlement of regional and central military classes of Ethiopia. Thus, these lowland peripheries became reservoir areas for slave raiding, gold extraction and hunting for ivory. Slaves, gold and ivory were among the chief trade items of the period. Furthermore, the ruling elites were collecting tribute from these regions in the form of slaves, gold, and ivory. Thus, this chapter focuses on slave raiding, hunting, and expansion of forest and bushland which were chief factors for environmental change in the study area, Mätäkäl, during the period under discussion.

### **State Centralization and Resource depletion**

The major motive of the state for centralization of peripheral territories was economic interest. The Ethiopian state developed interest to control new sources of revenue to build the national economy in the post-Great Famine period. This process was strengthened and continued with the rise of *Ras* Täfäri Mäkönnen to power since 1916.<sup>1</sup> Building wealth was a source of power and a mechanism to attract more followers for nineteenth and early

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<sup>1</sup> James McCann, "House Economy, Demography and the "Push" Factor in the Northern Ethiopian History, 1916—1935 "in *Review*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Winter, 1986), 372; Donald Donham "Old Abyssinia and the New Ethiopian Empire: themes in Social History," in *The Souther Marches of Imperial Ethiopia: Essays in History and Social Anthropology*, Donald Donham and Wendy James, eds. (London, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p.29

twentieth Ethiopian rulers. Hence, the military class of Ethiopia considered the peripheries as sources of booty to build up their wealth. This booty was collected either in the form of slaves or cattle.<sup>2</sup> Land in the periphery was not suitable for settlement by plough agriculturalist population; therefore it was used for slave raiding and tribute collection.<sup>3</sup>

In 1898, *Nigus* Täklä Haymanot of Gojjam carried out military campaign to Mätäkäl to establish control over the region. Through this military campaign, Täklä Haymanot established firm control over the territories of Wombära and Bälaya regions of Dangur district where the central state did not have control.<sup>4</sup> However, occupation of border territories of Mätäkäl like Gubba remained loose until the 1902 boundary agreement between Ethiopia and the Sudan. This boundary agreement placed Gubba and Abu Ramla regions under Ethiopia and created the present administrative region of Mätäkäl.<sup>5</sup>

The major motive behind *Nigus* Täklä Haymanot's conquest of Mätäkäl was to have effective control over the sources of slaves, gold, civet and ivory and to promote the revival of trade that had collapsed due to the Great Famine of 1888-1892.<sup>6</sup> By the turn of the twentieth century, the relative economic recovery of Gojjam had increased demand for slaves that could provide labour for agricultural production and household services to the military classes and well-to-do families of the region. Even the churches of the region and Zägé coffee farmers were also in demand of slave labor. The churches were the owners of large tracts of land that were usually cultivated by slave labour. Amhara-Agaw slave

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<sup>2</sup> Donal Donham, "Old Abyssinia...", pp. 33—34

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 42—43

<sup>4</sup> Tsega Endalew, *Inter-Ethnic Relations on a Frontier: Mätäkäl (Ethiopia), 1898—1991* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), p.63

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64

<sup>6</sup> Abdussamad H. Ahmad, "Gojjam: Trade Early Merchant Capital and the World Economy, 1901—1935" (Dissertation in History, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1986), p. 125

raiders from the western frontiers of Gojjam met this demand for slaves. These raiders sold their captives at Dangela, the famous slave market in early twentieth century Gojjam.<sup>7</sup> State officials themselves also sent organized slave raiding armies to the western frontiers of Mätäkäl to obtain slave captives. Thus, state officials of the region became the largest owners of slaves whom they used as household laborers and farm hands.<sup>8</sup>

Extraction of local wealth either through tribute collection or in the form of trade was an objective of the Ethiopian central state for conquering frontier territories. Tribute was a political action imposed on subjects to ensure administrative control and loyalty whereas trade was aimed at maintaining economic ties between center and frontier territories.<sup>9</sup> Hence, when Täklä Haymanot conquered the region of Gubba, Hamdan Abu Shok (hereditary ruler of Gubba) was said to have sent 2000 slaves to the Ethiopian government as a tribute. Since then, Gubba paid heavy tribute in slaves and gold. For his failure to pay this tribute he and his families were taken hostage in 1901 by the Gojjame forces and in 1910 by Qwara.<sup>10</sup>

Hence, in response to this perennial demand for tribute Hamdan was forced to raid neighboring territories to build his capacity to pay tribute in slaves to the state. During the time of power reshuffling at Addis Ababa around 1910, he got respite to expand the slave raiding reservoir areas outside Gubba. Thus, Hamdan extended his political control to other

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.159—160; James E. Baum, *Unknown Ethiopia: New light on Darkest Abyssinia* (Kingsport, Tennessee: Crosset and Dunlap, INC., 1935), p. 79

<sup>8</sup> Abdussamad, "Gojjam:...", p. 161

<sup>9</sup> Douglas H. Johnson, "On the Nilotic Frontier: Imperial Ethiopia and the Southern, 1898—1936" in *Southern March of Imperial Ethiopia: Essays in History and Social Anthropology* (London: New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 222.

<sup>10</sup> Peter P. Garretson, "Manjil Hamdan Abu Shok (1898—1938) and the Administration of Gubba" in *Proceedings of Fifth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, (NICE19—22 December 1977), p. 202; Wendy James, "Lifelines: Exchange Marriage among the Gumuz," in *Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*, p. 122.

territories beyond Gubba, and built his capacity to pay tribute in slaves.<sup>11</sup> When power vacuum was created following the death *Negus* Woldä Giyorgis, governor of Agaw Meder and Bégémeder, in 1918, Hamdan further expanded his political control northwards and occupied Abu Ramlah. He also looted the southern hilly massif area of Beri, near the Blue Nile where he left the area depopulated.<sup>12</sup>

Bari had been a target for both Ethiopian and Sudanese slave raiders since the 1800s. Sennar raided it in 1800, and Ethiopian soldiers in 1882, and Hamdan Abu Shok, governor of Gubba in 1898 and 1918 where the area was completely destroyed and left an uninhabited area after 1918.<sup>13</sup> Constant raiding for slaves in the Bäläs valley and southern parts of Mätäkäl forced many Gumuz to flee to areas south of the Blue Nile and particularly to the territories of Moroda Bakare of northern Wälläga.<sup>14</sup> This constant raid on Gumuz communities for slaves created fear within the society. Hence, whenever they saw a highland man they fled in to the jungles leaving behind what they had in their hands.<sup>15</sup>

Oscar T. Crosby who visited the souther part of Bäläs valley in 1900 states that “The plain was almost wholly covered with thick scrub, chiefly of mimosa, through which passage was in many places very difficult.”<sup>16</sup> This region was desolated by war of slave raiding

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Wendy James, p. 122

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*; p. 128; Abdussamad H. Ahmad, “Gojjam:..”, p. 162

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* p.129

<sup>15</sup> Oscar T. Crosby, “Notes on a Journey From Zeila to Khartum” in *The Geographical Journal*, Vol.18, No. 1 (July 1901), pp. 55, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1775763>

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

where a number of ruined villages were observed. According to Crosby, the former caravan lines were still identifiable but completely overgrown by thick growth of vegetation.<sup>17</sup>

The expansion of vegetation with the displacement of Gumuz from the Bäläs valley was markedly observable in the following decades. When Robert Cheesman visited the southern Bäläs valley in 1929, he observed the absence of a village within the distance of three days travel. He visited the region of Beri but could not discover a village in the area.<sup>18</sup>

Cheesman states his observation regarding the Beri ranges as follows: “The ‘city’ of the negro chieftain Aba Tembaho was on Beri hill. He had been conquered in a local war with *Dejazmatch* Banja eleven years before, and he and his men had scattered. We saw the remains of his settlement half-way up the hill, marked by much crockery lying on the ground just as they left it when they fled.”<sup>19</sup>

The deserted villages around Beri were changed to forestlands, which became a challenge for Cheesman’s team to pass through it. The Gumuz people who once inhabited just across Bäläs from Beri in the territory of Gubba had also fled to Sudan leaving the area uninhabited.<sup>20</sup> This fact suggests that apparently large part of the lower Bäläs valley had become depopulated because of slave raiding and hence contributing to the expansion of shrubs and woodlands in extensive parts of the region. As indicated in chapter one and in the preceding chapter, vegetation expansion and disease vectors have direct association. Hence, the sparsely populated lowlands of Matakal that were overtaken by forests and

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Robert E. Cheesman, *Lake Tana and the Blue Nile: An Abyssinian Quest* (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd, 1968), p. 357.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* p. 359

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61; see also Wendy James, pp.128—129

shrub as a result of extensive slave raids in the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century turned into a tsetse fly ridden region.<sup>21</sup>

Bälāya and its surrounding region in Dangur district, to the northwest of Gubba, also fell under the rule of local Agaw chiefs after the 1898 incorporation. The Gumuz inhabited region between Agaw Mider and the Bälās Valley up to Gubba served as reservoir for slave raiding for the Belaya chiefs. Among these chiefs, *Fitawrari Zälläkä Liku* (1905—1935) was the most notorious slave raider of the region.<sup>22</sup> Zälläkä was an Agaw chief of Tumha subdistrict, southwestern part of Dangila district. From 1905-1910 he administered Tumha subdistrict. Zälläkä was raiding for slaves as far west as Dunkur and Abu Ramla along the Sudan border. He is said to have bought his lucrative office when Mätäkäl region was given to *Ras Haylu* in 1911. *Ras Haylu* confirmed his position over Tumha and Balaya but Zälläkä raided for slaves as far south as Wombära.<sup>23</sup>

Zälläkä raided and sold slaves at Dangelä in Agaw Mider, which was the greatest slave market in northwest Ethiopia. In 1912, he raided lowland Mätäkäl where his retainers killed many Gumuz men who attempted to escape to the Sudan. Zälläkä's forces returned to Bälāya with many children and women slaves. In 1920, Zälläkä went beyond his slave reserve area and raided Hamdan Abu Shok's territory, Gubba. A year later, in June 1921, *Ras Haylu* ordered Zälläkä Liku to raid territories between Wämbära and Gubba that was

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<sup>21</sup> On Association of vegetation cover and tsetse fly, see James Giblin, "The precolonial politics of disease control in the Lowlands of Northeastern Tanzania" in *Custodians of the land*, pp. 136-137; Helge Kjekshus, *Ecological Control and Economic development in East African History*, pp. 161-170

<sup>22</sup> Abdussamad H. Ahmad, "Trading in Slaves in Bela-Shangul and Gumuz, Ethiopia: Border Enclaves in History, 1897—1938," in *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (1999), p. 439; Tsega Endalew, *Inter-Ethnic Relations*, p. 66

<sup>23</sup> Tsega Endalew, p. 81; Abdussamad, "Gojjam:" pp. 135-137

located southern part of the Bäläs valley. In response to Haylu's order, Zälläkä sent 30 riflemen but they returned with only 20 Gumuz captives.<sup>24</sup>

In the first and second decades of the twentieth century, “Amhara-Agaw military class intensified slave raiding”. Slave raiding was the chief factor for the depopulation of the Gumuz people from the region of Mätäkäl. Slaves were raided not only for sale or trade but also for domestic services. They were the chief providers of agricultural labor in the field and manual services in homes of well-to-do families. Thus, from top officials to the lowest level *Chiqa-Shums* of Agaw Meder and Damot were engaged in slavery and slave trade in the region.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, the role of state in slave raiding and the shift of population from the lowlands of Mätäkäl to highlands of Gojjam was immense. The state sponsored soldiers and merchants participated in slave raiding and trading.<sup>26</sup> The constant wars waged during the first three decades of the twentieth century against the Gumuz of Mätäkäl for slave raiding depleted the Gumuz population. Many Gumuz were forced to flee to Sudan and South of Blue Nile, which resulted in decline of population density of the region. Consequently, these shifts and migrations of population led to economic decline of the Gumuz country in Mätäkäl.<sup>27</sup> Not only officials but local peasants were also engaged in slave raiding in lowland Mätäkäl region. *Ato Fasil Tewachew* offered an eyewitness account of the slave-raiding tradition in Mätäkäl while he was a youngman living with his parents as follows:

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<sup>24</sup> Abdussamad, “Trading in Slaves...”, pp. 439—440; Tsega Endalew, pp. 66—67

<sup>25</sup> Abdussamad, “Trading in Slaves...”, p. 442

<sup>26</sup> Abdussamad, “Gojjam:...”, p. 162

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*; p. 163

ጉልበት ያለው በመሣሪያና በጉልበቱ እያስፈራራ ጉሙዝ ይዞ ገበያ ወስዶ ሽጦ የወር ጨው ይዞ ይመጣ ነበር። እራሱን የምበላውን አጣሁ ያለው ሁሉ በጉልበት አስገድዶ ይዞ ቻግኒ ወይም ዳንግላ ወስዶ ሽጦ ይመጣ ነበር። የኔአባት ተዋቸው በጋም አንዲት ጉሙዝ ሴት ከነሁለት ልጇቿ ገዝቶ አምትጧት ልጇቿም ከኔጋር አብረው አድገው ወንድሞቹ ሁነውኝ ነበር። አባቴ ከሞተ በኋላ ትልቅ ሆነው ትዳር ሁሉ መሥርተው እራሳችንን እንችላለን ብለው በ1950ዎቹ አካባቢ ቻግኒ ከተማ ገብተው ሲኖሩ ቆይተው በቅርብ ጊዜ ነው እናታቸውም ልጇቿም የሞቱት። እናታቸው እኔንም ያሳደገችኝ በመሆኗ እንደእናቴ ነበር የማያት።<sup>28</sup>

Any individuals who have power caught the blacks threatening by force and gun and took them to markets for sale and returned with monthly expenses. any individual who claimed shortage of money caught the blacks by force and sold them at Čagni or Dangela Markets. My father, Tewachew Bägaw had bought one female Gumuz with her two male children and brought her to home when I was seven or eight years old. We grew together and became brothers for me. After the death of my father while they were adults and married, they demanded for independence and went to Čagni town around 1950s. They were dwelling in Čagni town with their mother until their death recently.

Merchants were not directly involved in slave raiding but they bought slaves from slave raiders at Dangela slave market and distributed slaves to buyers throughout the province. Though the international slave trade declined in Northwestern Ethiopia since the Mahdist occupation of Sudan in 1885, the domestic slave trade was attractive in the post-Great Famine period to the 1930s. Merchants distributed the Gumuz slaves beyond Gojjam province in Bégémeder and Wollo provinces.<sup>29</sup> After the fall of Mahdists in 1898, the British administration in Sudan announced the end of the slave trade by the decree of July 11, 1900. However, the Anglo-Egyptian administration could not stop slavery and slave trade in the Sudan to 1936 but they were repeatedly complaining on Zälläkä's slave raiding

<sup>28</sup>Informant: Fasil Tewachew Bägaw, interviewed on December 8, 2015 at Dibati town in Dibati district of Mätäkal Zone. He is a Šinaša elder and was 82 years old by the time of interview

<sup>29</sup> Mohammed Ibrahim Nugud, *Slavery in the Sudan...*, p. 90; Abdussamad H. Ahmad, "Gojjam..." p.

in Mätäkäl. This administration took harsh measures between 1905—1915 that led to the execution of 15 slave raiders from Bahr al-Ghazal province.<sup>30</sup> Despite this effort of Anglo-Egyptian rule in Sudan, slave trade continued in the Funj province on the Ethio-Sudan border along my study area, Mätäkäl, which made slavery a cross-border issue. Particularly, a slave merchant woman named Sit Amna on the Sudanese side of the border and Sheik Khojali and his family remained major slave traders to the British administration in Sudan up to February 1929 when Sit Amna was convicted and stripped off her district along the Ethio-Sudan border.<sup>31</sup>

Slavery in northwestern Ethiopia was also profitable business for *bandits* (outlaws). Bandits raided for slaves even across international frontiers and within Ethiopian boundary. In 1906, bandits raided about 142 Sudanese slaves along the Ethio-Sudanese border in northwestern Ethiopia. These incursions into Sudan continued on yearly basis for the next two or three decades.<sup>32</sup> Bandits from elite background and who aspired to power in the regional or central administration went to lowland peripheries to build up their wealth and power. They built their power and wealth by extracting resources from the lowlands through hunting, slave raiding and robbery. After building their wealth in the lowlands, these bandits went to the highlands to struggle for legitimate power.<sup>33</sup> Particularly, after March 1924 slave emancipation declaration of *Ras Täfäri*, bandits deeply involved in slave raiding in the Gumuz lands. *Ras Täfäri*'s edict to abolition slavery opened opportunity for outlaws who actively engaged in slave raiding. The outlaws in the regions of Gojjam and

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<sup>30</sup> Mohammed Ibrahim Nugud, *Slavery in the Sudan...*, p., 108

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Timothy fernyhough, "Social Mobility and and Dissident elite...", p. 161; see also James Baum, *Unknown Ethiopia*, pp. 107—110

<sup>33</sup> Donald Donham, "Old Abyssinia...", p. 20

north Gondär raided the Gumuz population day and night and sold the captives in secret markets held in forests and deserted villages or nearby houses to market places.<sup>34</sup> When open slave markets were prohibited, many secret slave markets in the forests uninhabited nearby areas were opened that practiced marketing at night or even at daytime in some confidential places. Täfäri's decree could not stop illegal slave raiding hence continued until the Italian invasion of 1935.<sup>35</sup>

Regional slave raiding in Mätäkäl was the reflection the activities of the central state in Ethiopia. Slaves were sources of manual labor in the agricultural fields and houses of nobilities and even served as bodyguards of warlords.<sup>36</sup> Hence, slavery was the foundation of agricultural economy and served as a device for controlling the peripheral communities who lay at the frontiers from direct religious and political influence of central state.<sup>37</sup>

As I mentioned above regional rulers sent slaves to central state as tribute. Hence, the Ethiopian heads of State or “king of kings” were biggest owners of slaves. Slaves were the sources of labour for extensive crown properties and performed all the manual labor in and around the palace. Furthermore, many slaves were assigned as important functionaries in the palace and some had significant influence.<sup>38</sup>

Even after Täfäri's decree to abolish slave trade, the royal family at Addis Ababa continued to support slave raiding on the frontiers of the country to the west. The royal court

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*; see also Timothy Fernyough, “Social Mobility and dissident elites in northern Ethiopia”, pp. 160—161

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>36</sup> Mordechai Abir, “The Ethiopian Slave Trade and Its Relation to the Islam World,” in *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa: The Servile Estate, Vol. II* (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd, 1985), p. 124

<sup>37</sup> Peter J. Parish, *Slavery, History and Historians* (New York: West view Press, 1989) pp. 22—23, 43; Mordechai Abir, pp. 121—123

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*.

commissioned the procurement of fresh slaves. *Wäyezäro Mänän*, Täfäri's wife, sent 30,000 Thalers to Sheik Khojälé to buy for her "600 young slaves between seven and thirteen years." Täfäri and Mänän owned large numbers of slaves who served in their palace and in the house of their son-in-law, *Fitawrari Dästa Damtäw*, in Addis Ababa.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the slave raiders in western and northwestern borderlands remained untouched because the central government was directly or indirectly participant in the business. The slave raiders from Agaw Meder and Damot in Gojjam continued slave raiding from Mätäkäl until 1930s and continued to feed the slave market at Dangela. These slaves were absorbed into domestic economy of northwestern Ethiopia.<sup>40</sup>

The revival of external trade in the late nineteenth century also gave a new impetus for the demand of Ethiopian slaves in Arabia. Anglo-French rivalry along the Red Sea coast accelerated the expansion of caravan trade through the Ethiopian plateau. British Occupied Gulf of Aden in 1839 and French occupied Obock since 1864.<sup>41</sup> Since the late nineteenth century, Ethiopia became chief supplier of slaves to Muslim world. Political developments in the Arab world increased demand for the Ethiopian slaves. Ethiopian slaves were needed for military service in the Arab world. New prosperities in the region encouraged local rulers to build private armies. These developments in Arabian world encouraged expansion of caravan trade along the Red sea coast. Many slave merchants from Persian Gulf and Southern Arabia were connected to the Ethiopian markets.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Abdussamad H. Ahmad. "Trading in Bela-Shangul...", pp.443—444

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 445

<sup>41</sup> Mordechai Abir, "The Ethiopian Slave Trade...", pp. 129—130

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125

Besides agricultural labor and domestic service, the export of slaves to Arab-World increased demand for slaves and consequently raiding for slaves. Though a provision slave for market was common in northwestern Ethiopia, many slaves sent the Muslim world were mainly from southern and southwestern Ethiopia. The northern and northwestern slaves dominantly consumed in agricultural fields and hard manual labor in the households of wealthy farmers and the nobility. The southern slave caravan that passed through Shoa carried young slaves aged up to sixteen years old. The most favored were young girls followed by boys in their early teens. Slave merchants in Ethiopia were dominantly *Jabarti* (Ethiopian Muslim merchants) who conducted trade throughout the Ethiopian plateau.<sup>43</sup>

The caravan slave merchants also fed the ruling elites and the military class of Ethiopia with quantities of firearms that helped them to expand slave raiding on the frontier territories to the west and northwestern borderlands of Ethiopia. The export of slaves from Ethiopia became the source of new weapons and wealth for the ruling classes in Ethiopia because they were the major suppliers of slaves to merchants and used the firearms they obtained from merchants for slave raiding.<sup>44</sup>

Hence, neither the Anglo-Egyptian government in Sudan nor the central government of Ethiopia could control slave raiding in western and northwestern Ethiopia. Though both governments tried to check external trade in slaves, the domestic slavery and slave trade continued to persist until Ethiopia was invaded by Italy in 1935. Adjacent districts of Ethio-Sudan border were areas where illegal enterprises carried out. All kinds of opportunities for *shifra* bands, slave-dealing, gun-running and contraband traffic were exercised in these

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131

border districts.<sup>45</sup> The major change that made after Ethiopia's admission to the League of Nations was slave raiding and its trade made without the consent of the government. Slave-traffic followed secret lines and open display places of slaves were moved to secret places, or houses of slave dealers. The drama of hunting of one human group by another human group resulted in depopulation of certain communities from western and northwestern Ethiopia.<sup>46</sup>

### **Market Expansion and Organized Hunting in Mätäkäl, 1900s to 1940s**

The pre-1800s hunting tradition in Mätäkäl gave primary emphasis to hunting conducted to supplement the subsistence economy of the peoples of the region. Besides subsistence hunting, trophy hunting was also widely practiced in the region because these communities gave special prestige to big game hunters. Pre-1880s communities in Mätäkäl also produced different commodities from hunting products like *colba* (drinking cups) *woläba* (gloss) which were made from the horns of buffaloes and rhinos. These were highly valued items which were used by highly respected individuals of the time. Handles of knife, sword, spear and *mäkuomya* (nun or monk's stick) were also made from these horns and sold on domestic markets. The big hunters and their wives had also their own identification clothes made from products of big game hunting. These included the mane of lion, *adduda* for their wives and hunters, *erban*, *tälsom* and *dree* for wives, and fly-whisk (*chira*) of giraffe.

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<sup>45</sup> Mohamed Ibrahim Nugud, *Slavery in the Sudan*, pp. 107—108; Abdussamad H. Ahmad, "Trading In Bela-Shangul...", p. 445

<sup>46</sup> Hermann Norden, *Africa's Last Empire: Through Abyssinia to Lake Tana and the Country of Falasha* (London: H. F. & G. Witherby, 1930), pp. 227—234

In the post-Great Famine period, hunting in Mätäkäl was greatly transformed both in its motive and in the technologies employed. The commercial value of hunting became more important than prestige hunting. Benefitting from the ivory trade became the interest of local elites and individuals than hunting to win prestige in society. Thus, hunting became more commercialized since the beginning of the twentieth century. Technologically, the pre-1880s hunters used traditional methods and tools in hunting that included bows and arrows and traps whereas in the post-Great Famine period, hunting using guns became a dominant feature of the region.

During the post-Great famine period, big game animals were gradually restored after their destruction by the rinderpest epidemic of the late 1880s and early 1890s. Game animals in the region included antelope, waterbuck, roan antelope, greater and smaller kudu, buffalo, lion, leopard, cheetah, elephant, giraffe, wolf and others. Waterbuck and buffalo were widely available and grazed in herds in the open fields like cattle in the Durra Valley and Durra Jaallaa areas of Wombära. The Bäläs Valley was largely inhabited by lions and other kinds of big game until the establishment of a state farm and the Därg's settlement program in the 1980s. Lion was also found in the southern portion of Wombära along the Abbay valley until the *Därg* period.<sup>47</sup> Giraffe and elephant were found to the west of the Wombära plateau in the lowland areas that extended up to the Sudan border and west of the Bäläs River in the lowland parts of Gubba and Dangur districts largely in Awjamis forests of Dindär valley.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Informants: Agrew Worku, Abeyou, Yibbas, Adam, Biddikka Yadetta, Dheressa Yadetta, and Assefa Damtie

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

Travelers of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century reported on the diverse and abundant wildlife of Mätäkäl during their visit to area. For instance, Oscar T. Crosby reported the types of wild animals he observed when he passed through Wombära in 1901. He observed leopards, varieties of deer grazing in herds, and ‘lion-monkeys and grazer monkeys.’<sup>49</sup> Similarly, R. E. Cheesman reported seeing a special type of greater kudu with magnificent horns and several groups of bright-colored antelopes in the forest around Gum-Iyesus area in Zigäm sub-district of Mätäkäl when he visited the region in 1927.<sup>50</sup> When Cheesman moved from the Wombära Plateau downwards to the west, he and his companions struck with pathless forest after crossing the Shar River, which forced them to follow elephant tracks. According to him, elephants uprooted and stripped big trees. Furthermore, there were several species of antelopes around the junction of the Bäläs and Shar Rivers.<sup>51</sup>

Game animals of the region were largely browsers that fed on branches of trees. The immense forests of the region that were composed trees of soft and succulent substance provided principal food for elephants and rhinoceros. They first ate the tops of leaves and branches, and uprooted or broke the trees that they fed on more woody parts through stripping.<sup>52</sup> W.E.D. Allen also visited this region in 1941 while returning with the imperial army from exile and stated that the region of Dangur and Belaya were covered with rich forests and streams. According to him, this region was uninhabited and repeatedly visited

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<sup>49</sup> Oscar T. Crosby, “Notes on a Journey from Zeila to Khartoum,” in *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (geographicalj, July, 1901), p. 52. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1775763>.

<sup>50</sup> R.E. Cheesman, *Lake Tana and the Blue Nile: An Abyssinian Quest* (London: Frank Cass &Co.Ltd, 1936), p.333.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 354—356

<sup>52</sup> James Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of Nile, In the Years 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772, and 1773, Third Edition, Vol. 6* (Edinburgh: George Ramsay and Company 1813), p.231.

by hunters.<sup>53</sup> The vast densely forested lowland region of Dindär Valley that bounded to the north by the highlands of Qwara district of Gondär and to the south by Dangur and Belaya Mountains of Dangur district of Mätäkäl hosted different kinds of big game animals like elephant, lion, buffalo, and giraffe. This region has been the major hunting ground for trophy hunters from Gojjam and Gondär at least since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. These hunters stayed for months in this big Awjammis hunting ground region searching for big game animals. Local guides who knew well the geography of the region and the behavior of game animals directed the trophy hunters who came from these highland areas.<sup>54</sup>

There were two important factors that transformed hunting practices in Mätäkäl after the Great Famine period. These were introduction of guns at least in to the hands of elite members of the society and the rise of the demand for ivory in the international market. During the late nineteenth century different firearms were imported into the country, the first of which was Snider (*sänader*) which came in the 1870s. Snider enjoyed considerable reputation throughout the Menelik era and was a rifle of preference by hunters because its shooting accuracy was better than other rifles of the period.<sup>55</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century, even more popular rifles like Fusil gras (*wujiğra*), Winchester rifle (*dimotfor*), lebel rifle (*läbän*), mauser (*mäwzir*), and manlicher (*minišer*) were imported into the country. The Russian rifle known as *moskob* was also introduced to the country during this period.<sup>56</sup> On the eve of Adwa, the types of firearms possessed by the Ethiopian forces were

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<sup>53</sup> W.E.D. Allen, "Ethiopian Highlands: Meeting of Society" in *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. CI, No. 1 (18 January 1943), p. 1.

<sup>54</sup> Informants: Agrew Worku, Kelemu Bezabih and Adam Endalew.

<sup>55</sup> Richard Pankhurst, "Linguistic and cultural data on the penetration of firearms into Ethiopia" in *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. IX, No. (January 1971), pp. 70-71

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71-77

breech-loaders, rimington and witterly or gras.<sup>57</sup> In 1896, Ethiopians campaigned to Adwa with about 110,000 rifles and captured 11,000 rifles from the Italians in the battle.<sup>58</sup> The flood of imported firearms after the battle of Adwa led to expansion of uncontrolled hunting throughout the country.<sup>59</sup>

Many local chiefs and their retainers had campaigned to Adwa under *Negus* Tāklä Haymanot following the Italian invasion of northern Ethiopia in 1895.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, at the battle of Adwa, as indicated above, Ethiopians had captured a large number of weapons from the enemy.<sup>61</sup> Adwa campaigners who survived the war returned home with different kinds of guns like *Senadir* and *Wujjigra*. Rifles also became available on the market for those who could afford to buy them in the post-Adwa period. Armuster, a British official in Sudan, visited Gojjam in 1904 and presented a report on the firearms that people carried in the region. Richard Pankhurst quoted from his report as follows: “The number of rifles and ammunition in the country is enormous. 80 percent of the able-bodied males have a rifle of some kind.”<sup>62</sup> Though Armuster’s report seemed an exaggeration, rifles were widespread in Gojjam during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. *Ras* Hailu had also imported a large number of firearms after the end of the First World War. He supplied these weapons to Zälläkä and his retainers for the purpose of elephant hunting.<sup>63</sup> It was these riflemen who played a great role in the hunting of big game animals like elephant, lion, rhinoceros, buffalo and giraffe in Mätäkäl. In the pre-Adwa period, the chief

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p.70

<sup>58</sup> Timothy fernyhough, “Social Mobility and and Dissident elite...”, pp. 159

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p.160

<sup>60</sup> Informants: Kebede Bayleyegn and Fentahun Yismaw; Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia, 1855—1991*, second edition (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2002), p.77.

<sup>61</sup> Timothy Fernyhough, p. 160

<sup>62</sup> Richard Pankhurst, “Guns in Ethiopia” in *Transition*, No. 20 (1965), p. 33

<sup>63</sup> Abdussamed, “Gojjam...”, p. 139

instruments in hunting these animals were spears, sword and horses. Gun-hunters were very rare during this period. The introduction of guns made the killing of these animals easier.<sup>64</sup>

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Gumuz communities of the Ethio-Sudan border smuggled different kinds of guns from the Sudan. British officials in the Sudan reported in 1908 that while the Gumuz who lived along the border had many rifles the Gumuz of Bälaya did not possess firearms; they only had spears, bows and arrows. The introduction of rifles among the borderland Gumuz was facilitated by the British Colonial administration in the Sudan to encourage the ivory trade with the border people of Mätäkäl. The British targeted the Gumuz communities to become suppliers of ivory.<sup>65</sup>

The expansion of the slave trade at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Arabian world also became a source of firearms to hunters across northwestern Ethiopia including Mätäkäl. Weapons were acquired with revenues from the slave trade, which were then distributed through the Ethiopian plateau by the Muslim merchants (*Jabarti*). Slave merchants returned with firearms from the Red Sea coast for which they found attractive market in the Ethiopian highlands. Furthermore, the European visitors of Ethiopia also supplied the ruling classes with different kinds of rifles and ammunitions. The British and the French also supplied weapons to win the support of regional lords of Ethiopia for their commercial and political interests in the region.<sup>66</sup> However, during the First World War when *Lej*

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<sup>64</sup> Informants: Kebede and Fentahun.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, Alheir Mohammad Nur and Sheik Rejeb Algamer; Abdussamad H. Ahmad, "Gojjam: Early Merchant Capital and the World Economy, 1901—1935" PhD Dissertation in History (Urbana: University of Illinois Urbana-Campaign, 1986), p. 134

<sup>66</sup> Mordechai Abir, "The Ethiopia Slave Trade...", pp. 130—131

Eyasu showed favor to Central Powers, Britain, France and Italy imposed embargo on arms sales to Ethiopia that lasted 1916 to 1930.<sup>67</sup>

The second important factor that transformed hunting in Mätäkäl was the rise of demand for ivory at the international market. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, almost all East African countries except Ethiopia fell under colonial rule. The expansion of colonial markets transformed hunting in Africa.<sup>68</sup> For instance, beginning from the late nineteenth century, different groups of Europeans that constituted explorers, missionaries, administrators, soldiers and settlers came to Kenya and all of these were engaged in regular hunting. In Kenya big game hunting provided a hidden subsidy; collection of ivory was a colonial enterprise.<sup>69</sup> The purpose of these groups of hunters varied from providing for themselves to quest for ivory valuable trophies that inspired by both commercial and sporting motives. Specialized ivory harvesters were deployed in Kenya during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These hunters used contemporary weapons that included automatic firearms and assault rifles.<sup>70</sup> The Piano-key and billiard-ball manufacturing industries in America and other parts of the world since the mid-nineteenth century used tusks as raw materials. The main suppliers of ivory for these industries became Southern and East African elephants. Thus, British colonial administration became the chief exporter of ivory from these regions.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Harold G. Marcus, "The Embargo on Arms sales to Ethiopia, 1916-1930" in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 16. No. 2 (1983), pp. 263-279.

<sup>68</sup> William Beinart and Lotte Hughes, *Environment and Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 62

<sup>69</sup> E.I. Steinhart, "Hunters, Poachers, and Game Keepers: Towards a Social History of Hunting in Colonial Kenya" in *Journal of African History*, Vol.30 (1989), p. 251.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 251.

<sup>71</sup> Beinart and Hughes, p. 67

Britain had established a number of market places along the Ethio-Sudanese border in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to attract Ethiopian commodities to the Sudan. The British established Gambella as trading post in 1904,<sup>72</sup> Dunkur in the middle course of the Dindär River to the south along the Gojjam-Sudan border in 1906 and Gallabat along the Gondär-Sudan border, near Mätämma, in 1912. However, Dunkur became unattractive to merchants from both the Sudan and Gojjam because Mangasha Atikäm, governor of Damot and Agaw Meder imposed a market due. Hence, the Gumuz of Mätäkäl were discouraged from participating in the trade and stopped bringing cotton to the market. Thus, the British decided to close the Dunkur market in 1910. Gallabat, however, remained a permanent commercial center in northwestern Ethiopia.<sup>73</sup> With the establishment of these market places, the ivory trade became an attractive business for the military class of Gojjam and Gondär. Mätäkäl was the major hunting ground for this class and elephant were the most prized game.<sup>74</sup>

Local rulers in Ethiopia did all their best to take part in the lucrative ivory trade, which was growing at the international level. One of these local chiefs was *Ras* Hailu of Gojjam. Hailu extracted ivory from territories in Mätäkäl that extended from Bäläya Mountain to the Awjamis lowland hunting ground on the Sudan border and Abromula Mountain across Dindär (Ayimma) river to Omedla.<sup>75</sup> Hailu appointed *Fitawrari* Zälläkä Liku, an Agaw chief, in 1911 over these territories with the responsibility of collecting ivory tribute from hunters. Zälläkä had been governor of Tumha district in Agaw Meder from 1905 to 1910.

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<sup>72</sup> Donham, "Old Abyssinia...", p. 30

<sup>73</sup> Abdussamad, "Gojjam:..." pp. 117—121

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123

<sup>75</sup> Abdussamad, "Gojjam:...", p. 137

His primary target in Belaya became elephant hunting because of its ivory.<sup>76</sup> Zälläkä organized a special hunting band known as *adma* and transferred his headquarters from Tumha to Bälāya. His hunting group or *adma* also settled with Zälläkä at Belaya. The Number of the *adma* gradually grew and formed a special community at Bälāya. The chief occupation of the *adma* during the dry season was procuring ivory. During the rainy season they were given land in Belaya and cultivated crops. Zälläkä's hunting team gradually mastered the ins and outs in the lowland where elephants, buffalo, rhinos, giraffe, lion and other game animals abounded. Ras Hailu provided the *adma* with firearms (Fusil gras and Witterely) and ammunitions. Zälläkä collected tusks from the *adma* and private hunters and sent these to Hailu's storehouse at Injibara.<sup>77</sup>

Private hunters from Gojjam and Gonder highlands also went to Mätäkäl for hunting. But they had to pay tribute in ivory to Zälläkä, the chief of the hunting territories in the Bälāya and Dangur regions. These groups of hunters were not well equipped with firearms like Zälläkä's hunting team. Private hunters bought rifles and bullets through individual efforts.<sup>78</sup> Bullets for individual hunters were sold at the government customs offices but they had to have licenses for hunting.<sup>79</sup> However, in peripheral areas like Mätäkäl, access to bullets was not a serious problem because traders could easily smuggle bullets from the Sudan. The issue of license was not to ensure legality or regulate hunting activities but rather was aimed at collecting tribute in ivory or in cash. Hailu and his agent, Zälläkä

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<sup>76</sup> Informants: Agrew Worku, Regassa Assegie, Alheir Mohammad Nur and Sheik Rejeb Algamer; Abdussamad, p. 137.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*; Abdussamad, p. 138.

<sup>78</sup> Informants: Adam, Agrew, Alheir, and Rejeb

<sup>79</sup> Den ena Dur Arawit Tibeqa ena Limat Bale Siltan, p. 345.

Liku's interest was collecting ivory or money as tribute.<sup>80</sup> Ras Hailu even gave the authority of licensing hunters in Mätäkäl to *Fitawrari Zälläkä* for which he collected two Maria Theresa thalers from each hunter before they left for hunting. When they returned from hunting, Zälläkä collected tribute in ivory from these hunters at the rate of one ivory out of two.<sup>81</sup>

Ras Hailu also appointed a local chief known as Biftu Anno in Wombära, southern Mätäkäl, as his agent for ivory collection. Biftu was the godson of Hailu's father *Negus Täklä Haymanot*. He was given a Christian name Gebre Sillassie by *Negus Täklä Haymanot*. Thus, Hailu considered Biftu as his brother and did not appoint other Gojjames over his territory, the region of Kitar.<sup>82</sup> Like Zälläkä Liku, Biftu Anno also established his own hunting team in Wombära. He had about fifty hunting team members who were recruited from the Šinaša and Oromo ethnic groups. Biftu armed this team with spears and rifles and gave them plots of land in highland Wombära and Kitar region to cultivate coffee. Whenever Biftu went out on hunting, his hunting team accompanied him.<sup>83</sup> When this team killed elephants, Biftu sent one out of two ivories to Belaya to Zälläkä Liku as tribute, and sold the rest for his personal revenue. However, Wombära did not attract hunters from other highland parts of Gojjam because wildlife bundance and diversity was less when compared to Belaya and Dangur regions in the north.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Adam, Agrew, Alheir, and Rejeb

<sup>81</sup> Abdussad H. Ahmad, "Hunting in Gojjam: The Case of Mätäkäl, 1901—1932," in *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University, 1984), p. 238.

<sup>82</sup> Tsega Endalew, "The Oromo of Wombera: A Historical Survey to 1941" (MA Thesis in History, Addis Ababa University, June 1997), p. 68.

<sup>83</sup> Abdussamad, "Hunting in Gojjam:...", p. 238

<sup>84</sup> *Ibidi*.

In the 1910s and 1920s, Hailu established monopoly of ivory trade in northwestern Ethiopia. He encouraged Zälläkä to maximize ivory collection from the region of Mätäkäl. Zälläkä organized series of hunting expeditions that roamed the lowland regions extending from Awjamis to Bambudi along the Sudan border. Sometimes Zälläkä's hunters crossed the border through Dindär Valley to Khor Galagu in the Sudan. This brought them into conflict with British patrols along the Ethio-Sudan border. The British Consuls at Dangela in Agaw Meder also repeatedly complained to *Ras* Hailu about Zälläkä's activities along the border.<sup>85</sup> In addition to elephant for ivory, hunters in the region of Mätäkäl killed and collected buffalo horns, horns and skin of rhinos, manes of lion, and skin of giraffe. To hunt these animals, hunters used both traditional weapons as well as rifles because participants in the hunting varied in social hierarchy and motive. The motive of Gumuz hunters was to support their subsistence who armed themselves with traditional instruments like bows and arrows whereas Gojjam and Gonder military class members usually motivated by the value of ivory in the international market. These hunters came down to Mätäkäl armed with firearms and they usually used Zälläkä's *adma* members as guides for their hunting.<sup>86</sup>

As hunting was a dry season occupation, beginning from October the military class from Gojjam and Gondär flowed to Mätäkäl in large numbers and stayed at the village of Zälläkä in Bälaya until they were issued licenses to hunt.<sup>87</sup> These hunters were mainly the nobility class members who had double motives: earning money and acquiring trophy for social

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<sup>85</sup> A. D. Home's letter exchange with Bentinck, 31 July, 1925, F.O. 371/1/10875; "Correspondence of John Maffey to Lloyd, concerning Abyssinian raids and incursions in British Territory" (London, 1928), F. O. 371/131008.

<sup>86</sup> Informants: Agrew Worku, Regassa Assegie, Alheir Mohammad Nur and Sheik Rejeb Algamer; Abdussamad, "Gojjam....", p.139.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, Mekuriaw Adigeh, Kebede Bayletegn; Abdussamad, "Hunting in Gojjam:...", p. 239

prestige. When they received their licenses, they moved down to the lowlands of Bälāya and Dangur regions where big game animals abounded. On their return, hunters paid the usual tribute to Zälläkä.<sup>88</sup> The motive of Zälläkä's hunters, *adma*, was primarily economic. They were well armed with better types of guns supplied by *Ras* Hailu.<sup>89</sup>

The British colonial government in the Sudan and British consuls at Dangela, in Agaw Meder, strengthened pressure against Zälläkä's hunting activities in Mätäkäl beginning in the early 1920s. British consuls at Dangela had discussed the issue with *Ras* Hailu many times but Hailu was not ready to stop hunting activities along the Sudan border or to remove *Fitawrari* Zälläkä from his position at Bälāya. Thus, when R. E. Cheesman replaced David Home as a consul at Dangela, Cheesman demanded that *Negadras* Dästa, governor of Agaw Meder, to remove Zälläkä from Bälāya.<sup>90</sup> However, Dästa did not have power to remove Zälläkä because he was appointed by *Ras* Hailu, not by him. Thus, Dästa reported the problem to *Ras* Täfäri Mäkonnen in Addis Ababa. Täfäri had been seeking an excuse to weaken Gojjam's regional autonomy and Hailu's efforts at building power. Therefore, based on Dästa's report, Teferi removed Zälläkä from Bälāya in 1926 and thus ended the career of one of the most prominent personalities in ivory collection in Mätäkäl.<sup>91</sup>

Though Zälläkä was removed from his post at Bälāya, this did not lead to the end of hunting in Mätäkäl. For one thing, Zälläkä's *adma* was not disbanded and remained stationed as a community at Bälāya. They owned extensive agricultural land in highland parts of Bälāya and hence evolved into an agricultural community. For another Zälläkä's

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Abdussamad, "Gojjam:...", p. 139.

<sup>90</sup> R. E. Cheesman, His letter to London, 23 April 1926, F. O. 371/11567, J1680/20/1

<sup>91</sup> Abdussamad, "Gojjam:...", p. 141

removal from Belaya opened free access to ordinary hunters of the region and the nobility of Gojjam and Gondär because Zälläkä's overlordship in the region and granting licences for hunters had come to an end.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, the introduction of the latest and more effective guns in the hunting field in the 1930s intensified the campaign on the destruction of game animals. Latest guns like *Wočäffo* (Wetterly), Lee Metford (*dimotfor*) and *Mawzir* (Mauser) were imported into the country in great numbers. These weapons became more reliable and accurate in the hunting field. Witterly (*wochäfo*), fusil gras (*wujigra*), lebel (*läbän*), mauser (*mawzir*), and manlicher (menišer) were the rifles that were widely used in the 1935-36 Ethio-Italian war and resistance period. They were made for quick shooting and therefore outdated the role of earliest rifles like muskets and *Sänader* rifles which had been under use since the nineteenth century. Loading powder in muskets for shooting was a time consuming task and hence substituted by breech-loader and automatic rifles.<sup>93</sup>

The early 1940s witnessed two important developments in the history of hunting in Mätäkäl. The first relates to the period of Italian occupation when rifles became widely distributed across society and during the immediate post liberation period, they were sold in open markets of Segadi, near present day Čagni and Däbrä Zäyt, in Wombära, like firewood. Thus, everybody became a hunter in Mätäkäl which resulted in the near total destruction of wild animals from many parts of Mätäkäl.<sup>94</sup> The other important feature was that the Ethiopian government issued a law that concerned with conservation of wildlife in

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<sup>92</sup> Abdussamad H. Ahmad, "The Gumuz of the lowlands of Western Gojjam: The Frontier in History 1900-1935" *Africa Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Istituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente*, Anno, 50, No. 1 (Marzo, 1995), p., 66; Informants: Agrew Worku, Regassa Assegie, Alheir Mohammad Nur and Sheik Rejeb Algamer

<sup>93</sup> Richard Pankhurst, "Lingistic and Cultural Data...", pp. 70-77; Richard Pankhurst, "guns in Ethiopia", pp. 26-33; Abdussamed, "Hunting in Gojjam:...", p. 239; Informants: Kebede Bayleyegn and Mekuriaw Adigeh

<sup>94</sup> Informants: Kebede, Mekuriaw, Fasil Tewachew, Alboro Dibaba and Sheik Rejeb Algamer.

Ethiopia soon after the liberation of the country. The imperial regime issued a decree on May 29, 1944 that stated the need to conserve wildlife and their habitat. This decree prohibited hunting any kind of wild animal or capturing alive without due permission from the concerned office. However, this decree was not effective in the region of Mätäkäl for the next two or three decades.<sup>95</sup>

This chapter has discussed how the Gumuz population and wildlife of Mätäkäl depopulated during 1900s to 1940s. The major factors for this depopulation were the need for agricultural labor in the highlands of Gojjam and Gonder after the Great Famine period depopulation of agricultural community from the highlands and expansion of slave trade in the early twentieth century. The expansion ivory trade and improvements in weapon technology led to the depletion of wild animals from Mätäkäl because the lowlands of Mätäkäl served as hunting ground for the military class of Gojjam and Gondär at least beginning from the eighteenth century.

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<sup>95</sup> "A proclamation to make a provision on the conservation of Game" *Negari Gazeta* No. 9, Proclamation No. 61, 1944, p. 91.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **STATE MODERNIZATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE IN MÄTÄKÄL, 1940s to 1970s**

In the post-1941 period, Ethiopia's development policy was tied with global development politics. In 1945 United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) was established with the objective of improving food supply to poor nations of which Ethiopia became a member in 1947. Hence, from the outset Ethiopia became one of FAO's focal countries toward an envisaged international food regime and agricultural intervention. Thus, the Imperial Government of Ethiopia began to implement modern developmental policies under the strong influences of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United States Technical Cooperation Administration (Point Four Program). The major focus of this modernization program was improving Ethiopia's agricultural production system that included crop and livestock production. Settlement of people from densely populated and landscarce area was also implemented as part of this modernization project in Mätäkäl during this period. The settlement of self-sponsored migrants from Wollo province began to be implemented beginning in the 1950s. Thus, this chapter investigates push factors in Wollo that triggered series of peoples' migration to Gojjam, particularly to Mätäkäl on individual and group basis and the consequent environmental changes that resulted from the settlement of these migrants.

Mätäkäl was also a region where livestock diseases were rampant. Hence, livestock disease control in the region as part of the modernization project began to be implemented in Mätäkäl at least beginning from the 1960s. Some of these modernization projects in

Mätäkäl were livestock immunization and implementation of new settlement programs to use effectively government land. Thus, this chapter tries to investigate environmental effects of these programs in Mätäkäl region of northwestern Ethiopia. Hence, it focuses on major factors of environmental change in Mätäkäl during 1940s to 1970s that included expansion of plow agriculture, unplanned resettlement project, illegal hunting practices, and human and animal disease control efforts.

### **State Modernization and its Impact on the Environment**

Development became a global agenda after World War II. Hence, support for the Third World countries and agricultural modernization through the transfer of technology and capital from the First World countries to Third World countries became international issue in eradicating hunger. The recently established United Nation's Organization-FAO was mandated to promote agricultural development and food supply in the world. Ethiopia was one of FAO's target countries in Africa for beginning operational activities in poor countries.<sup>1</sup> During the post-liberation period, the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and United State's Technical Cooperation Administration (T.C. A.) or Point Four were pressing the Imperial regime to modernize its agricultural sector.<sup>2</sup> Amanda Kay Mcvety stated the modernization effort of USA in Ethiopia as follows: "At first glance, the Point Four program to Ethiopia seemed to be dedicated to the pursuit of economic growth, which was understood at the time to be the primary purpose the new doctrine of development....development is still generally understood to be the

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<sup>1</sup> Getnet Bekele, p. 185

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, "Agriculture in Ethiopia" (Addis Ababa, 1953), p. 69

transformation of poor nations into wealthy ones.”<sup>3</sup> When Ethiopia became a member of FAO in 1947, the organization believed that Ethiopia would be chief exporter of food crop to the Middle East countries. Thus, “Ethiopia became one of FAO’s focal points” to realize its international food supply programs through the development of the country’s agricultural system. Hence, starting from 1948 FAO sent technical experts to Ethiopia to improve the country’s agricultural system. FAO’s specialists closely worked with the emperor’s policy makers in realizing this objective.<sup>4</sup>

In line with FAO’s directives and provision of technical services, the Ethiopian government embarked on designing of dynamic agricultural development policy that included development of agricultural education, commercialization and industrialization of the sector. This policy gave emphasis to “active use of government lands.”<sup>5</sup> The First Five Year Plan (1957-1961) describes that Ethiopia used only 7.5 percent of land from the total 55 million hectares of cultivable land. Therefore, the plan gave emphasis to expanding agricultural lands.<sup>6</sup> Effective use of natural resource was taken as a major issue for the Ethiopian government to realize this global agenda. Hence, the government planned to effectively exploit the available fertile land of the country in order to develop the national economy. In line with effective use of government land, this plan describes the promotion and implementation of extensive settlement programs and large modern farms. On how to exploit uncultivated land the First Five Year Plan states as follows:

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<sup>3</sup> Amanda Kay Mcvety, “Pursuing Progress: Point Four in Ethiopia” in *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (June 2008), p. 371

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, p.69; Getnet Bekele, “Knowledge Power, and a Region: The Making of Ethiopia’s South-Central Rift Valley Agricultural Environment and Society, 1892—1975,” (Ph.D Dissertation: Michigan State University, 2005), pp. 181—186.

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, “Agriculture in Ethiopia”, p.69

<sup>6</sup> Imperial Ethiopian Government, “Five Year Development Plan, 1957-1961” (Addis Ababa, 1956), P.14

Extensive settlement should be promoted on unoccupied land suitable for agricultural production, amounting to some 40,000 hectares, thereby encouraging a considerable increase in the products available for domestic and foreign markets. Pioneer families should be actively encouraged with technical and financial assistance. A number of large modern farms should be organized as an essential step toward the production of more efficient production.<sup>7</sup>

Hence, farming and developing ‘government lands’ became an issue of increasing agricultural output during the post liberation period. Agricultural lands were expanded at the expense of forest and pasturelands. Hence, extensive farming method contrary to the advice of FAO’s experts for intensive farming method became responsible for the destruction of large forestlands in the country. FAO’s experts recommended to the Ministry of Agriculture of Ethiopia to use improved seeds to increase agriculture productivity per plots of land and the modern agricultural machineries instead of oxen drawn cultivation method.<sup>8</sup> These experts also strongly advised the Ethiopian government to reform the age-old plow system of the country, which is not better than digging tool that only breaks but not turn the soil. These experts recommended for the Ethiopian farmers the substitution of moldboard-plow technology which they stated as simple, light and inexpensive and reduce the amount of labour and time wasted with traditional plow system. The moldboard-plow could maximize farmers’ capacity of cultivating land two or three times.<sup>9</sup> This development thinking reached Mätäkäl around 1948/9 in the minds of officials coming from the center when Mätäkäl became separate *awraja* in 1948. Hence, modernization projects were other factors behind environmental change in Mätäkäl in the post-1941 period.

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64

<sup>8</sup> Imperial Ethiopian Government, Five Year Development Plan, 1957-1961, p.3; Getnet Bekele, 216; W.C. Bosshard, “FAO Report to the Government of Ethiopia on Forestry Development” (Rome, 1959), p. 4

<sup>9</sup> Getnet Bekele, p. 188

## **Expansion of Plow Agriculture and Environmental Change in Mätäkäl**

Plow agriculture became a major economic activity among the highland communities of Mätäkäl after the 1940s. Before the 1940s, the highland Agaw and Šinaša communities were herders of large number of cattle, which bred freely inside the forests. The people lived on animal products collected from their cattle and wild animals they hunted. They bought or exchanged food crops from the neighboring Gumuz communities who were hoe agriculturalists and hunters. The Gumuz raised sheep and goats and not cattle because of the prevalence of trypanosomiasis in their settlement areas.<sup>10</sup>

As in other parts of Ethiopia attempts to modernize the economy and society of Mätäkäl by the state emerged in the post-liberation period and especially with the administrative restructuring that the region witnessed in the late 1940s. When Mätäkäl was separated from Agaw Meder and became an *awraja* (sub-province) in 1948, the Imperial regime sent new governors who had modern attitude towards agricultural development. The first of these *awraja* governors of Mätäkäl was *Fitawari* Woldä Berhan Akalu who was deeply involved with the project of transforming the livelihood strategies of the Agaw.<sup>11</sup>

*Fitawari* Woldä Berhan initiated different mechanisms to turn the Agaw from livestock herders into plow agriculturalists. Informants claim that soon after his arrival in Mätäkäl in 1948, he carried out a study of the economy of the region. In the course of this study, he discovered that the land was fertile and largely covered by forests but plow agriculture was very limited. He also found out that despite the suitability of the land they occupied for agriculture, the Agaw preferred to raise livestock and met their subsistence needs through

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<sup>10</sup> Oral Informants: Mekuriaw Adgeh, Mäkonnen WoldeGiyorgis, and Adam Endalew.

<sup>11</sup> DMUAC, Fol. No. 163, File No. 46, *Ye Mätäkäl Awraja Gizat, Ke Sene 1 qen eske Nehase 30, 1950 E.C. Report.*

exchange of food crops with the lowland Gumuz. He therefore convened the people and told them about the benefits of developing plow agriculture. At the same time, he issued a decree that prohibited the Agaw from going to the lowlands to exchange or purchase grain from the Gumuz.<sup>12</sup> He established posts at Kar and Bizra-Kani to prevent the movement of Agaws to the Gumuz area to buy food crops. Any Agaw who wanted to go to the Gumuz lowlands was required to present a permission letter from the local governors. He was successful influencing local officials and his ideas of modernization are still commemorated by the retired former officials who reside in Čagni. However, *Fitawrari* Woldä Berhan did not stay long as *awraja* governor and was transferred from Matakal sometime in 1952. His immediate successors did not continue his project of expanding plow agriculture in Mätäkäl. Hence, the Agaw of the region returned back to their earlier traditions.

But after a brief lull, *Fitawrari* Woldä Berhan's initiatives were taken up by a new and vigorous governor called *Käntiba* Dästa Meteké.<sup>13</sup> *Käntiba* Dästa described Agaw agricultural practices in a report he wrote to the province in August 1958 as follows:

... ምድሩ አራሽ በማጣት ደን ለብሶ ከብቱም ሥራ የሚያስይዘው  
ባለማግኘት ያለጠባቂ እንደዱር አራዊት በጫካ ተበትኖ ስለሚኖር  
ለነጣቂ ሌቦች የተመቸ ከመሆኑም ሌላ ሰዎችም በከብቶቻቸው ጉልበት  
አልተጠቀሙበትም።  
.... በ41 እና 42 ዓ. ም የነበሩት አወራጃ ገዢ በነገሩ ደርሰውበት  
የሁለቱንም ወገን ችግር ለማስቀረት በማሰብ ከደጋው ወደ ቆላው  
ሻንቅላ አገር የሚወርዱ ማናቸውም ሰዎች በታወቀ ምክንያት ካልሆነና  
ከመስሪያ ቤት የይለፍ ደብዳቤ ካልተሰጣቸው በቀር በሻንቅላው መንደር  
ባዶ አህያና አቆማዳ ይዞ ሲዘዋወሩ የሚገኙ አገዎች እንዲቀጡ አድርገው

<sup>12</sup> Informants: Adam Endalew and Assefa Abejehu

<sup>13</sup> DMUAC, Fol. No. 163, File No. 46, *Ye Mätäkäl Awraja Gizat, Ke Sene 1 qen eske Nehase 30, 1950 E.C. Report.*

ተቆጣጥረዋቸው ኖሮ ሻንቅሎችን የሚደልሏቸው አገዎች እደጃቸው ባለመድረሳቸው ያላቸውን ጥጥና የምግብ ነገር ገበያ ወደአለበት እየወሰዱ በመሸጥ የሌላቸውን በመግዛት ሲጠቀሙ ለመቆየታቸው አገዎችም ከሻንቅላው ቤት በማይረባ አነስተኛ ነገር ደልለው የሚያመጡትን ማናቸውም ነገር ሲከለከሉ ችግር አስገድዷቸው ለጥቂት ጊዜ እርሻ ሞክረው ኖሮ ረግጠው የሚያልፉት ምድር ከፍ ያለ ሀብት መስጠቱን መረዳት እንደጀመሩ አሁን የሻንቅላው አመፅና መተባበር ድጋፍ ሆኖአቸው መቆጣጠር ስላልተቻለ በዚህ ዓይነት ወደ ቀድሞ ልምዳቸው ተመልሰዋል።<sup>14</sup>

...Since there were no farmers to cultivate the land, it had turned into a forestland. Since the oxen were not made use of, they were left to roam in the forest like wild animals. This has created an ideal situation for cattle rustlers. Also people were not able to benefit from the traction power of their cattle.

...The governor of the sub-province in 1949 and 1950 realized the problem and to alleviate the problem on both sides, attempted to stop the movement of any highlander to the Gumuz country unless for a known reason and with a pass letter from local government office. Any Agaw who was caught moving in the Gumuz villages carrying empty sacks and driving bare donkeys were to be penalized. The governor was able to control the situation through this system. Since the Agaw brokers were prevented from entering the Gumuz villages, the latter had started to bring their cotton and other commodities to the market for sale, previously controlled by Agaw brokers at minimum price. The prevention of the movement of Agaws to the Gumuz country forced them to start plowing in order to cultivate food crops and made them to understand that their land is fertile. Currently, because of the outbreak of the Gumuz rebellion and the Agaw alliance with the Gumuz, it has become difficult to control peoples' movement and hence Agaws returned to their earlier practices.

The report clearly demonstrates *Käntiba* Dästa's opposition to the return of the Agaw to their age old tradition of cattle breeding. *Käntiba* Dästa and other officials criticized cattle breeding as inferior economic activity and put pressure to start plow agriculture. They condemned Agaws in their reports to the *täklay gizat* as lazy people who did not plow their fertile land. According to them, effective use of the land was expanding plow agriculture in

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<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

the region through clearing vast forestlands.<sup>15</sup> He bemoaned the fact that despite the extremely fertile land they owned that was suitable for crop cultivation, the Agaw had not been able to use this opportunity the environment afforded them. *Kántiba* Dästa attempted to force the local peasants to till their land but his effort to reinforce Woldä Berhan's policy faced challenge because of Gumuz disturbances in the region.

Early in the 1950s, Mätäkäl *awraja* officials classified the land in the region as taxed and non-taxed lands. Consequently, large forestlands in Gumuz territory were classified as unused and *geber-ṭäl märét* (land on which tax has not been paid).<sup>16</sup> The area that extended from Bizra Kani to the west of Čagni town across Durra River to the south up to Galessa area including Dawur, the present Menta-Wuha, and Dibati areas were classified as *gibir-tel meret* and re-appropriated by the state as government land.<sup>17</sup> From Dibati and Mäntawuha areas alone about 550 *kumale* of land was re-appropriated as government land from the Agaw peasants and Gumuz shifting cultivators. Of this land 100 *kumale* was Agaw *rest* land located in Dawur in Bizra Kani *qebelle*. *Dejjazmatch* Tsehayu Enqu Sillassie gave this land to migrants coming from Wollo and south Gonder areas on contract or lease bases, and it was made to be administered by the Ministry of Land Tenure. Wollo settlers paid 3264 birr per *kumale* to the central government. The responsibility of

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<sup>15</sup>DMUAC, Fol. No. 163, File No. 46, *Ye Mätäkäl Awraja Gizat, Ke Sene 1 qen eske Nehase 30, 1950 E.C. Report*; Oral informants: Adam, Kelemu Bezabih, Assefa, and Dheresa Demera

<sup>16</sup> Oral Informants: Adam Endalew, Assefa Abejehu, and Mäkonnen Wolde Giyorgis; *Ye Mereit Yizota ena Astedader*, a letter written from Demilew Gebre Medhin, Mätäkäl Awraja Land Tenure Security head to Gojjam Teklay Gizat Land Tenure office, DMUAC: Fol. No.3047, File No.7227.

<sup>17</sup> Oral Informants: Adam Endalew, Assefa Abejehu and Mäkonnen Wolde Giyorgis

collecting the revenue of government land in Mätäkäl was given to *Ato Admassu Moges*, an agent of the Ministry in the region.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, the government appropriated vast forestland areas in Dangja in Dibati district and Durra Jalla area of Wombära district, which were inhabited by Oromo and Šinaša as *gibir-tel meret*. The size of land re-appropriated from the Dangja region was about 644 *kumalé*. Although the size of land in Dura Jalla area was not indicated in the documents, it was believed to have been not less than 600 *kumale*.<sup>19</sup> The local *Qorro* complained about the appropriation of these lands but they could not cover the heavy tax imposed by the state.<sup>20</sup> The government in Mätäkäl was engaged in land appropriation to ensure effective use of government land to increase agricultural production as part of its modernization plans. Thus, identification of uncultivated land, measuring and classification of land, and appropriations in Mätäkäl since 1950s were part of this national development and modernization project.<sup>21</sup>

Forestlands that were appropriated from the inhabitants in Mätäkäl were leased to individuals who could develop the land. A wealthy Muslim merchant called Abba Jebril Billal, who was a resident of Čagni town, leased part of the vast *geber-täl* forestland, which extended from Dawur to Galessa. Abba Jebril cleared part of this forestland using the labor of Wollo migrants and cultivated crops in an agreement to share the produce with *awraja*

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<sup>18</sup>, Mätäkäl Awraja Gizat, Meriet; a letter written to Dejjazmatch Dereje Mekennen, Enderassie of Gojjam by Mätäkäl Awraja Inspector, named Ayalew Girma, NALA, 17.1.11.13.20

<sup>19</sup>Ye Mereit Yizota Astedader, a letter written on June 9, 1974 to Gojjam Teklay Gizat land tenure and administration office and a letter written on December 13, 1973 to the ministry of land tenure and administration, DMUAC. Fol. No. 3047, File No. 7227

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

officials.<sup>22</sup> Agaw and Gumuz chiefs complained for a long time about the government appropriation of their land but received no positive response to their demands. These forests were not idle lands but according to the local tradition they were home to different kinds of wild animals and used as hunting ground. In addition to hunting, the Gumuz needed extensive forest for their slash-and-burn agricultural system.<sup>23</sup>(See appendix-F I and II)

State appropriation of land was also extended to the highlands of Wombära in the southwestern parts of Mätäkäl. In Wombära and its surroundings which were inhabited by Oromo and Šinaša, agricultural land as well as forestland were the private property of local *qorros*. Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Wombära region had been under traditional system of *qorro (balabat)* administration and the area was divided in to twelve *qorros*.<sup>24</sup> Thus, peasants could not cut a single tree without the permission of a *qorro*. Even honey collectors from the forests had to get permission from their respective *qorros* to collect the produce and had to pay one-third of the collected honey to the *qorro*. The presence of strict control over land and its natural resources by *qorros* had been responsible for the maintainance of large forests in the region and prevented their decline.<sup>25</sup> However, as indicated in the above quotation, the state viewed these resources as “unutilized”resources and increased intervention in the region beginning from 1940s affected the forest environment, the life of the local people as well as the diversity of wildlife in the region.

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<sup>22</sup>Oral Informants: Adam Endalew, Assefa Abejehu, and Mäkonnen Wolde Giyorgis; Mätäkäl Awraja Astedader Tsifet Bet, ke Sene 1 eske Nehasie 30 1950 E.C. *ye sost wor Report sile Ersha ena Azmera Betemelekete*; DMUAC, Fol. No. 0163, File No. 278.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Oral Informants: Jalleta Giddada, Dheressa Yadeta, Bidika Yadeta, Kenaw Gobena and Amsalu Täfäri ; Tsega Endalew, Dissertation, p.63

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*

James C. Scott argues that state intervention for the sake of transforming a society at the expense of local social and economic institutions had dangerous consequences. The state came with the plan of social and economic development but local people with less political power did not have capacity to challenge state objectives and show their alternative as better for their social and economic life. Thus, states imposed their own interests upon the societies regardless of the needs of local communities.<sup>26</sup> The Ethiopian state intervened in Mätäkäl regardless of the opposition of the local population and the harm such a project wrought on them. The indigenous knowledge and economic systems of the peoples of Mätäkäl were disregarded. Such an intervention resulted in adverse effects on the environment.

Expansion of central state to peripheral regions like Mätäkäl was an old tradition in Ethiopian history though it was shriking and expanding based on interest and strength of the state. Expansion of plow-based agricultural system to new areas was a prerequisite for establishing imperial control. Thus, peasant agriculture and politics had strong ties to ensure state expansion and loyalty of people in the new localities. Consequently, central state intervened in the local political economies to control the nature of production at this level.<sup>27</sup>

### **Unplanned Resettlement and its impact on the Environment**

Resettlement was one of the objectives of the Imperial state to modernize and increase agricultural production. As I stated above, Mätäkäl awraja officials suggested extensive

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<sup>26</sup> James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve Human Condition Have failed* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 4—5

<sup>27</sup> James McCann, "A Great Agrarian Cycle? ---", p. 412

settlement programs to effectively use vast uncultivated government land in the region.<sup>28</sup> Another modernization program of the state to increase agricultural production and to solve land shortage in densely populated highland regions was to launch extensive resettlement in “unoccupied” areas. The movement of people from densely populated, degraded, and drought-affected areas of Ethiopia to less affected parts of the country has been a survival strategy well practiced for a long period in Ethiopian history. Wollo and Tigray were the two provinces in the northern highlands of Ethiopia, which were repeatedly affected by drought and famine and peasants from these provinces migrated to other regions as survival strategy.<sup>29</sup>

Geographically, the highlands of Wollo are located on the leeward side of the main rain-bearing winds in western Ethiopia and hence receive less precipitation than the highlands in the western Ethiopia. Thus, rainfall is frequently unreliable and, on many occasions, *belg* rains fail completely and *mähär* rains may be short. This has been the process by which droughts and famines have been triggered for many generations.<sup>30</sup>

In the First Five Year Plan of Imperial Ethiopia, the planners envisaged that at the end of 1962 farmers would settle on about 40,000 hectares of unoccupied cultivable land. Based on this plan, in May 1961, the government granted land to 1342 farmers from Warahimano (Wollo) in Aminat, Chilga *awraja* of North Gondär.<sup>31</sup> Those peasants of Wollo who lived in acute destitution and under the threat of famine adopted a different coping strategies at

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<sup>28</sup> See The First Five Year Plan, p. 70

<sup>29</sup> Mengistu Woubie, “Southward-Northward Resettlement in Ethiopia,” in *Proceedings of the Six Michigan State University Conference on Northeast Africa* (East Lansing, April 23—25, 1992), p. 401

<sup>30</sup> Dessalegn Rahmato, *Environmental Change and State policy in Ethiopia: Lessons from Past Experiences* (Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies, 2001), p. 6

<sup>31</sup> Getnet Bekele, pp. 218-219

least beginning from the 1950s. The majority of peasants from different parts of the province suffered from hunger resulted from crop failure and destruction of livestock due to recurrent epidemic disease and drought. One of the coping strategy of peasants was temporary migration and “crisis migration”—that was characterized by mass migration and wide-scale dislocations of communities. Temporary migration was to leave the home areas to other areas and to return back when conditions restored to the previous status but “crisis migration” was the peoples’ movement to other parts of the country leaving the home areas permanently.<sup>32</sup>

The main destination for the bulk of these out-migrants, particularly those from Wollo, was Agaw Meder in Gojjam. Agaw Meder was a choice of destination for such migrants because of the relative nearness of the area to Wollo, availability of land for settlement, and absence of drought.<sup>33</sup> Migration from Wollo to Gojjam, specifically to Agaw Meder and Mätäkäl, started at least since the outbreak of devastating famine and drought in the area in the 1930s. The migrants of this period came on family or individual basis. In some cases, there was a tradition in Wollo, which claimed Agaw Meder as their ancestral land and certain families wished to return back to these areas.<sup>34</sup> The intensity of migration from Wollo to Gojjam increased in the 1940s. Besides drought and famine, the 1940s migrants from Wollo settled in different parts of Gojjam including East Gojjam, Daga Damot (Finote Selam, Dembecha and Jigga areas) and Agaw Meder (Chara sub-district) on a

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<sup>32</sup> Dessalegn Rahmato, *Famine and Survival Strategies: A Case Study from Northeast Ethiopia* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1991), pp. 163—165

<sup>33</sup> Adrian P. Wood, “The Resettlement of Famine Victims in Illubabor Province, Ethiopia” in African Population Mobility Project Working Paper No. 28 (University of Liverpool, 1976), p. 17

<sup>34</sup> Dessalegn Rahmato, *Environmental Change and State policy in Ethiopia*, p. 7; Berihun Mebrate “Spontaneous Settlement and Inter-Ethnic Relations in Mätäkäl, North-West Ethiopia” MA Thesis in Social Anthropology (Addis Ababa University, June 1996), p. 44; Dessalegn Rahmato, “Neither Feast nor Famine: Prospects for Food Security,” in *Ethiopia in Change: Peasantry, Nationalism and Democracy*, Abebe Zegeye and Siegfried Pausewang, eds. (London, New York: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 199--200

temporary basis. These migrants either leased land from local peasants or entered into tenancy agreements with *balabats* of different localities in Gojjam. The number of Wollo migrants who came to Mätäkäl during this period was very small. The earliest migrants who arrived in Mätäkäl first were migrants from Wadla-Delanta *awraja* of Wollo.<sup>35</sup>

The demand for agricultural labor by some local Mätäkäl chiefs opened the way for some Wollo migrants to move and settle in Mätäkäl from parts of Agaw Meder. Two of these chiefs especially seem to have played an important role in the employment of migrant Wollo. These were Bego Woldä-egzi and Jebril Bilal, who had rented government land, brought small group of Wollo migrants from Chara sub-district of Dangla to use them as laborers.<sup>36</sup> The size of Wollo migrants to Mätäkäl gradually increased and they established special quarter at a place called Worwora (the present Bole area of Čagni town). Billal and Bego rented land that was identified as *gebrä-čäl* from the government in the area beyond the Durra River. These chiefs became successful in harvesting maize and *čéff* using the labour of the migrants. Other local chiefs drew lessons from Bego and Billal and hired Wollo laborers on their private farms. On hearing the news of better job opportunities in Mätäkäl, other Wolloye began to come to Čagni in large numbers. Agricultural production in the region increased because of the use of the labor of Wollo migrants.<sup>37</sup>

In the mid-1950s, the number of Wollo migrants had gone beyond the labor demand of the region and became a challenge for local administrators of Mätäkäl *awraja*. The 1953 and 1957-1958 drought and famine in Wollo increased the influx of Wollo migrants to

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<sup>35</sup> Informants: Hassen Lemma and Yesuf Shume; Berihun, pp. 42—46

<sup>36</sup> Informants: Adam Endalew and Assefa Abejehu. Jebril was a Muslim who lived in the region for many years. The time of his arrival to Mätäkäl was not clearly known but elders suggested that he might have come in 1930s and married in to a local family.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

Mätäkäl.<sup>38</sup> In 1957 following the drought, a large number of Wollo migrants arrived in Mätäkäl. Berihun indicated this figure to be 1250 families<sup>39</sup> but local elders estimated this number to be as high as 49, 000 people. While the figure given by elders seems somewhat exaggerated, from the land that settlers occupied the figure cited by Berihun seems very small. The migrant groups came to Mätäkäl headed by two brothers called Yimer and Mesganaw Hamza. The sub-provincial and district governors of Mätäkäl received the migrants and prepared special settlement for them in Mänta-Wuha and Dawur areas.<sup>40</sup> These large-scale settlements were one of the causes of environmental change in Mätäkäl because the migrants were given forest lands for settlement and agricultural production.

The designation of forestlands in Dawur and Mäntawuha region as settlement site for the migrants led to opposition from the Agaw and Gumuz communities of the region and subsequently led to the outbreak of a widespread rebellion by the latter. The Agaw claimed Dawur, Bogoş and parts of Mäntawuha areas as their *rest* land. Agaw chiefs under the leadership of *Liqäkahenat* Kassahun Asräs, *Grazmač* Räta Täklé, and Alänä Gāzahāñ appealed to the sub-province office. However, the officials responded that the land was *täf* (uncultivated land) not the peasants'.<sup>41</sup>(See also appendix F, I and II.) The Gumuz also claimed Mäntawuha and Dibati areas as their *Däsichah* (one of Gumuz clans in Dibati district) clan territory administered by their clan leader, Wobgäny, but there was no positive response from the government side. Thus, the Gumuz launched attack against the settlers, stopped paying government taxes, and attacked travelers who passed through their

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<sup>38</sup> Dessalegn Rahmato, "Neither Feast nor Famine: Prospects for Food Security" in Ethiopia in Change: Peasantry, Nationalism and Democracy, Abebe Zegeye and Siegfried Pausewang, eds. (London: British Academic Press, 1994), p. 199.

<sup>39</sup> Berihun Mebrate, p. 53

<sup>40</sup> Informants: Adam, *Hamsa Aleqa* Simeneh and Fentahun Yismaw

<sup>41</sup> Informants: Fentahun, Mäkonnen Wolde Gebriel and Assefa Abejehu.

territories. The Gumuz established a rebel band headed by Lambecha Wobgäny, Yäshanäh and Gunda. In spite of this opposition from Agaws and Gumuz people of the region, sub-provincial officials continued with the settlement of Wollo migrants. Agaws did not enter into armed conflict but continued with litigation in the courts.<sup>42</sup>

To maintain peace and security of the settlement area, two police stations were established one at Mäntawuha and the other at Dibati. The area in between the two police stations was covered by dense forest made up of bamboo and other tree species that extended for more than 10 kilometers from east to west. Members of the *Däsichah* Gumuz clan had established scattered settlement sites inside this forested area that extended from Mäntawuha to Zegeh beyond Dibati, near present Bullän district territory. Police Stations were established in 1959 and police force commanders were assigned to the two stations.<sup>43</sup>

Major Asfaw, commander of Mätäkäl sub-province police force, assigned captain Arägu with some police members under him to keep the Dibati gate while lieutenant Zikargé with five police members were assigned to the Dibati gate that is eastern and western gates of vast forestland areas. Corporal Hassän Lämna was one of the five police members assigned at Mäntawuha gate, eastern gate. These police stations later developed into small towns and Dibati became a district center.<sup>44</sup>

When the security problem in Dibati grew worse *Däjazmač* Säbsebé, Governor General of Gojjam province, came to Mätäkäl in October 1959 to investigate the security problem in

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<sup>42</sup> Informants: Adam Endalew, Kelemu Bezabih and Fentahun Yismaw; See also Jira Mekuria, "A History of the Gumuz People of Mätäkäl, 1941—1991" MA Thesis in History (Addis Ababa University, March 2008), pp.39—40

<sup>43</sup> Informants: *Hamsa Aleqa* Smineh, Asir *Aleqa* Hassen Lemna and Adam Endalew, who became the first governor of the newly established Dibati district

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

the region. During his stay in Mätäkäl, *Däjazmač* Säbsebé learnt that the situation had become worse and thus decided to send to Mätäkäl a special force when he went back to Däbrä Markos. The Provincial Police commander, Colonel Dämes, came to Čagni with this special force from Däbrä Markos and established a camp on the western outskirts of Čagni town.<sup>45</sup> However, security problem in Dibati and Mäntawuha areas went beyond the capacity of the police force assigned to these areas. In January 1960, Gumuz rebels killed an Agaw chief named Agajjé Birru who was assigned as government tax collector over Gumuz territories because Gumuz considered Agajjie as government agent. This incident forced the sub-provincial officials to call for massive mobilization of security forces against the Gumuz rebels.<sup>46</sup>

Rebels were more organized when the government launched massive attack in February 1960. When the Gumuz rebel leaders heard about the arrival of special force headed by Colonel Dämes and Colonel Lämméssa Badhadha, the rebel leaders gave “titles” to themselves. Lambicha Wobgäny styled himself a colonel, Yäshanäh a captain and Gunda a lieutenant.<sup>47</sup> The campaign against the rebels started in February 1960; the special force was deployed in the rebel territory under leadership of Colonel Läméssa. The sub-province officials also ordered local militia (*näch-läbaš*) recruited from the neighboring districts of Gwangwa, Mandura, Wombära and Zigäm and to campaign against the Gumuz rebels. The rebels inflicted heavy damage on the police and local militia sent against them. Hence, the government forces found it difficult to suppress the rebellion within short period. In revenge against their losses government forces carried out cruel measures against the

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*; Jira Mekuria, pp.37—39

Gumuz communities in the region. They burnt their houses, looted their cattle and goats, and sold these on the open market through auction. The Gumuz of Dibati were relatively better owners of cattle compared to other lowland Gumuz in Mätäkäl because their settlement area was relatively midland located between Šinaša territories of Bullen and the Agaw territories of Gwangwa district beyond Durra River. In addition to looting cattle, government forces burnt the granaries of Gumuz people.<sup>48</sup> People in Čagni area composed the following couplets regarding the lootings of the time as follows:

ኮሎኔል ላም ብቻ  
 ቻግኒን አደረገዉ ላም ብቻ።<sup>49</sup>  
 Colonel Lambicha  
 Filled Čagni town with cows.

This couplet shows that government forces plundered livestock from the Gumuz of Dibati area and brought them to Čagni for sale at minimum price. Čagni was the only market place in the region by the time. This led to overflowing of the the market with cattle and dramatic decline in price.<sup>50</sup>

The settlement of Wollo in Mätäkäl affected the environment in two ways. First, their settlement resulted in Gumuz rebellion and the government forces set fire on the forests to destroy the hiding places of Gumuz rebels. The government forces routed the Gumuz of the region and many of them fled to the fartherwest and to the south beyond the Blue Nile. Thus, former Gumuz occupied territories became vacant. The war ended in 1962 when

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51 <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*; See also Berihun Mebrate, "Spontaneous Settlement and Inter-Ethnic Relations...", pp.50—

<sup>49</sup> Informant: Adam Endalew

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

government forces caught Colonel Lambecha alive and sent him to Addis Ababa for imprisonment.<sup>51</sup>

The other was the Gumuz defeat in the war opened opportunities for more settlers to come to the region who expanded plow agriculture and settlement sites. This war created vast “vacant” spaces for settlements by migrants. A large number of Wollo came from other parts of Gojjam when they heard about the availability of large tracts of land for settlement. Wollo migrants faced many challenges in other parts of Gojjam and therefore proceeded to Mätäkäl to escape these constraints. Two of these challenges for Wollo migrants in other parts of Gojjam were social exclusion they faced due to their religion and the ever-increasing price of land lease from time to time. The Christian communities of Gojjam alienated the migrants as socially outcast people because the migrants were predominantly Muslims.<sup>52</sup> For this reason, the Wollo migrants were not able to integrate easily into the dominant Christian society of Gojjam. The other challenge for them was the rise in the rate of sharecropping and price of land lease, which became unaffordable to the Wollo settlers. Peasant rebels of 1950s and 1960 in Gojjam also targeted Wollo settlers in their regions because the rebels saw Wolloye as “aliens” and uncooperative in the peasant struggle against the government. Hence, the rebels wanted to clear these “non-cooperative” elements from their regions and they attacked Wollo settlers because immigrants were Muslims whom they saw as aliens to Christian community of Gojjam. This led to the evacuation of many Wollo migrants from many parts of Gojjam to Mätäkäl.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*; See also Berihun Mebrate, p. 51

<sup>52</sup> Informants: Dheressa Demera, Yibas Guk, Yosuf Shume and *Asir Aleqa* Hassen Lemma; Berihun, pp. 47—49

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*; see also Berihun Mebrate, p. 60

These factors and the expulsion of the Gumuz from the Dibati and Mäntawuha areas created opportunities for Wollo migrants to expand their settlement zones and agricultural fields in Mätäkäl. It also led to a scramble for the acquisition of new territories among neighboring ethnic groups. Agaw, Šinaša, and Oromo peasants moved into newly vacated territories because of war between Gumuz and the government forces and established settlements, and agricultural sites.<sup>54</sup> The expansion of neighboring ethnic groups and Wollo settlers into Gumuz territories pushed the Gumuz community further into the remote lowlands to the west and many migrated to Wälläga beyond the Blue Nile. Gumuz land in Mätäkäl was divided into different clan territories in which one Gumuz clan could not settle on the territory of other Gumuz clans. Such an action might have led to conflicts. Hence, to avoid such conflict displaced Gumuz from Gojjam crossed the Abbay and went to Wälläga in search of unoccupied land.<sup>55</sup>

After they acquired land in Mäntawuha and Dawur areas, the Wollo settlers produced much produce by clearing forests during their first agricultural production year, and filled the Čagni market with a variety of crops. Their efforts received recognition and appreciation from the sub-provincial officials which further encouraged them to expand their agricultural fields by clearing the extensive bamboo forests that extended up to Zegeh *qäbälé* beyond the present Dibati town.<sup>56</sup>

Wollo encroachment threatened the traditional land rights of the Agaw of the region and led to a response on their part which brought about fundamental change in their subsistence strategy. Agaws also began to expand their territory and secure new land rights in these

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, Adam, Kelemu Bezabih and Assefa Abejehu

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Oral Informants: Adam, Shiferaw, Kelemu, Simeneh, Yesuf Shumie and Saidu Mohammed.

areas that were found to the east of the Durra River. They also cleared vast forests and began cultivation. These lands were communal forest lands used for hunting and collecting honey by both Agaw and Gumuz communities.<sup>57</sup> This competition of the Agaw with Wollo settlers to expand agricultural fields transformed the Agaws of the region into real plow agriculturalists. Previously they had been unenthusiastic about plow agriculture and were attached to cattle herding. This shift brought about a drastic change in the physical environment of the region. Vast forest covered areas east and west of Durra River became open fields. The Agaw even claimed land across Durra River to restrict Wollo expansion and occupied Zegeh area inside Gumuz territory beyond the present Dibati town.<sup>58</sup>

Wollo migration to Mätäkäl was not a one time event; it continued throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. Wollo *Cheqa Shums* were appointed to receive and administer continuously migrating settlers. The sub-province officials authorized these *Cheqa Shums* to expand new settlement and agricultural lands based on the needs of the new migrants and redistribute it to them. In 1969, these officials pushed further into the western part of Matakäl and displaced more than 750 Gumuz from the Dibati area and settled new Wollo migrants.<sup>59</sup> *Cheqa Shums* and sub-province officials had *hudad* (large farmland tilled by free labour local peasants) lands plowed and cultivated by free labor of Wollo migrants that was used for the personal benefit these officials. In these settlement areas, large tracts of agricultural fields were owned by sub-provincial and district officials which were

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<sup>57</sup> Oral Informants: Adam, Mekuriaw, Mäkonnen, and Fentahun

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

cultivated by free labor of migrants in return to their access to agricultural and settlement land.<sup>60</sup>

In the early 1970s, Wollo province was hit by severe drought and famine crisis. In 1971 and 1972, Wollo experienced irregular rainfall. The failure of the *kerämt* rain in June, July, and August resulted in the failure of the principal harvest, which led to the outbreak of famine. This was compounded by the failure of the spring rain in February and March 1973. Following this incident, people from Wollo began to flock to different parts of the country.<sup>61</sup> During the early crisis of the famine, police blocked the movement of thousands of famine stricken peasants to Addis Ababa in search of food but mass migration of peasants to other parts of the country continued. Servants and dependents of farmers were the first victims of the failure of agriculture in 1973 and were forced to look for work elsewhere.<sup>62</sup> It was during this time that a large number of Wollo migrants came to Mätäkäl and settled in Gohanage and Yemali *qäbälés* of Zigäm sub-district in the southern part of Mätäkäl. Yimali area was at that time forestland, which had been serving as hunting ground for the people of Zigäm region. These settlers cleared forest and turned the land into agricultural fields. Some of these migrants also moved to Mäntawuha and Dibati areas in search of their friends, kith and kin as well as co-religionists.<sup>63</sup> The settlement of Wollo migrants that began in Mätäkäl in the early 1960s and continued throughout the early 1970s turned large tracts of forestlands in to agricultural fields. This led to a major change in the

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Donald Crummey, *Farming and Famine: Landscape Vulnerability in Northeast Ethiopia*, James C. McCann, ed. (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2018), pp. 35—37; See also Gopalakrishna Kumar, "Ethiopian Famines, 1973—1985" in Working Papers of World Institute for Development Economics Research of the United Nations University (November, 1987), pp. 9—1; Mermari Commission Report, Sile Wollo Derq ena yasketew Rehab (Tekemt 1968), pp. 18—25, IES, MS, 5706,

<sup>62</sup> Gopalakrishna Kumar, "Ethiopian Famines, 1973—1985", pp.10—11

<sup>63</sup> Oral Informants: Adam, Mekuriaw, Mäkonnen, and Fentahun.

physical landscape of the region. It also led to the flight of wild animals because of the destruction of their habitats. Habitat destruction was not the only cause for the decline in wildlife from the region. As we would see in the next section, organized hunting was another major cause for the loss of biodiversity in Mätäkäl.

### **State Policy versus Continued War against Game Animals, 1940s to 1970s**

As I noted in chapter one, hunting in northwestern Ethiopia had a long history and that in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, it was a major sport for the Gonderine ruling elite. The expansion of the ivory trade during the 19<sup>th</sup> century transformed the hunting tradition of the region. Since the first decade of the twentieth century, elephant hunting in Mätäkäl had become highly commercialized although hunting for social purposes continued to be strong.<sup>64</sup>

After the liberation of Ethiopia from the Italian occupation, Emperor Haile Sillassie issued different decrees that were concerned with wildlife conservation. The first of these was entitled “Proclamation No. 61 of 1944”.<sup>65</sup> Certain landlords who possessed their own forests and tribes who depended on hunting for their livelihood were exempted from the imposition of the law, which created vacuum to enforce the law uniformly upon the citizens of the country for preservation of wild animals. The final limit of punishment on violators of the law was also stated not to exceed 1000 birr, which could not deter illegal hunters from their activities.<sup>66</sup> To enforce the 1944 decree, the Ministry of Agriculture came out with detailed rules and regulations on hunting in 1946. This regulation entrusted the

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<sup>64</sup> James Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile*, Vol. 2, p.541

<sup>65</sup> *Negarit Gazeta* No. 9, Proclamation No. 61/ 1944, (May 21, 1944), pp. 91—92

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

responsibility of preserving wild animals on different government bodies like administrators of the country, police and defense forces and individual citizens.<sup>67</sup>

The provision of these laws, rules and regulations, however, did not deter people from continuing to hunt game in Mätäkäl. Though game animals had been depleted in large parts of Mätäkäl by this time, parts of Wombära and Dangur districts still had a fair amount of wildlife and therefore continued to be hunting grounds for game from the 1940s to the 1970s. Local people and poachers manipulated the existing loopholes in the new regulations and continued to hunt game without much restriction. For example, the 1944 Decree and the 1946 rules and regulations of the Ministry of Agriculture on hunting gave the right for the people to kill wild beasts that endangered their life or attacked their cattle.<sup>68</sup> Exploiting this loophole in the law, people in Wombära, in southern Mätäkäl, reported to the local government that lions posed a danger to their settlements and requested that they be given permission to hunt these threatening beasts. For instance, the Wombära district Police office reported on May 16, 1954 about lions' attack on peoples' cattle. Based on these applications and police report, the regional government permitted killing lions, leopards and other similar beasts whenever these beasts attacked people or their cattle in the province but government ordered the killers to submit the skins of killed beasts to the Mätäkäl sub-province Treasury Office.<sup>69</sup> Thus, people got an excuse to continue with their traditional trophy hunting of different game by presenting only the skins

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<sup>67</sup> A letter written by *Ato* Solomon Abreham, vice of rest and contract, to Dejjazmatch Tsehayu Equ Sillassie, Governorate General of Gojjam Teklay Gizat that dated Tahsas 22, 1958 E. C with ref. no. 71/3859, DMUAC, Fol. No. 45, File No. መ/ደ--85 Den ena Dur Arawit.

<sup>68</sup> Den ena Dur Arawit Tibeqa Limat Bale Siltan, p. 375, see section 17 of the rules and regulations

<sup>69</sup> See *Fitawrari* Embiale Gessesse's letter to Mätäkäl *awraja* on May 16, 1954 with ref. no. 804/9, DMUAC, File No. መ/ደ--85 Den ena Dur Arawit

as evidence to the local government offices about attack by beasts on people and their cattle.

The other target of trophy hunters in the southern part of Mätäkäl particularly in the Dura valley and southern parts of Wombära district were buffalo. People complained against buffalo in the 1940s and 1950s for destroying agricultural fields and settlements.<sup>70</sup> As indicated in section 16<sup>th</sup> of the rules and regulations of the Ministry of Agriculture on wildlife preservation, *rest* landholders, renters and peasants could kill or catch alive crop destroyers if they could not get other alternative mechanisms to control them.<sup>71</sup> Hence, when individuals were caught killing different game animals and brought before the courts, they reported that they killed the animals in response to attack on their cattle or agricultural fields. The court in many cases released the suspected criminals free due to loopholes in the government law and hence people became experienced in punishable and non-punishable crimes in hunting practices.<sup>72</sup> These legal loopholes allowed peasants of Mätäkäl to continue with buffalo trophy hunting in the 1950s and 1960s, which finally led to complete eradication of buffalo from the southern parts of Mätäkäl and Dura valley.

Game animals, however, continued to be abundant in the northern part of Mätäkäl because of geographical and climatic factors. The Dindär valley in Dangur district, which extend up to the Sudan border hosted a wide variety of big game. *Abba Mändi* and

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<sup>70</sup> Informants: Mekuriaw Adigeh, Kebede Bayleyegn and Fentahun Yismaw

<sup>71</sup> Den Ena Dur Arawit Tibeqa ena Limat Balesiltan, P. 375; see also Ato Takele Endiro's Letter, chief secretary of Mätäkäl Awraja, addressed to Gojjam Teklay Gizat Office written on Meskerem 22, 1955 E. C with ref. no. 3395/99/50, DMUAC, Fol. No.45, File No. *መ/ደ*--85 Den ena Dur Arawit.

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

Awjamis lowlands in the Dindär valley were ideal grounds for elephant habitation.<sup>73</sup> Geographically these regions were located far from human settlement. Also because of its hot and malarious ecology, the Dindär valley was not suitable for human habitation. Thus, the region remained a heavily forested area suitable for browsers and grazers as well as their predators like lion, cheetah, and leopards.<sup>74</sup>

Besides ineffectiveness of the law, its distance from the center of administration also made Dindär valley a challenge to control illegal hunters. This region covered vast lowland territories that extended from the highlands of Bälaya up to the Sudan border and Omédla and Bambudi areas to the southwest direction. This hunting ground was very distant from district and sub-provincial administrative centers where there was no transport service except pack animals. Thus, the small numbers of police available in the district at the time complained about logistics and transport service supply. Due to absence of effective control system because of these problems, illegal hunters moved in this vast territory without serious challenge from the security forces throughout the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>75</sup>

The bands of hunters involved in poaching in the Dinder Valley came from different districts of Begemeder and Simen province, and Agaw Meder, and Bahir Dar sub-province of Gojjam province. Illegal hunters from the districts of Aläfa Taqussa, Dingäl Bär and Qwara from the Gondär side and Dangela and Ačäfär from Gojjam province posed severe

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<sup>73</sup> See Simeneh Desta's Letter, Governor of Dangur District, addressed to Mätäkäl Awraja Administrative Office written on Nehassie 9, 1958 E.C with ref. no. 1058/39/56, DMUAC, Fol. No. 45, File No. 00/ 2--85 Den ena Dur Arawit

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

challenge to the efforts of controlling poaching in Mätäkäl.<sup>76</sup> (See appendix D, VII-X) These bands of illegal hunters killed small and big game animals annually in the Awjamis lowlands in Dangur district. The major targets of these illegal hunters were elephants, lion, giraffe and buffalo. Each hunting band consisted of 15 to 20 armed members.<sup>77</sup> For instance, in 1966 a hunting band that was led by a man named Hussén Ali from Dangela district entered the Awjamis lowlands and returned first with three elephant tusks. In the second round of hunting trip that took two weeks of stay in the lowlands from May 20-June 3, 1966, the band returned with the tusk of four elephants. During the same year, a hunting band led by Wondiyefraw Tegegn from Achefer district of Bahir Dar sub-province returned home with the tooth of ten elephants and skin of two lions. Another hunting band or *adma* led by a man named *Ato* Shibabaw from Alefa Taqussa returned home with trophies of four elephants and Kebede Gonete's hunting band or *adma* returned with the trophies of six elephants. Thus, during the 1966 hunting season alone, illegal hunters killed twenty-nine big game animals, particularly lions and elephants.<sup>78</sup>

Hunting bands strongly depended on bush-meat during their stay in the hunting ground for weeks or months in search of game. Therefore, the rate of animals killed for their meat was much higher than those killed for their trophies. Trophy hunters also returned home with

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<sup>76</sup> See letter of Tsehayu Enqu Sillassie, regent of Gojjam Governorate General, written to regent of BegeMeder and Simen Governorate General on Yekatit 4, 1959 E. C., DMUAC, Fol. No. 45, File No. መ/ ደ--85, *Dän ena Dur Arawit*.

<sup>77</sup> See Tsehayu Enqu Sillassie's letter to *Oegnazmatch* Haile Birra, Governor of Agaw Meder Awraja written on Sene 3, 1960 E. C and Letter of Admasu Moges, secretary of Alefa-Taqussa district, to Dangur district administrative office on Miazia 9, 1960 E. C., DMUAC, Fol. No. 45, File No. መ/ ደ--85, *Dän ena Dur Arawit*.

<sup>78</sup> *Ato* Demisew Delta's report to Dangur district administrative office written on Sene 29, 1958 E. C., DMUAC, Fol. No. 45, File No. መ/ ደ--85, *Den ena Dur Arawit*. *Ato* demise Desta was member of Dangur district security force.

loads of dried meat.<sup>79</sup> They killed greater and smaller meat animals like buffalo, roan antelope, waterbuck, greater and smaller kudu, hartebeest, antelope, gazelle, reedbuck and others.<sup>80</sup>

Th illegal game hunters established temporary camps along riverbanks and repeatedly moved from one site to another to prevent detection from wildlife guards or government surveillance workers. These hunters did not expose their personal identities while they moved inside the forests for fear of charge from government bodies. When anybody like local people or wildlife guards tried to approach these hunters, they threatened them by shooting at them.<sup>81</sup>

Control of illegal hunters was very difficult for the admistration of Dangur district as well as Mätäkäl *awraja* because the police force deployed in the area was minute in proportion to the vast territorial size of the area and number of hunters engaged in illegal hunting in the vast lowland of the Dindär Valley. Hundreds of elephant hunters arrived in the lowlands every year during the dry season, which was beyond the capacity of Mätäkäl sub-province police force. In spite of a series of letters exchanged between Gojjam and Gondär provinces that called for joint operations to control illegal hunters in Dangur district, the effort to control illegal hunters remained ineffective.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Informants: Agrew Worku, Mekuriaw Adigeh, Alboro Dibaba and Adam Endalew

<sup>80</sup> See Report of Local People named Melese Ayana and Siraw Tebeje to Dangur district police office on Ginbot 20, 1960; Admasu Wassie, secretary of Belaya subdistrict, letter written to Dangur district administrative office on Miazia 19, 1960 E.C. with ref. no.114/60, DMUAC, Fol. No. 45, File No. መ/ ደ--85, *Dän ena Dur Arawit*; James E. Baum, *Unknown Ethiopia: New Light on Darkest Abyssinia* (New York: Grosset and Dulap Publishers, 1935), pp,353-354.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*; See also the letter of Mätäkäl Awraja Police commander, Tsegaye Eshetu, addressed to Gojjam Teklay Gizat Police written on Tikmt 26, 1961 E. C. with ref. no.754/6/99,DMUAC, Fol. No. 45, File

The struggle between local administration and illegal hunters was a story that was not unique to Ethiopia; it was also played out in many other parts of colonial and post-independence Africa. For instance, in Zambia the conflict between the Game Department staff and rural residents was very severe. Arrests, fines, prison term and even attempts to educate the rural community about wildlife conservation did not deter rural people from hunting illegally. Wildlife conservation measures were considered as colonial restriction against African access to use their wildlife resources and hence the conflict between game officers and illegal hunters was given political tone which related with independence struggle. Wildlife conservation policies were politicized and local African politician used this to incite opposition against colonial rule.<sup>83</sup> Though there was no political tone in Mätäkäl, the interplay between local administration and illegal hunters was similar with the case in Zambia.

Many factors encouraged hunters to continue with their illegal hunting activities in Mätäkäl. One was the absence of severe penalty on the illegal hunters when government forces caught them and presented them to the court. The maximum punishment for an individual who was caught red-handed for killing a game animal, which was valued 1000 birr was not more than 10 birr. Thus, the large profit that illegal hunters obtained from the sale of skins, horns, and tusks even after paying the fines imposed on them by the courts encouraged them to continue with their illegal hunting activities.<sup>84</sup> The second important

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No. 00/ ደ--85, Dän ena Dur Arawit. Tseaye stated in this letter incompatibility of the number of illegal hunter with the police force deployed in the region.

<sup>83</sup> Clark C. Gibson, *Politicians and Poachers: The Political Economy of Wildlife in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 28

<sup>84</sup> See the letter Lealem Birhanu, vice director of wildlife use and conservation Department under Wildlife Administration and Conservation Organization, addressed to Gojjam *Teklay Gizat* office written on

factor that encouraged poachers to continue with their illegal activities was their relationship with ivory merchants. Merchants who strongly needed ivory and skins of wild animals usually sponsored the poachers. Merchants sold the skins of wild animals in open markets at Addis Ababa and other major towns of the country. In some cases, the merchants themselves organized bands of hunters and campaigned to the lowlands of Dangur district of Mätäkäl sub-province in search of big game.<sup>85</sup> For instance, a Muslim merchant from Dangela named Hussein Ali had recruited elephant hunters from Aläfa Taussa district and organized his own hunting band or *adma*. He collected ivory and skins of beasts from his *adma* and other hunting groups and traded these items with merchants. Besides Hussén Ali, many merchants from Gojjam and Gondär had direct or indirect links to different hunting groups. It was this market demand that pushed hunters to continue with their illegal hunting in Mätäkäl from the 1950s to 1970s despite the promulgation of laws and regulations against illegal hunting.<sup>86</sup>

The insignificant attention that the government gave to control hunting in the region compared to other game reserve areas of the country also contributed to the continuation of illegal hunting in Mätäkäl. From the beginning when Emperor Menilek II issued the first game preservation law, he did not recognize Mätäkäl as a game reserve area. The 1913 Game Preservation Decree identified Bako *awraja* (Nech Sar), Borena *awraja* (Kadka Miyo Chamcha), Beni-Shangul *awraja*, Majji *awraja* (From Soddo Forest to the frontier),

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Miazia 15, 1966 with ref. no. **m** 10/2—3/10/66. DMUAC, Fol. No. 45, File No. **መ/ ደ--85, Dän ena Dur Arawit.**

<sup>85</sup> Informants: Regassa Assegie, Ashebir Beyene, Kebede Bayleyegn and Adam Endalew; See also Dejazmatch Tsehayu Enqusillassie's letter addressed to Oegnazmatch Haile Birra, Governor of Agaw Meder *awraja* written on Säné 3, 1960 E. C and application of Jemere Gombel, Abere Tekola and Damtew Delta that dated Sene 29 1958 E.C, DMUAC, Fol. No. 45, File No. **መ/ ደ--85, Dän ena Dur Arawit.**

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

Illubabor *awraja*, Addaa *awraja* (Bishoftu Lakes area and its surrounding) and Ogaden *awraja* as game reserve areas of the country and free hunting in these areas was prohibited.<sup>87</sup> Emperor Haile Sillassie's decrees of 1931 and 1944 showed no significant change from Minilek's decrees; rather Haile Sillassie decrees recognized special right of *rest* holders and "tribes" whose life was related with bush-meat and skins of games to engage in hunting.<sup>88</sup> Thus, Mätäkäl remained a free hunting game area where elites and military class of northwestern Ethiopia enjoyed for long trophy hunting. The local people and regional elites had already built strong cultural tradition of trophy hunting in the region. This strong cultural tradition of trophy hunting became very difficult for the government to control by the later rules and regulations of the government.

The size of the security force deployed in the region was also a factor for lack of effective control of illegal hunting in Matakäl. The district and sub-province governors did not have sufficient police force to deploy along these long borderlines. In addition to limited the security force to manage the region, the existing members of security force were not willing to stay long or even to go to the lowlands fearing life-threatening malaria or other lowland diseases that abounded in the area.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, the region was distant and inaccessible to travel on foot and thus needed the help of pack animals to travel to the lowlands. These were not provided to the security force limiting the effectiveness of their jobs in the region.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Dän ena Dur Arawit Tebäqa ena Limat Baläsilta, p. 362; See also *Negarit Gazeta* No. 9, Proclamation No. 61/ 1944, (May 21, 1944), pp. 91—92.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 364—375

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

Absence of cooperation and coordination between neighboring regions of Gojjam and Gondär to control illegal hunters was another challenge in the fight against illegal hunting. The chief secretary of Gojjam province, Mulualäm Gäbrämaryam, complained this problem to Begemeder and Simén *täklay gizat* office for the absence of cooperation to control illegal hunters in the lowlands of Mätäkäl. The Ministry of Interior also expressed its complaint to Simen and Bégémeder province for the inability of the province to put into practice the government's decree to preserve wildlife in coordination with the security forces in Gojjam province.<sup>91</sup>

The central government appointed two experts in 1968 to investigate wildlife conservation problem in Mätäkäl. Furthermore, *Ato* Simeneh Desta, the governor of Dangur district, recommended in his report that wildlife preservation and development organization should deploy well-trained and sufficient security force in the lowlands of Dangur to save big and small game animals from extinction. Since his appointment over the district as governor, he found difficult to control illegal hunters of the region using the available force.<sup>92</sup> Based on *Ato* Seménäh's recommendation, the Wildlife Preservation and Development authority sent two men named Bälačäw Täkola and Yähuala Yimam in June 1968 to assess the problem of illegal hunters in Dangur district. However, the authority's assignment of the two individuals showed that it did not recognize the geographical and climatic complexities of the region. This authority did not consider the vast size of this lowland region and the large number of illegal hunters that roamed in the region. Thus, as could be expected, the two

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<sup>91</sup>See the Letter of *Ato* Mulualem Gebremaryam, chief secretary of Gojjam *Teklay Gizat* addressed to Simen and Bege Meder *Teklay Gizat* written on Meskerem 15, 1961 with ref. no. 12912/10/4,DMUAC, Fol. No. 45, File No. መ/ ደ--85, *Dän ena Dur Arawit*.

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid*.

individuals assigned by the Wildlife Conservation authority had little success in controlling illegal hunting in the region.<sup>93</sup>

On the pretext of disagreement with the district governor, *Fitawrari* Iyasu Zälläkä Liku, Belachew and Yehuala returned to Addis Ababa after only two months of stay in the region. *Fitawrari* Iyasu reported to the sub-provincial and provincial offices that there was no disagreement with these individuals. The two men actually went back to Addis Ababa because they could not get accustomed to the lowland climate and execute their tasks effectively. Furthermore, the region where they were assigned did not have means of communication to district and sub-provincial administrative centers which made their life in the lowlands harsh. In addition, they could not stop the massacre of game animals like elephants, buffaloes, giraffes, lions and other small and big meat animals in the lowlands of Bälāya and Omédla sub districts.<sup>94</sup>

The attractive market on wildlife products like skin and tusks pushed poachers to continue with their illegal hunting even with the existence of strong legal regulations. The government issued new regulation in January 1972 concerning wildlife conservation. However, poaching continued unabated in Mätäkäl posing a threat to wildlife conservation. The benefits that hunters and merchants gained from the sale of skins and tusks encouraged them to continue with their poaching activities. The exchange of numerous letters to and

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<sup>93</sup>See the letter of Fikre Maryam Demeke, Wildlife administration and preservation organization administration and Finance Manager addressed to Mätäkäl *Awraja* administrative office written on Tahsas 5, 1965 E. C. with ref. no. 21/23/65, DMUAC, Fol. No. 45, File No. መ/ ደ--85, Den ena Dur Arawit

<sup>94</sup>*Dejazmatch* Desta Birru's letter, Mätäkäl *Awraja* Governor, to *Ato* Tariku Tamrat, Gojjam Teklay Gizat Agricultural Office Deputy Maanager written on Tahsas 23, 1965 E. C with ref. no. 1438/99/50; and letter of *Dejazmatch* Dereje Mäkonnen, Regent of Gojjam Teklay Gizat, addressed to *Dejazmatch* Desta Birru, Governor of Mätäkäl *Awraja* written on Tahsas 30, 1965 E. C, DMUAC, Fol. No. 45, File No. መ/ ደ--85, Den ena Dur Arawit

from different government organs to sub-provincial and district offices could not break the attitude of local people on hunting traditions. Both local and provincial government could not establish effective control system on the ground. Thus, illegal hunting continued to be a threat to extinction of wildlife species in Mätäkäl through out 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>95</sup>

The threat to wildlife by illegal hunters came not only from the highland provinces but also from cross-border hunters. Sudanese nationals crossed the Ethiopian border to kill big game animals like elephant and buffalo. They entered Ethiopian territory by either bribing Ethiopian border chiefs or threatening them through the use of arms. The Ethiopian nationals along the border areas were not well armed and organized to defend organized and well- armed hunting bands from coming from the Sudan.<sup>96</sup>

### **Human and Animal Disease Control Efforts and Achievements**

Disease was one environmental factor that affects human settlement pattern as well as farm and livestock economies.<sup>97</sup> Natural factors like altitude, temperature, rainfall and humidity largely determine the prevalence of disease in specific environments. These factors helped both the development of vectors of diseases or created favorable conditions for the proliferation of vectors and development of disease pathogens. Vast environments in Africa are suitable for the proliferation of insects that serve as vectors of disease.<sup>98</sup> The warm and

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<sup>95</sup> See the letter of Assefa Tareke, Gojjam *Teklay Gizat* Director, addressed chief department of provincial police office written on Meskerem 26, 1966 E.C. with ref. no. 906/10/4 and letter of Shambel Fekadu Tenny, crime prevention and investigation deputy commander of provincial police force, addressed to Gojjam *Teklay Gizat* administrative office written on Yekatit 25, 1973 E. C with ref. no. 4932/12/126, DMUAC, Fol. No. 45, File No. መ/ ደ--85, Den ena Dur Arawit

<sup>96</sup> See application of Dejazmatch Balbind Sendiki, the chiefs of Abultu and Abba Mendi of Omedla sub district, addressed to Mätäkäl administrative of that dated Tir 9, 1961 E. C.

<sup>97</sup> Shepard Krech III, J. R. McNeil, and Carolyn Merchant (eds.), *Encyclopedia of World Environmental History, Vol. 1, A—E* (Routledge: Berkshire Publishing Group, 2004), p.8

<sup>98</sup> Kenneth F. Kiple( ed.), *The Cambridge World History of Human Disease*(London: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp.299—302

humid climate of lowland Mätäkäl also served as breeding ground for different kinds of human and animal diseases. For this reason highlanders shunned the region as a settlement land and for plow agriculture.<sup>99</sup>

The people of Mätäkäl suffered from both epidemic and endemic diseases of the region. Epidemic diseases were diseases that broke out sporadically and caused excess morbidity or mortality than the normal time.<sup>100</sup> Such diseases had long history in Mätäkäl as well as the whole of Gojjam province. Some of the deadly diseases of the region remembered by the elders of Mätäkäl were categorized as cattle disease and human disease. Cattle disease included rinderpest, bovine pleuropneumonia, smallpox, anthrax, trypanosomiasis, and blackleg. Human diseases included malaria, smallpox, typhus, and Cholera.<sup>101</sup>

During the post-1941 period, Control of human and animal diseases was another important area of modernization intervention of the Imperial Government in Mätäkäl. The central motive of the state was to expand the country's resource base to peripheral areas like Mätäkäl in northwestern Ethiopia. Because of the prevalence of malaria and trypanosomiasis, Mätäkäl had remained a sparsely populated region at least to the middle of the 20th century. By extending medical facilities to fight human and animal disease, the Ethiopian state beginning from the 1960s began to attract settlers from other parts the country, like Wollo and Gonder that encouraged the expansion of agriculture and human settlement. The expansion of agriculture and settlement as we noted above had direct impact on environmental change in Mätäkäl. Thus, this sub-section discusses the

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<sup>99</sup> Getachew Woldemeskel, "The Consequences of Resettlement in Ethiopia" in *African Affairs*, Vol. 88, No. 352 (London: Oxford University Press, July 1989), p. 363.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> Oral Informants: Adam Endalews, Assefa Abejehu, Alboro Dibaba, and Fasil Tewachew.

governments' efforts to fight against pathogens to make the land suitable for human habitation at least beginning from the 1950s and its environmental ramifications.

## **Malaria**

Malaria is an infectious disease that “constitutes Africa’s most deadly and debilitating vector-borne disease.”<sup>102</sup> Lowland river valleys and warm temperature are suitable habitats for mosquito where it nurtures year-round.<sup>103</sup> Historically, the lowlands of northwestern Ethiopia including the Lake Tana region were unhealthy areas where fever prevailed during certain seasons.<sup>104</sup> The lowlands which were characterized by low elevation, swampy flats near rivers and lakes were infested with malaria-carrying mosquitoes.<sup>105</sup> These lowlands were important for the economy of the country because they were areas with high agricultural potential but had high risk of malaria infection.<sup>106</sup>

Mätäkäl, which forms parts of this broad region, has physical and climatic features characterized by predominantly low elevation that ranged from 600 meters in Gubba to 1500 meters above sea level around Čagni town. Mätäkäl is also characterized by warm and humid climate with flat laying physical environment around Bäläs River valley and average annual temperature that ranges from 30 to 35°C.<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, Mätäkäl is endowed with abundant water bodies like Gilgel and Abbat Bäläs Rivers, Dindär River, Dura, Dondor, Ardi, Šar, and others that serve as an ideal breeding ground for

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<sup>102</sup> James C. McCann, *The Historical Ecology of Malaria in Ethiopia* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014), p.1

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2

<sup>104</sup> McCann, *The Historical Ecology of Malaria*, p. 57; Richard Pankhurst, “Some Factors Influencing the Health of Traditional Ethiopia” in *Journal of Ethiopian Studies Vol. 4, No. 1* (Institute of Ethiopian Studies, January 1966), p.34

<sup>105</sup> McCann, *The Historical Ecology...*, p.57 Pankhurst, “Some Factors...” . p.33

<sup>106</sup> *Ethiopian Herald*, No. 37, Vol. 15, 1958

<sup>107</sup> Getachew Woldemeskel, p. 363.

mosquitoes.<sup>108</sup> Malaria vector requires water to complete its life cycle that passes through the stages of egg, larva, pupa and adult. Longevity and density of mosquitoes in an area determined the intensity of infection and transmission of the pathogens to human beings. Temperature and humidity have a direct effect on the longevity of mosquitoes. Mosquitoes develop and multiply in an ecological region optimum for their survival as well as for the parasite. Mosquitoes need average temperature of approximately 21°C to 32°C and relative humidity at least 60% for its survival and maintenance of transmission.<sup>109</sup>

Though malaria was endemic to the lowlands of Mätäkäl, occasionally it acquired epidemic proportions resulting in mass death, and covering wider geographical areas some of which had elevations above 2000 meters. Malaria broke out as an epidemic in Mätäkäl in 1948/9 and caused the loss of large number of people in the region. The cause of the 1948/9 malaria epidemic was ecological disturbance that resulted from the establishment of new human settlements following the establishment Čagni town. Studies on malaria show that ecological disturbance that occur due to deforestation and establishment of new settlements in previously unsettled areas led to proliferation of mosquitoes. Mosquitoes need human habitation for their proliferation because human-vector contact allowed malaria parasite development and transmission.<sup>110</sup> That ecosystem instability due to human actions gave

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<sup>108</sup> Tsega Endalew, *Inter-Ethnic Relations on a Frontier: Mätäkäl (Ethiopia), 1898—1991* (Weisbaden: Harrasswitz Verlag, 2006), p.2

<sup>109</sup> Aynalem Adugna, "Malaria in Ethiopia" [www.EthioDemographyAndHealth.org](http://www.EthioDemographyAndHealth.org), p.6; National Research Council, *Under the Weather: Climate, Ecosystems and Infectious Disease* (Washington, Dc :National Academy Press, 2001), p. 48.

<sup>110</sup> Aynalem, p. 6 James C. McCann, *The Historical Ecology of Malaria in Ethiopia: Depositing the Spirits* (Ohio, Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014), p. 136.

rise to new interactions among hosts and disease agents encouraging the emergence of new malaria threats.<sup>111</sup>

Čagni was established in an area that was surrounded by three big rivers called Dura, Ardi and Dondor and covered by dense forest and tall savanna grass. New houses were built by clearing forests and tall grass of the region. However, epidemic disease swept the new settlement area and decimated many people. It also spread to relatively highland areas in its surroundings.<sup>112</sup>

A few years later, in 1953 another devastating malaria epidemics broke out in northwestern Ethiopia that covered the Blue Nile watershed region including the region of Mätäkäl. Though there were no statistical figures showing the death rate in Mätäkäl, James McCann has indicated that about 7000 deaths were recorded from the region of Lake Tana and Dembya plains.<sup>113</sup>

The name ‘*weba*’ (malaria) was not known in Mätäkäl before the 1950s. The most widely used name in both the Agaw and Gumuz communities was *midrashi*. Alternatively the name *shuta* or *nidad* was also used based on the difference of localities in the region. The people also did not have knowledge about the role of mosquitoes in causing malaria. Rather people believed that *midrashi* resulted from climate change or rainfall when there was hot temperature.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> National Research Council, p. 104; James C. McCann, *The Historical Ecology of Malaria in Ethiopia*: P. 136

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> James McCann, *Historical Ecology of Malaria*, pp. 63—64

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

Malaria was a big challenge to the people of Mätäkäl. There was no modern medical service to control malaria until the 1960s. The local people resorted to different traditional remedies to treat malaria. Agaws used onions and alcohol when they had malaria-induced fever. The Gumuz boiled the leaf of *nyem*, which is very sour and drank it when they felt feverish. When people drank the boiled leaf, it caused heavy sweating and hence temporary relief. The Gumuz also mixed hot pepper with sorghum and water and drank it as a medicine against malaria. Strong hot pepper caused the body of the patient to release heavy sweat and gave relief after a while.<sup>115</sup> When the Agaw felt feverish and understood it was *midrashi* (malaria), they used different kinds of traditional medicines. The Agaw ate a sour leaf locally known as *kakim* mixing it with hot pepper and salt. The leaf was first slightly warmed by fire and then they ate it hence the feeling of fever disappeared with heavy sweat. They also ate garlic mixing it with honey.<sup>116</sup> Using traditional medicine was also common among the Šinaša community of the region. They used different types of plants as a medicine for different types of disease. However, Šinaša elders were not willing to discuss the type of plant that they used as a medicine for malaria or other types of diseases.<sup>117</sup> Probably, the reason may be that they are known in traditional medicine and it is the source of income for them so that feared the diffusion of their knowledge to other areas.

According to local elders, modern medical service in Mätäkäl was a recent phenomenon. Hence, the local people had to depend on herbs as sources of remedy for different health

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<sup>115</sup> Oral Informants: Alheir Mohammed, Sheik Rageb Algamer and Zahra Mohammed

<sup>116</sup> Informants: Bewket Belay, Kelemu Bezabih and Assefa Abejehu

<sup>117</sup> Oral Informants: Alboro Dibaba, Fasil Tewachew, Filate Jirra and Chinqarro Tsinno

problems.<sup>118</sup> Fekadu Fulla had stated that Ethiopia is a country highly dependent on medicinal plants to get remedy from different kinds of diseases. Herbal remedies were widespread practices in different cultures across Ethiopia.<sup>119</sup>

State intervention against malaria in Mätäkäl began in 1961/2 after the severe malaria epidemic of 1958 that covered the majority of provinces of Ethiopia including Gojjam Province that included Mätäkäl. Though there is no figure on Mätäkäl, as a result of this epidemic, the death of about 130,000 people at national level was reported and the highest morbidity rate that coincided with the harvest season resulted in shortage of labour across the country. Thus, the epidemic strongly affected the agricultural economy of the country.<sup>120</sup> Following the 1958 epidemic, the government established the Malaria Eradication Service (MES) at national level by Imperial order number 22 of 1959.<sup>121</sup> Anti-malaria activities had already been started as pilot projects around economically important agro-industrial areas like Awash Valley since 1955 as part of the Global Malaria Eradication Program. After the Imperial order of 1959, Malaria Eradication service was gradually extended to the provinces.<sup>122</sup>(See aappendix B-I)

Following the decree the Ministry of Health announced the tasks to be undertaken by the Malara Eradication Service. The Minister of Health, *Ato* Abebe Retta, wrote a letter on September 30, 1960 to the viceroy of Gojjam, Tsehayu Enqu Sillassie. In this letter, the

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<sup>118</sup> Oral Informants: Fasil Tewachew, Alheir Mohammed, Sheik Rageb Algamer and Zahra Mohammed

<sup>119</sup> Fekadu Fullas, "Ethiopian Traditional Medicine: Common Medicinal Plants in Perspective" (Sioux, 2001), pp. x, 3—4, Anteneh Hante and Enawgaw Mahri, "Palliative Care and Traditional Medicine in Ethiopia" in *The Manual of the Ethiopian Medical History* (N.p: People to People, 2013), p.50

<sup>120</sup> Awash Tekle Haimanot, "Malaria in Ethiopia" (December 30, 1967), p.4

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12; *Negarit Gazeta*, 18<sup>th</sup> Year, No.6, Order No.22, February 28, 1959, pp. 30—32

<sup>122</sup> National Health Development Network (NHDN), Proceedings of the Workshop on the Promotion and Strengthening of Malaria Control Through Primary Health Care (Addis Ababa, October 1984), p.7; See also *Negarit Gazeta*, Order No.22, 1959, pp.30—32

minister reminded the tasks to be accomplished to eradicate malaria in the province. The tasks to be carried out were listed as mapping malarious *qebälés* with their population size, giving numbers and codes to the houses of individuals, collecting and identifying the types of Anopheles species from areas where they could breed like pools and riverbanks.<sup>123</sup>

Accordingly, the Malaria Eradication Service opened its provincial head office in Gojjam in 1961 at Dangla in Agaw Meder because it was the center for the malarious areas of Bahir Dar region and Mätäkäl. *Ato* Teka Abebe was assigned as head of the Malaria Eradication Service (MES) of Gojjam Province.<sup>124</sup> A sub-office was opened in Mätäkäl *awraja* at the beginning of 1962 with the strong urging *awraja* governor, *Däjazmač*Dästa Berru. Beginning from 1962 to 1966 preparatory work such as identification of malarious *qebälés*, preparation of maps for them and registration of number of peasants' houses and families took place.<sup>125</sup> (See also appendix B-II and III). DDT spraying in the houses of identified *qebälés* as malarious began in March 1966 and continued until 1971. The Malaria Eradication Service (MES) provided for the society malaria diagnosis and treatment with chloroquine, and house-to-house DDT spraying.<sup>126</sup> Hence, malaria epidemic

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<sup>123</sup>Gojjam *Teklay Gizat Hikmena*, See the letter written by *Ato* Abebe Retta, Minister of Ministry of Health, on September 20, 1953 E.C with ref. no. 3/Ø/55/57 addressed to Gojjam *Teklay Gizat Ederassie*, *Dejj. Tsehayu Enqu sillassie*, NALA, Folder and File No. 17.1. 11. 18. 04.

<sup>124</sup> See the letter of *Ato* Fantaye Wolde Yohannes, Vice Minister of Ministry of Interior, written on May 13, 1963 with ref. no.2/19144/6595/24/48 addressed to Gojjam *Teklay Gizat*, NALA: Fol. No. & File No. 17.1.11.18.04.

<sup>125</sup> Oral Informants: Fentahun Yismaw, Mekuriaw Adigeh and Adam Endalew; see also Ministry of Health, "Ethiopia: Malaria Program Performance Review" (Addis Ababa, June 2011, available at Ministry of Health Library) ,p. 4.; Federal Ministry of Health, "Ethiopia: National Malaria Indicator Survey" (Addis Ababa, 2007 available at Ministry of Health Library), p.2.

<sup>126</sup> Oral Informants: Fentahun, Mekuriaw, And Adam; See also Federal Ministry of Health, p.2

prevalence was reduced to a great extent though it could not eradicate malaria from the region.<sup>127</sup>

Malaria Eradication Service began evaluating its activities as of 1967 and continued upto April 1970. The evaluation result showed the prevalence of malaria particularly in the lowland parts of Mätäkäl. The reasons mentioned for this increase were the Gumuz refusal to spray their houses with DDT and inability to cover all localities with DDT spraying and medicine distribution because of inaccessibility of the area and absence of transport service.<sup>128</sup> The twenty-second World Health Assembly Resolution of 1969 also recommended changing the strategy of malaria eradication to one of control. Based on the recommendation of the WHO and the national evaluation result, Malaria Eradication Service was discontinued as of 1971.<sup>129</sup>

Consequently, the Malaria Eradication Service closed its sub-office in Mätäkäl *awraja*, Čagni Town on March 15, 1972. The *awraja* administration and the local population were disappointed at the closure of the MES sub-office and petitioned the provincial office to continue its service. However, Malaria Eradication Service regarded that its anti-malaria activities were going to be integrated to the activities of Čagni town health center. Though *Ato Amha Eshete*, chief manager of Malaria Eradication, claimed the provision of anti-malaria service would continue by the health center, spraying DDT was interrupted in the

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<sup>127</sup> Informants: Assefa Abejehu and Adam Endalew

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> National Health Development Network, p.7

region of Mätäkäl as of 1972 but distribution of Chloroquine for patients continued by the workers of the health center.<sup>130</sup>(See also appendix B-IV)

With the change of approach from malaria eradication to control in 1972, the malaria control program was reorganized as a vertical program operating across the country through 17 zonal and 70 sector offices.<sup>131</sup> This vertical program was known as National Organization for the Control of Malaria and Other Vector-Borne Diseases (NOCMVD). This national program again gave emphasis to Agro-Industrial Project areas<sup>132</sup> However, the peripheral regions like Mätäkäl could not get due attention in the newly structured national program of malaria control. Thus, malaria remained one of serious environmental problems in the region of Mätäkäl.

### **Attempts Made to Improve Livestock Health in Mätäkäl**

Another government effort of modernization in the study area involved controlling animal diseases, which hindered livestock production in Mätäkäl. The Imperial government sought to control livestock diseases in order to create conducive condition for cattle breeding and the expansion of plow agriculture in the region. Trypanosomiasis was one of the severe environmental challenges in the region of Mätäkäl since ancient times. Though the disease was endemic to the region, the available sources are silent about its early history in Mätäkäl until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Juan Maria Schuver, who visited the Gubba region of Mätäkäl in June 1882, lost two of his horses and his dog during his stay in Gubba. According to him,

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<sup>130</sup> See the letters of *Dejjazmatch* Desta Birru, Mätäkäl *Awraja* Governor, written on 23/1/1972 with ref.no. 58/361/48 and a letter of Ato Amha Eshete, Chief Manager of Malaria Eradication Service under Ministry of Health, written on October 31, 1972 with ref. no. መ/ከ2/2/65 to Gojjam *Teklay Gizat* office as a response to Mätäkäl *Awraja* request NALA: Folder and File No. 17. 1. 11. 18. 19

<sup>131</sup> Federal Ministry of Health, p. 2.

<sup>132</sup> Ministry of Health, p. 4

the cause for the death of his animals was tsetse fly that fed on blood of animals and infected them with disease causing pathogens.<sup>133</sup> The major symptoms of this disease were rapid loss of weight and physical weakness that finally led to death.<sup>134</sup> Another traveler, Donaldson-Smith, who visited southwestern Ethiopia from 1894 to 1895, stated that trypanosomiasis was a major constraint on livestock production and in general agricultural development in the vast lowlands of Ethiopia. Though these vast lowlands were potentially productive, agricultural development was constrained because of the impact of the trypanosomiasis.<sup>135</sup> Hence, Mätäkäl was found under similar tsetse zone and lowland ecology the problems were related to the southwestern lowlands.

The veterinary service in Ethiopia began in 1927. The government of Ethiopia officially declared cattle breeding as chief economic sector for Ethiopian peasants. However, due to absence of veterinarian service in the country the deaths of cattle were as many as breeding size. Thus, the Ministry of Agriculture announced beginning of veterinary service to keep animal health as of September 1927.<sup>136</sup>

However, the Ministry's veterinarian activities were not known in the provinces, particularly in Gojjam province by 1927. A national proclamation for vaccination and protection of animal health was for the first time issued in 1949. This proclamation provided legal responsibility to the Ministry of Agriculture to control infectious diseases of cattle in the country and to assign pertinent veterinarians in all provinces and woredas to

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<sup>133</sup> Wendy James, Gerd Baumann and Douglas H. Johnson (eds.), *Juan Maria Schuver's Travels in Northeast Africa, 1880—1883* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1996), p. 196.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> Getachew Abebe, "Trypanosome and Trypanosomiasis" DVM MSC (Addis Ababa University, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, 1983), p.1

<sup>136</sup> *Birhan ena Selam*, Third Year No.38, Meskerem 11, 1920 E.C (September 22, 1927), p. 301.

eradicate infectious diseases from the country.<sup>137</sup> After this proclamation, animal health workers faced the unwillingness of peasants to have vaccinated their cattle. Hiding cattle became a challenge against the efforts to control infectious diseases in Mätäkäl. People were not conscious about the value of vaccination and people in Mätäkäl were relating this with government registration of peoples' wealth in order to increase tax.<sup>138</sup> The 1949 legal notice did not have clear statement to force cattle owners to get treatment for their cattle throughout the country. For this reason, the government was forced to declare an amendment proclamation No.104 of 1951 that provided legal ground for veterinarians to force cattle owners to vaccinated and get treatment for their cattle. Thus, vaccinating cattle became obligatory and hiding cattle from vaccination teams became punishable by this proclamation.<sup>139</sup>

The government made vaccination free of fee as of 1955 to motivate cattle owners for vaccination because the previous proclamation demanded fee per cattle head. The 1955 proclamation stated that vaccination program would be carried out free of charge and called for all owners of cattle in Ethiopia to vaccinate their cattle against infectious diseases without fee.<sup>140</sup>

However, massive vaccination campaign in the province started too late. For instance, in Gojjam cattle vaccination took place from July 1969 to April 1970 and vaccinated about 485, 763 cattle in the province against lung disease, anthrax, smallpox, rinderpest, liverfluke and others. However, the program was limited to accessible parts of *awrajas* in

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<sup>137</sup> *Negarit Gazetha* No. 12, Legal Notice 128/49, August 27, 1949, pp. 46—48

<sup>138</sup> Informants: Adam Endalew, Fentahun Yismaw, Mekuriaw Adigeh and Fasil Tayachew

<sup>139</sup> *Negarit Gazetha*, Amendment Proclamation No. 104 Of 1951, p. 3

<sup>140</sup> *Negarit Gazetha* No. 9, "A proclamation to Provide for the Control of Infectious Disease of Cattle" May 28, 1955, p.91

the province and it was registered as better achievement.<sup>141</sup> The achievement of this vaccination program in Mätäkäl was it limited to the *awraja* center Q. H. S. Ber and its surroundings. For instance, a letter written on October 15, 1970, shows the unwillingness of cattle owners in Dangur district to to have their cattle vaccinate. The vaccinator assigned in Dangur at this time was Ayalew Admassu reported that he was able to vaccinate only 525 cattle during his stay in the district for about six months. He reported that the people were not willing to have their cattle vaccinated.<sup>142</sup> The reason as I understood from discussion with the elders was absence of discussion with local population to create and understand the value of vaccination.<sup>143</sup>

The head of provincial agricultural office, *Ato* Tariku Tamrat, was not happy with Ayalew Admassu's complaint and reports. *Ato* Tariku demanded *Ato* Assefa Abebe, the head of Mätäkäl *awraja* animal health department punish Ayalew Admassu for his unwillingness to carry out vaccination activities properly in Mätäkäl *awraja*.<sup>144</sup> However, Mätäkäl *awraja* officials were unwilling to punish the vaccinator. According to the the governor of Mätäkäl, *Dejazmatch* Desta Birru, the provincial agricultural office was seeking pretext for the failure of the vaccination activity in Mätäkäl because there was misunderstanding between the *awraja* governor and provincial animal health department. *Dejazmatch* Desta

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<sup>141</sup> DMUAC: Fol. No. 190, File No.10: Gojjam *Teklay Gizat Ersha Sira Tsifet Bet* (Gojjam Province Agricultural Office), see the letter written May 7, 1970 (Miazia 29, 1962 E.C) with ref. No 1310/62/47 by Defar Tafesse, Director of Provincial Agricultural Office.

<sup>142</sup> DMUAC: Fol. No. 190, File No.10: Gojjam *Teklay Gizat Ersha Sira Tsifet Bet* (Gojjam Province Agricultural Office), see the letter written on October 15, 1970 (Tikmt 5, 1963 E. C) with ref. no. 162/63/86 by Defar Tafesse, Director of Provincial Agricultural Office

<sup>143</sup> Oral Informants: Assefa Abejehu and Mekuriaw Adigeh

<sup>144</sup> DMUAC: Fol. No. 190, File No.10:Gojjam *Teklay Gizat Ersha Sira Tsifet Bet* (Gojjam Province Agricultural Office, See *Ato* Tariku Tamrat's letter written on October 12, 1972 (Tikmt 2, 1965 E. C) addressed to Mätäkäl *Awraja* Animal Heath Department

accused the *Teklay Gizat* office for not assigning sufficient budget and supply of medicine to carry out the vaccination in Mätäkäl properly.<sup>145</sup>

Hence, the early 1970s vaccination activities in Mätäkäl were not coordinated and organized because of the misunderstanding between *awraja* and provincial offices. Mätäkäl is a peripheral region infested with different kinds of diseases. Therefore so provincial offices did not want to assign workers to Mätäkäl which usually caused conflict between *awraja* and provincial offices. Provincial and sub-provincial officials accused each other to free themselves from taking risk of responsibility for the destruction of cattle in Mätäkäl by different diseases.

Well organized and nationally coordinated vaccination campaign in Gojjam Province started only in 1974. The Canadian Government and British Animal Health Officers supported this vaccination campaign. In July 1973, a committee that comprised: Dr. Adamu Waqjira, National coordinator of anthrax cattle disease eradication campaign; Dr. Morris, the head of Canadian Veterinarian team in Ethiopia; Dr. Wilsmore, vice head of British Veterinarian team in Ethiopia were sent from Addis Ababa to Gojjam to assess the situation in the province and set plans in advance for the next year national vaccination campaign. The Canadian Government supported this vaccination campaign not only with skilled animal health workers but also covered financial expense of the program.<sup>146</sup> African Initiated Joint Campaign against Rinderpest (JP15) also funded mass vaccination campaign

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<sup>145</sup> DMUAC: Fol. No. 190, File No.10:Gojjam *Teklay Gizat Ersha Sira Tsifet Bet* (Gojjam Province Agricultural Office, see the letter exchanges between Awraja Office and *Teklay Gizat* Agricultural office written on July 7, 1972 (Sene 30, 1964 E. C) and August 11, 1972 (Nehassie 5, 1964 E. C) with ref. no. 3945/60/47.

<sup>146</sup> DMUAC: Fol. No. 190, File No.10:Gojjam *Teklay Gizat Ersha Sira Tsifet Bet* (Gojjam Province Agricultural Office, see the letter written on August 4, 1973 (Hamle 28, 1965 E. C) with ref. no. ~~h~~h0/112/47 by Dr. Assefa Wolde Giyorgis, Chief Director of Animal Health Department in Ministry of Agriculture.

program in Ethiopia from 1972 until it was phased out in 1975.<sup>147</sup> This Committee made a survey on selected lowland parts of Gojjam from March 4—11, 1973. The survey team visited Bahir Dar on March 4 and 5, Zegie and its surrounding on March 6 and 7, Chagni town and its surrounding from Mätäkäl *Awraja* from March 8—10, and Gish Abay area and Debre Markos town on March 10—11, 1973.<sup>148</sup>

Based on the survey study and plan of the national committee, the first National Vaccination Campaign in Mätäkäl *awraja* began on March 29 and continued to May 16, 1974.<sup>149</sup> The first vaccination program in Mätäkäl entered into action after thorough discussion of *Awraja* officials chaired by Lieutenant Bassazinew Gebeyehu, Governor of the sub-province, with local elders. Local *balabats* and elders were given responsibility to facilitate vaccination activities at every vaccination centers in their respective localities. The vaccination activity covered the whole woredas of Mätäkäl *awrajas*.<sup>150</sup> The vaccinators' team carried out its activity in the inaccessible areas along Ethio-Sudan boarder assisted by American Government gift CC5 red airplane that made flights along boarders on March 11 and 12, 1974.<sup>151</sup>

Thus, the first vaccination program that aimed against eradicating smallpox and lung diseases of cattle from Ethiopia vaccinated about 24, 294 cattle in Mätäkäl through cooperative campaign. However, this was very small when compared to the total cattle

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<sup>147</sup> Tom Barrett, p.304

<sup>148</sup> DMUAC: Fol. No. 190, File No.10: Gojjam *Teklay Gizat Ersha Sira Tsifet Bet* (Gojjam Province Agricultural Office, see Dr. Yilma Ayalew's report written on March 28, 1973 (Megabit 19, 1965 E. C). Dr. Yilma was the head of Animal health department of Gojjam Teklay Gizat.

<sup>149</sup> DMUAC: Fol. No. 190, File No.10: Gojjam *Teklay Gizat Ersha Sira Tsifet Bet* (Gojjam Province Agricultural Office, See, March 25, 1974 minute of Mätäkäl Awraja Administrative Assembly.

<sup>150</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> DMUAC: Fol. No. 190, File No.10: Gojjam *Teklay Gizat Ersha Sira Tsifet Bet* (Gojjam Province Agricultural Office, See Dr. Yilma Ayalew's letter written on March 14, 1974 (Megabit 5, 1966 E. C) with ref. no.7769/10/10 by Muluaem Gebremaryam, chief Secretary of Mätäkäl Awraja.

population of the region.<sup>152</sup> The second round vaccination program took place in all districts of Mätäkäl from January 24 to February 12, 1975. The objective of this vaccination program was similar to the first round vaccination program that is eradicating smallpox and lung diseases of cattle.<sup>153</sup> According to Dr. Yilma, about 17, 682 cattle were vaccinated from Mätäkäl *awraja* but it was less than the first round vaccination achievement indicated above. Dr. Yilma indicated that the reason for the under achievement during the second round of vaccination program was peasants' and local administrative officials' uncooperativeness to facilitate vaccination program that was going on in the province of Gojjam. Geographical inaccessibility of some *awrajas* also became another challenge for vaccinators to carry out the program effectively.<sup>154</sup>

The national vaccination campaign to eradicate smallpox and lung diseases from Gojjam for the third round took place from October 25, 1975 to April 23, 1976. The third round vaccination program that covered central *awrajas* of Gojjam province (Debremarkos, Qolla Dega Damot, Bahir Dar and Agaw Meder) took place from December 10, 1975—January 8, 1976 and vaccinated 47, 521 cattle from the four *Awraja* that mentioned above.<sup>155</sup> The vaccination activity that carried out in the rest three *Awraja*: Mätäkäl, Motta and Bichena

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<sup>152</sup> DMUAC: Fol. No. 190, File No.1o: Gojjam *Teklay Gizat Ersha Sira Tsifet Bet* (Gojjam Province Agricultural Office, see Dr. Yilma Ayalews letter written on January 4, 1975 (Tahsas 26, 1967 E.C) with ref. no. 168/17/67

<sup>153</sup> DMUAC: Fol. No. 190, File No.1o: second volume, Gojjam *Teklay Gizat Ersha Sira Tsifet Bet* (Gojjam Province Agricultural Office, See Dr. Yilam Ayalew's Vaccination Program written on December 17, 1975 (Tahsas 8, 1968 E. C) with ref. no. 136/68 that addressed to Mätäkäl *Awraja* Administrative Office; See also Dr. Yilma's notice written January 4, 1975 (Tahsas 26, 1967) with ref. no. 168/17/67 that announced the second round vaccination program beginning from January 1975 also evaluates the weaknesses and strengths of the first round program.

<sup>154</sup> DMUAC: Fol. No. 190, File No.1o: Gojjam *Teklay Gizat Ersha Sira Tsifet Bet* (Gojjam Province Agricultural Office, Dr. Yilma's letter written on March 18, 1975 (Megabit 9, 1967 E.C) with ref. no. 177/17/67

<sup>155</sup> DMUAC: Fol. No. 190, File No.1o: Gojjam *Teklay Gizat Ersha Sira Tsifet Bet* (Gojjam Province Agricultural Office, Dr. Yilma's Report written on February 17, 1976 (10/6/68 E.C) with ref. no 211/68..

took much more time that extended up to April 23, 1976. Thus, national Vaccination that carried out for the third round from October 25,1975 to April 23, 1976 in Gojjam province vaccinated totally 139, 269 cattle.<sup>156</sup> See also the table below

Table 1. The Vaccination Report of Gojjam Province

<b>N o .</b>	<b>Awrajas</b>	<b>1974</b>	<b>1975</b>	<b>1976</b>
1	Däbrä Markos	357 094	8 122	28 194
2	Bichena	27 220	16 239	4 658
3	Qolla Däga Damot	315 773	9 580	11 569
4	Agaw Meder	282 953	5 690	15 809
5	Bahir Dar	290 954	18 696	44 024
6	Motta	115 839	146 090	-----
7	Mätäkal	24 042	17 682	33 015
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1 413 875</b>	<b>222 099</b>	<b>139 269</b>

Sorce: Veterinary Department Report of Gojjam Province, April, 1976

Gojjam Province Veterinary Department reported this result to Ministry of Agriculture and Forest Development. The report indicated that 70% of the total cattle of the province were

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.; final report of Dr. Yilma to Ministry of Agriculture and Forest Development , cattle disease eradication cooperative Campaign, written on April 21, 1976 (Miazia 13, 1968 E. C) with ref. no.252/68

vaccinated during the first-round vaccination campaign. The rest 30% of cattle vaccinated during the second and the third-round vaccination campaigns.<sup>157</sup>

However, the efforts of these periods could not find a solution for the problem of trypanosomiasis in Mätäkäl. Trypanosomiasis had been an endemic cattle disease in Mätäkäl and was known by different names like *Lol*, *Lolly*, and *Wozwuz*. The Agaw called this disease as *lolly* or *wozwuz* whereas the Shinasha and Gumuz identified it as *lol*. The name *Gendi* began to be used for the disease in the region with the establishment of modern medical service institutions in the 1960s.<sup>158</sup> This disease broke out sporadically as an epidemic covering larger areas of the region extending up to the fringes of the highlands. In 1948, trypanosomiasis epidemic broke out and severely attacked cattle in large parts of Mätäkäl. Again in 1956, this disease broke out in epidemic proportions in parts of Gwangwa, Zigem and Dangja districts that are found in the southern parts of Mätäkäl extending up to the Abbay valley. *Lolly* or *gendi* repeatedly attacked particularly the territories lying near the Abbay and Bäläsvalleys; hence the peasants of these regions were not beneficiaries from cattle breeding because the area was vulnerable to trypanosomiasis.<sup>159</sup>

Livestock health service did not start in Mätäkäl until the 1960s. When severe trypanosomiasis epidemic struck *dibati* and Lowland parts of Wombera districts from May to September 1961, peoples and sub-provincial officials petitioned the Provincial Agriculture Office to save the cattle from being wiped out by the disease. However, the

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<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> Informants: Fasil Tewachew, Alboro Dibaba, Mekuria Adigeh and Fentahun Yismaw.

<sup>159</sup> *Selä Hizib Tēna Tibäka* Minister Rapor, Ye 1948 E. C *Säné* 1 to Nehassie 30, 3 months Report, DMUAC, Fol. No.80. File No.456, 2<sup>nd</sup> volume

provincial Agricultural Office demanded concrete statistical data regarding the districts that have been stricken by the cattle disease so that they would send the necessary medicine. However, sub-province officials demanded for emergency assistance to save the life of the dying cattle until statistical data to organize because statistical data needed time to collect information from all districts.<sup>160</sup>(See also appendix A,II-IV). During the course of the exchange of letters between the sub-province and provincial office, the cattle in the above stated districts continued to die due to the absence of immediate response from the provincial office, which needed a long time to gather the data and compute statistical figure of cattle wealth of each district.<sup>161</sup>

Thus, Mätäkäl sub-province officials and assistant veterinarians caught tsetse fly and sent to the provincial agricultural office putting it in small bottle (vial) for investigation because there was no laboratory and lab-technicians in the sub-province. However, there was no positive response from provincial officials. Thus, the people were forced to leave tsetse fly infested areas of Abbay and Durra valleys and move to tsetse free areas in Wombera and Zigem districts.<sup>162</sup> In addition to efforts officials of Mätäkäl sub-province to find a solution, representatives of the local people also appealed to the Ministry of Interior as of 1959 stating the destruction that have been wrought on their livestock in Bullen, Dibati, and parts of Gwangwa by trypanosomiasis. Thus, peasants were forced to cultivate their lands using hoes and other digging tools. Because of limited capacity of production using hand-tools, peasants could not pay government tax for the two consecutive years. For this reason, the

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<sup>160</sup> See an application letter to Gojjam *Teklay Gizat* written on November 27, 1961 (Hidar 18, 1954 E.C) with ref. no. 259/60/47, NALA: Fo. No. & File No. 17. 1. 11. 13. 01

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*; see also a letter written to Gojjam *Teklay Gizat* with ref. no. 592/24/53 on November 16, 1954 E. C. by the Mätäkäl Awraja administrative that informed migration those people who lost their cattle to other areas, NALA: Fol. No. and File No. 17.1.11. 13. 01

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

government appropriated peasants' lands of the region in the name of *gebrätäl märét*.<sup>163</sup> Peasants demanded to be exempted from tax because the imperial regime had exempted the tax arrears of 1949—1967 in other parts of Gojjam. However, the peasants of Mätäkäl who lost their cattle to disease did not receive a positive response from the imperial regime.<sup>164</sup> (See also Appendix C, I-II.) This suggested the bias of the imperial regime against peripheral communities.

In 1965, Abebe Gobena, member of Hailesillassie's parliament appealed to the Emperor about the problem of cattle disease in Mätäkäl. On his return from Addis Ababa he brought medicine for trypanosomiasis that he got from the Ministry of Agriculture by order of the Emperor. He introduced this medicine in his locality for the first time and this gave temporary recovery for the cattle suffering from trypanosomiasis.<sup>165</sup> However, many peasants in the region did not have access to this medicine, particularly the Gumuz communities and peoples of the region who lived in inaccessible areas. There was no way to get this medicine because there were no animal drug stores in the region during the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>166</sup>

In 1972, a trypanosomiasis epidemic broke out in the region of Gubba and devastated the livestock resource of the region. An assistant veterinarian of Mätäkäl sub-province, Wubantä Mälaku, who was sent to Gubba to examine the animal health problem in the region of Gubba affirmed the outbreak of trypanosomiasis epidemic in the region. He

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<sup>163</sup> See the appeal of Demsew Mekonnen and others to the Ministry of Interior written on March 17, 1959 (Megabit 8, 1951 E. C) with ref. no. 1128/62; See also the application letter to the Emperor written on January 21, 1970 that listed applicants as Demisew Mekonnen, Qes (priest) Gebeyehu Bitew, Tefera Wondie, Yalew Getahun and others, NALA, Fold and File No. 17.1. 11. 18. 05

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> Informants: Alboro, Fasil, Demilew Beyene

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

demanded the Gojjam Provincial Agricultural Office provide transport facilities, per-diem and assistant animal health workers.<sup>167</sup> However, there was no any transportation system to Gubba by this time except on mule back or walking on foot, which took weeks. Even crossing Bäläs River before December was not possible. Thus, absence of transportation service to Gubba and Dangur made animal health service inaccessible in the region.<sup>168</sup>

In February 1973, senior Veterinarians' team of Gojjam province led by Dr. Alemu Abebe and Dr. Yilma Ayalew moved from place to place to investigate Trypanosomiasis problem in lowland parts of different *awrajas* of Gojjam province. This team could not move in Mätäkäl beyond the *awraja* capital Čagni town. Thus, these veterinarians could not undertake detailed investigations on animal health problems in the region of Mätäkäl.<sup>169</sup>

In 1974 a cattle plague broke out in sub-districts that extended from Sigadi to Zigäm. This area is relatively highland and settled by Agaws. According to sub-province governor, Lieutenant Bassazenäw Gäbäyähü (governor from 1973 to 1974), the area covered by disease was vast but there was only one assistant veterinarian in the *awraja* who could not overcome the devastating disease that broke out in Segadi and Zigäm sub-districts. Thus, the *awraja* governor demanded skilled veterinarians and sufficient Medicine.<sup>170</sup> As one can understand from the series of letter exchanges between sub-province officials and

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<sup>167</sup> *Ye Gojjam Teklay Gizat Ersha Sira Tsifet bet* (Agricultural office of Gojjam *Teklay Gizat*; See the application letter written on February 7, 1972 (Tir 30, 1964 E.C) with ref.no. 37/1/64 by Wubante Melaku to Gojjam Teklay Gizat agricultural Office.DMUAC: Fol. No. 190, File No. 10

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*; see the letter written on February 12, 1973 (Yekatit 5, 1965 E.C) with ref. no. 577/65/2 by Tariku Tamrat, Manager of Gojjam *Teklay Gizat* Agricultural Office and addressed to Fit. Tafesse Tebkie, Vice *Enderassie* of Gojjam Teklay Gizat.; See also Dr. Yilma Ayalew's report written on March 28, 1973 addressed to Gojjam *Teklay Gizat* Agricultural Office.

<sup>170</sup> DMUAC: Fol. No. 190, File No. 10; *Ye Gojjam Kifle Hager Ersha Sira Tsifet Bet* (Gojjam Province Agricultural Office. See a letter written by Mätäkäl Awraja Governor, Meto Aleqa Bassazinew Gebeyehu, on December 6, 1974 with ref.no.1014/60/47

provincial officials, there was a problem of resource allocation for peripheral areas like Mätäkäl. The region was infested by many kinds of diseases so that sub-province governors repeatedly complained about the absence of budget and skilled veterinarians. There was the problem of resource allocation by the province to sub-provincial offices. For instance, in 1974, a cattle disease broke out in Qolla Däga Damot sub-province, Womberma district, but the sub-province Governor, Taye Bayera, reported to provincial office as Qolla Däga Damot sub-province was equipped with sufficient medicine and veterinarians whereas in Mätäkäl were complaining about lack of trained veterinarians and shortage of medical supply. According to Taye, five veterinarians were working in Gwagussa-Womberma to combat the disaster of the animal disease in the district with sufficient medicine while there was only one veterinarian in Mätäkäl.<sup>171</sup> In addition to resource allocation imbalance, professional workers were not willing to work in Mätäkäl because of absence of infrastructure and inaccessibility of the sub-province and infestation of the region with different kinds of diseases.

Hence, trypanosomiasis continued to be a challenge for livestock production and agricultural activities of the peoples of Mätäkäl. In 1976, this disease again broke out as epidemic in the lowland parts of Mätäkäl. The destruction of cattle during this time became the major cause for social and economic crisis among the peasant communities of the region. Local officials were appealing for higher administrative officials of Mätäkäl sub-province and provincial office for assistance to restrict further expansion of this disease to

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<sup>171</sup> DMUAC: FoI. No. 190, File No. 10; *Ye Gojjam Kifle Hager Erisha Sira Tsifet Bet* (Gojjam Province Agricultural Office. See the letter written by Ato Taye Bayera, Deputy manager of Qolla Däga Damot Awraja Agricultural office, on October 23, 1976 (13/2/ 1966 E.C) with ref.114/66/2<sup>nd</sup> 2 to Provincial Agricultural Office and a letter written by *Balambaras* Nigatu, chief secretary of Qolla Däga Damot *Awraja*, on December 10, 1976 (30-2-1966 E. C)

other localities. However, there was no medical or technical support arrived to the localities by the time.<sup>172</sup> During January, cattle disease reached its critical stage so that the local people were at the verge of losing their total cattle wealth, the main source of their life sustenance. There was no means of communication to send health workers and medicine to the affected areas. Even the type of disease that devastated cattle of the region was not known. Thus, Dr. Hailu, head of veterinary department of Gojjam Province, was demanding for helicopter from Ministry of Agriculture and population settlement to send health workers to the area and investigate the problem. However, no helicopter assistance was obtained from the Ministry.<sup>173</sup> For this reason, not a single veterinarian was sent to area until July 1977. The People of Gubba and Mätäkäl *awraja* officials were still hopped for arrival of veterinarians either from Debre Markos or Addis Ababa until November 1977 after the end of the rainy season.<sup>174</sup> The Disease had already destroyed the cattle of the region. Absence of means of communication in the districts of Mätäkäl was the major challenge to combat recurrent disease problems.

The disease that broke out in Western Gubba was expanding to neighboring district of Dangur. The cattle plague was devastating lowlands of Dangur since 1976 but the type of disease was not still identified<sup>175</sup>. Dangur is relatively nearer to Mätäkäl *awraja* center,

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<sup>172</sup> *Ye Gojjam Kifle Hager Ersha Sira Tsifet Bet*, See the letter written by Grazmatch Ashagari Zewde, Chief Secretary of Mätäkäl *Awraja* Administrative office, on April 2, 1976 (Megabit 24, 1968 E. C) with ref. No. 12880/10/10 addressed to Gojjam Province Agriculture and Forest Development Office, DMUAC, Fol. No. 190, File No. 10,

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> DMUAC: Fol. No. 190, File No. 10, second volume; *Ye Gojjam Kifle Hager Ersha Sira Tsifet Bet* (Gojjam Province Agricultural Office. See a letter written by Kassahun Belay, Secretary of Mätäkäl *Awraja*, on July 19, 1977 (12/11/69 E.C) with ref.no. 6229/00/47.

<sup>175</sup> DMUAC: Fol. No. 190, File No. 10, second volume; *Ye Gojjam Kifle Hager Ersha Sira Tsifet Bet* (Gojjam Province Agricultural Office), Ato Fentahun Asress's letter written on April 5, 1977 ( Megabit 27, 1970 E. C) with referenc no. 3991/60/47 . Ato Fentahun was the Governor of Mätäkäl *Awraja* during early 19 70s.

Čagni, than Gubba. Melese Agegnehu, assistant veterinarian, from Awabel district of East Gojjam was sent to Dangur on August 2, 1977 to investigate the problem of the devastating cattle plague in the region of Dangur. This plague devastated hundreds of thousands of cattle from the Dangur Zuria sub-district that Arbabizir Kidanämeherät qäbälé and From Belaya sub-district Java qäbälé since 1976. This plague was expanding to highland parts of Dangur that included Dangur Michael and Däk Maryam qäbälé.<sup>176</sup> The health worker reached to region too late in August 1977, after a year that plague began devastation of cattle. The people already lost their cattle when the veterinarian reached Dangur. Absence of communication system as stated above contributed a lot for the unwillingness of different professionals to serve in the region.

Generally, during the Imperial period efforts were made to improve livestock health conditions in Mätäkäl and Gojjam province as a whole through the provision of vaccination and curative medicines. These measures resulted in the reduction of the prevalence different kinds of deadly diseases in the region. However, the problem of trypanosomiasis remained a major challenge in Mätäkäl because vaccination and preventive medicines were not yet effective against it. Thus, peasants of Mätäkäl particularly lowland areas suffered from destruction of their livestock resources. Consequently peasants could not develop and expand plow agriculture in the region. Many of the peasants of lowland regions of Mätäkäl remained hoe cultivators due to the problems of trypanosomiasis.

In conclusion, this chapter has discussed the agricultural modernization efforts of the Imperial Regime and its environmental consequences in the period 1940s to 1970s. The

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<sup>176</sup> DMUAC: Fol. No. 190, File No. 10 ,second volume; *Ye Gojjam Kifle Hager Erisha Sira Tsifet Bet* (Gojjam Province Agricultural Office), Melese Agegnehu's report written on March 13, 1977 (Megabit 5, 1970 E. C) with ref. no.6/3/70.

agricultural modernization effort in Mätäkäl led to expansion of plow agriculture and implementation of unplanned resettlement program in the region that led to deforestation of large tracts forestland in the region. This deforestation brought about not only landscape change but destroyed the habitat of wildlife which made them to flee from the region. The problem of wildlife was not only habitat destruction there was also organized hunting in the region during 1940s to 1970s that led to dwindling of many game species.

The other modernization aspect of the Imperial Regime in the post-liberation period was attempt to control human and animal diseases in Mätäkäl. Malaria Eradication Service began functioning in the region during the 1960s but failed to achieve its objective and turned to control policy at the beginning of the 1970s. Vaccination program was another attempt made to improve livestock resource production in Mätäkäl during the 1960s to 1970s. In this case significant improvements were made in either eradication or reduction of the prevalence of rinderpest, smallpox, anthrax, lung-disease, liverfluke and other types of animal diseases. However, the problem of trypanosomiasis remained a major challenge in Mätäkäl for livestock production, particularly in the lowland parts and river valleys of the region.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SOCIALISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL TRANSFORMATION IN MÄTÄKÄL, 1970s to 1990s**

This chapter addresses human-environment interface in Mätäkäl during the dramatic period of the Därg. The Därg's socialist projects like the Bäläs State Farm and the Tana Bäläs Resettlement Projects were launched in Mätäkäl as a response to recurrent drought and famine in Ethiopia. The Därg saw the establishment of big state farms as a solution to solve the problem of food shortage in the country. It believed that state farms would enable the state to create adequate food reserve which would address the acute problem/food shortage in the country. Likewise the resettlement program was also part of the Därg's strategy to give permanent solution to persistent drought and famine problems in the northern and central highlands of the country. Some writers, however, have argued that the Därg's resettlement program was primarily a political project that aimed to depopulate the rebel areas. The resettlement program was accompanied by the introduction of mechanized agriculture in the settlement areas and the organization of farmers' cooperatives. The implementation of these projects in Mätäkäl beginning in 1985 resulted in large-scale deforestation, displacement and marginalization of the local peoples of the region by alienating from them their resource base areas.

To implement the agricultural and resettlement projects, controlling disease and making the environment hospitable for settlers also became a major concern of the government. The state farms and resettlement programs began to be implemented in the vast uninhabited lowland parts of Mätäkäl which were infested with malaria and trypanosomiasis. Malaria

had catastrophic impact on resettlers who came from highland ecological zones. Many of the settlers could not get accustomed to the hot and humid climate of the region. Furthermore, the settlers were more vulnerable to malaria than the people who lived in the region with the disease. Thus, the highest morbidity and mortality rate of settlers was recorded in Mätäkäl resettlement area as compared to other settlement sites in Western Ethiopia. The major cause for this high morbidity and mortality rate was environmental disturbance that resulted from large-scale clearing of forestlands made to establish the state farms and carry out settlement programs.

The last section of this chapter deals with environmental effects of the Därg's wars with dissident political groups that made their base in the region. Beginning from the mid-1980s, the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Party (EPRP) forces established their base areas in Mätäkäl. They began launching attacks on Pawe settlement areas beginning in 1986 and subsequently the western and southern territories of Mätäkäl fell under the control of the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Army (EPRA). EPRP forces encouraged peasants to expand their agricultural production through clearing vast forestlands found in these districts. Peasants rushed in to occupy virgin lands by clearing forests and expand their agricultural fields. This adversely affected the forest ecology of Mätäkäl, particularly the areas found in the southern and central parts of the region.

### **Resettlement and its Environmental Consequences**

Scholars define and understand the term "resettlement" in different ways based on the context of contemporary conditions. Alula Pankhurst defines resettlement as "a complex process that involves intricate combinations of social, political and economic factors that

render the outcomes difficult to predict and manage.”<sup>1</sup> The reason that complicated the process was the involvement of three different bodies in the realization of these projects in Ethiopia. These were first, planners, officials and extension agents; second, differentiated groups and categories of migrants; and the third, a variety of ‘host’ individuals, families and communities, who were often among the most marginalized groups. These bodies understood the resettlement indifferent and at times “contradictory” ways.<sup>2</sup> In this study I have adopted the definition of resettlement used by Alula as “the means of relieving population pressure and addressing the problem of land shortage.”<sup>3</sup> In the context of the 1984-5 famine, the Därg used resettlement program to achieve two goals simultaneously that is to relieve population pressure in the highlands which was prone to drought and famine and the other was to make productive the peripheral land which perceived as “unexploited and under-populated” through population relocation.<sup>4</sup>

Hence, the Därg established an emergency resettlement project in Mätäkäl following the 1984 famine crisis of the country. Resettlement was one of the strategies adopted by the Därg regime to find a lasting solution to the crisis of drought and recurrent famine in the country. The Därg emerged out of the 1972-74 drought and famine crisis that claimed the lives of more than two hundred thousand people.<sup>5</sup> The country was and is still pursuing a strategy that focused on agriculture as “the engine for growth” the sector most of the people of Ethiopia made a living from. Hence, resettlement was seen as a solution to the problem

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<sup>1</sup> Alula Pankhurst “Long Term Implications of Resettlement in Ethiopia” in *People, Space and the State: Migration, Resettlement and Displacement in Ethiopia*, Alula Pankhurst and Francois Pigué, eds. (Addis Ababa: The Ethiopian Society of Sociologists, Social Workers and Anthropologists, 2004), p. 113.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Alula Pankhurst, *Resettlement and Famine in Ethiopia: The Villagers’ Experience* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1992), p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Alula, “Long Term Implications...”, p. 114.

<sup>5</sup> Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, “The Challenges of Drought: Ethiopia’s Decade of Struggle in Relief and Rehabilitation” (Addis Ababa: RRC 1985.), p. 77.

of landlessness and food insecurity. It was seen as a mechanism to increase agricultural production and a means to provide people with land so that they became self-sufficient.<sup>6</sup> Resettlement was also supposed to provide a livelihood for famine victims, relieve pressure on overpopulated land, combat land degradation, and utilize “virgin lands.” The program was also perceived as a chance to pursue policies of socialist transformations that involved three basic ideas: one, mechanization that aimed to liberate peasant from dependence on the plow, the second, introducing villagization that could serve as a model for the plan in the countryside and the third was perceived as an experiment to implement collectivization of mode of production in order to bring about socialist transformation.<sup>7</sup>

Hence, the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) was established in March 1974 to carry out resettlement programs and coordinate humanitarian activities. One of the major tasks the RRC charged with was resettling displaced people due to natural and man-made disasters and those who lived in overcrowded and over-utilized lands.<sup>8</sup> To organize, carryout and supervise the settlement schemes, a special office called Settlement Authority (SA) was established in February 1976.<sup>9</sup> The Settlement Authority carried out settlement activities in different provinces of the country until it was merged with the RRC and the Awash Valley Authority in 1979 but still retaining the older name Relief and Rehabilitation

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<sup>6</sup> Tone Elisabeth Fosse, “Migration and Livelihoods: The Voluntary Resettlement program in Ethiopia” (Noragric, December 2006), p. 108.

<sup>7</sup> Alula, *Resettlement and Famine in Ethiopia*, pp. 54-55; Tone Elisabeth Fosse, p. 42

<sup>8</sup> Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, p. 102; Ministry of Agriculture and Settlement, “Agrarian Reform and Rural Development in Ethiopia” A Country Review Supplement for the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development to be held in Rome, Italy in July 1979 (Addis Ababa, August 1978), p. 89

<sup>9</sup> RRC, “Challenges of Drought...”, p. 157.

Commission (RRC). Between 1976 and 1979, the SA settled 30,298 family heads in over 80 settlement sites throughout the country.<sup>10</sup>

The *Därg* implemented two settlement strategies: conventional settlement and integral settlement. Conventional settlement, according to the RRC, referred to the settling of people on lands that had been unused and had potential for development programs like mechanized agriculture and state farm. Integral settlement, on the other hand, meant settling people in sparsely settled areas or in previous settlement sites that have a space for new settlements in peasant associations. Accordingly, until September 1985, the *Därg* regime settled about 111,425 family heads in conventional large-scale settlement sites and 71,270 family heads in integral settlement within peasant associations found in Illubabor, Käfa, Wälläga, Shoa, Gondär and Gojjam provinces.<sup>11</sup>

Virgin lands usually covered with forests were selected for conventional large-scale settlement programs with the objective of opening up new land for cultivation to increase the overall productivity of the country.<sup>12</sup> This system can be compared to the initiatives during the imperial period of land appropriation and allocation to new settlers on the grounds that previous users have not paid their taxes. As I have discussed in Chapter 3, the Imperial regime took vast forestlands from Mätäkäl, which later on were converted to

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<sup>10</sup> RRC: "Settlement Administration Department Response to Questionnaire of RSSS" (May,1984), pp. 18—21; "ADäga Mekelakel ena Zigijet biherawi strategy" (National Strategy for Emergency Prevention and Preparation) (Addis Ababa, Megabit 1982), p.2, available in Woldemeskel Archive Center.

<sup>11</sup> Francois Piguët and Dechassam Lemessa, "Review of Voluntary Migration and Resettlement Programmes upto the end of 2001" in *People, Spalce and the State: Migration, Resettlement and Displacement in Ethiopia*, Alula Pankhurst and Francois Piguët, eds. (Addis Ababa: The Ethiopian Society of Sociologists, Social Workers and Anthropologists, 2004), pp. 138, 145-146; RRC: "Review of Drought, Relief and Rehabilitation Activities for the Period of December 1984 to August 1985 and Requirement for 1986" (Addis Ababa, October 185), p.27

<sup>12</sup> Alula Pankhurst, *Resettlement and Famine in Ethiopia*, pp.61-62; Graham Hancock, *Ethiopia: The Challenges of Hunger* (London, 1985), p.112

either settlement site for emigrants from Wollo or plow agricultural fields to raise government revenue from the agricultural sector. The *Därg* also appropriated large tracts of land from Mätäkäl for conventional settlement and mechanized agricultural purposes. Bäläs State Farm and Pawe Resettlement were the two big projects of the *Därg* regime in Mätäkäl.<sup>13</sup>

The famine that broke out in Wollo, Tigray and Parts of Shewa in 1981 reached its climax at the beginning of 1984. Farmers in Tigray, Wollo, and parts of Shoa were left destitute having lost their cereals and other food crops and cattle population. In consequence the death rate among the agricultural population was unprecedented in Ethiopian history.<sup>14</sup> This crisis forced the government to initiate an emergency resettlement program to move famine-stricken people to different parts of the country. In October 1984, the government announced emergency resettlement program to relocate half a million people to western and northwestern parts of the country where lands were available.<sup>15</sup> The government thought that resettlement might reduce population pressure in the highlands and hence decreased rural vulnerability to famine.<sup>16</sup>

After the declaration of a state of emergency on September 23, 1984 due to the famine, a committee headed by Colonel Mengistu selected the conventional resettlement sites. This committee selected Mätämma in Gonder, Mätäkäl in Gojjam, Assossa in Wälläga and

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<sup>13</sup>Getachew Woldemeskel, "Famine and Resettlement in Ethiopia" (Upsala, June 1987; Unpublished Draft Available in IES Library ), p. 235

<sup>14</sup> Alula Pankhurst, *Resettlement and Famine in Ethiopia*, p.27; Francois Piguet and Dechassa Lemessa, p. 146; RRC, "The Challenges of Drought---", pp. 43—44

<sup>15</sup> Alula Pankhurst, *Resettlement and Famine*, pp. 51-52; Gopalakrishna Kumar, "Ethiopian Famines 1973—1985: A Case Study" *Wider Working Papers*, WP26, World Institute for Development Economics Research of United Nations University (Oxford, November 1987), p. 53

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*; Graham Hancock, pp. 72—73

Gambela in Illubabor as sites for resettlement.<sup>17</sup> The selection of Mätäkäl as a conventional settlement site was not based on any detailed agronomical and environmental studies at the time. The settlement sites chosen in Mätäkäl were hot and humid lands, malaria-ridden and unsuitable for the types of crops raised by most highlanders.<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, the selection of Mätäkäl as an emergency settlement site was based on recommendation made by the USAID in 1964 and World Bank Group in 1973. USAID, after aerial survey of north-west Ethiopia in 1964 pointed out the potential of developing some 350,000 hectares of land for irrigation and mechanized agriculture in the Bäläs valley. The Ministry of Agriculture and RRC had information on these studies. When the Därg's Politburo met between October 3 and 4, 1984 the argument was on how to implement these studies but not to survey new settlement area in Mätäkäl.<sup>19</sup> However, these recommendations did not show detailed agro-ecological conditions of the region except the availability of vast uninhabited land in the Bäläs basin. The World Bank report of 1973 also called for the implementation of large-scale resettlement in the lowlands of northwestern Ethiopia. To implement the program at the suggestion of the World Bank Group, International Development Association (IDA) gave U.S, \$ 3.1-million-dollar loan to the government but it was not implemented at the time. The idea of implementing this plan got acceptance by the politburo and the message was conveyed to the regional offices.<sup>20</sup> Hence, site selection in Mätäkäl was not arbitrary because Mängistu and his high-

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<sup>17</sup> Giordano Sivini, "Famine and Resettlement in Ethiopia" in *Africa Rivista trimestrale di Studi e documentazione dell' Istituto italiano per l' Africa e l' Oriente*, Anno 41, No.2 (GIUGNO 1986), pp. 218—223. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40759960>

<sup>18</sup> Yntiso Gebre, "Differential Reestablishment of Voluntary and Involuntary Migrants: The Case of Mätäkäl Settlers in Ethiopia," in *African Study Monograph*, Vol. 23, No.1 (March 2002), p. 35

<sup>19</sup> Getachew, p. 225

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

ranking officials had information on Mätäkäl from documents produced by different development agencies.

After the October 1984 politburo discussion, Colonel Mängistu Hailämariaam toured the targeted regions selected for resettlement between November 1 and 3. After visiting Mätäkäl on November 1, 1984, the Chairman expressed his impression that “Mätäkäl holds great potential both in the implementation of government’s program of alleviating the drought disaster and the long-term development projects.”<sup>21</sup> However, officials decided Pawe as resettlement site without scientific investigation of soil conditions, land-use patterns, social and economic relation of indigenous inhabitants to the eco-systems and the nature of physical environment of the region. Surveyors did not notice even the shortage of water in the region. Officials saw only the presence of the Bäläs River.<sup>22</sup>

Based on the Politburo discussion, the National Disaster-Aid Coordinating Committee that was chaired by Mängistu Hailä Mariaam selected Pawe as emergency resettlement site based, first on the availability of abundant virgin land that could support a large number of settlers. Second, the Gumuz people of the region sparsely populated the Bäläs Valley. The relatively short distance that was required to transport famine victims from Wollo and Tigray was the third criterion considered by this committee in choosing Pawe as a resettlement site.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* p. 226

<sup>22</sup> Getachew, “Famine and Resettlement”, P. 233.

<sup>23</sup> Dessalegn Rahmato, “Some Notes on Settlement and Resettlement in Mätäkäl Awraja (Gojjam Province)” in *Proceedings of Ninth International Congress of Ethiopian Studies* (Moscow, 26—29 August 1986), p. 119

The task of clearing and surveying locations in Pawe that would be used for the construction of villages started in mid-November 1984. However, actual construction of huts for settlers started only in the latter half of January 1985.<sup>24</sup> Peasant Associations from Gojjam province mobilized peasants from their respective *qäbälés* to participate in clearing up forests and in the construction of huts on shift basis. The Ministry of Construction also started opening up roads and clearing airfields.<sup>25</sup> The Ministry deployed heavy machinery for road construction. Students and teachers of secondary institutions from Bahir Dar participated in the winter-season village construction campaign of 1985. Student and teacher campaigners from Bahir Dar initiated village construction in Pawe and welcomed the first settlers in the area.<sup>26</sup>

The first groups of settlers that arrived in Pawe were surprisingly not from the famine-stricken areas of Wollo and Tigray but from Kambata and Hadya *awraja* of Southern Shoa province where there was severe land shortage due to high population density.<sup>27</sup> A study that was made in 1974/75 on land use and tenure in Southern Shoa identified that Durame and Angueme were the two districts with the highest population density in the province. More than one hundred families lived in a *gasha* but the land holding standard set by the newly established Därg government by the time was twenty *gasha* for eighty family members.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Getachew, "Famine and Resettlement", p. 226.

<sup>26</sup> Giordano Sivini, p. 235

<sup>27</sup> Dessalegn Rahmato, "Some Notes....", p. 119.

<sup>28</sup> Kambata *Awraja* Report dated Megabit 7, 1967 E.C. with ref. no.1144/172 addressed to Ministry of Land Tenure department of Peasant Association, NALA Fold. 12. 1. 7. 1 File No. *Selä Kambata ena Hadya Awraja Hizb.*

This study also demonstrated the size of average individual land holding in these districts to be 0.5—0.7 hectare. Furthermore, in addition to severe land shortage, the people in Kambata *awraja* had suffered from the drought for five years. Thus, the study recommended resettling those people who suffered from acute land shortage and suffering from famine in a new locality.<sup>29</sup> These realities forced The Relief and Rehabilitation Commission to give priority in transporting people from Kambata and Hadya *awraja* to Mätäkäl emergency resettlement site in April 1985. Victims of famine from Mänz and Gishe in north Shoa and a few hundred families from Wollo province followed the settlement of Kambata and Hadya people in Pawe.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, a large number of Wollo came using their own means and settled in different peasant associations of Agaw Meder and Mätäkäl because Gojjam is relatively nearest to Wollo from settlement sites in Wellega or other sites in 1985 and 1986. Some settlers also came from the eastern parts of Gojjam and south Gondär regions. The RCC provided support for the people who had interest to go to selected settlement sites.<sup>31</sup> By the end of August 1985, more than sixty percent of the settlers in Pawe were from South Shoa province.<sup>32</sup>

### **Deployment of Members of Higher Learning Institutions in Mätäkäl, June-August 1985**

When Mängistu Hailämariam visited Mätäkäl on May 4, 1985, he found out that many of the settlers who came to Pawe in April 6 and 9, 1985 were without shelter. The activities of the regional Workers Party of Ethiopia (WPE) committee through mobilization of public

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Dessalegn, "Some Notes...", p. 120

<sup>31</sup> Informants: Fentahun Yismaw and Mekuriaw Adigeh. Ato Fentahun was chairman of Mätäkäl *awraja* All Ethiopia Peasant Association and later served as secretary of All Ethiopia Peasant Association at Provincial and National level. He was the member of the regional resettlement program coordinating committee.

<sup>32</sup> Dessalegn, "Some Notes...", p. 120

and mass organizations could not provide sufficient number of shelters for the new comers. The provision of shelters demanded the mobilization of huge work force.<sup>33</sup> Thus, higher learning institutions became the first targets in the government's campaign for the preparation of settlement sites. After his return from Mätäkäl, Mängistu instructed the Commission for Higher Education to close all universities, colleges and teacher training institutions, and send students and administrative staff to settlement sites in Gamdella, Illubabor province and in Mätäkäl, Gojjam province to build dwelling for the alleged victims of famine who would be relocated from affected areas of drought.<sup>34</sup>

Accordingly, academic and administrative staff and students of higher institutions were sent to the two emergency settlement sites.<sup>35</sup> The first batch of higher institution campaigners set off for Mätäkäl settlement site in Gojjam on June 24, 1985 and arrived at Pawe the next day. As Comrade Zälläkä Bāyānā, the First Secretary of Gojjam Province expressed in his welcome speech, the construction of settlement villages had already started and more than three thousand people participated from Gojjam in the building of settlement houses.<sup>36</sup> This batch was stationed in Pawe while subsequent groups of campaigners were stationed in Gublak and Aisid. About 3032 campaigners were stationed in Pawe. They started clearing the land of bamboo forests and acacia trees found in the forests, woodlands and savanna areas of the district on June 30, 1985.<sup>37</sup> In Gublak 3434 and in Aisid about 4529 campaigners were stationed. Gublak and Aisid were new sites which were not included in the plan and more than 60 kms away from Pawe settlement site. On the report

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<sup>33</sup> Getachew, *Famine and Resettlement*, p. 214

<sup>34</sup> *Addis Zemen*, June 23, 1985, pp. 3, 7; Getachew, p. 214

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>36</sup> *Addis Zemen*, April 23, pp.1 and 7; June 24, 1985, pp.7, 11

<sup>37</sup> *Addis Zemen*, July 4, 1985, pp. 1,6; Getachew, pp.215—216

issued on March 1, 1985, the settlement sites selected in Mätäkäl were Pawe, Jura Aisis, and Babizända. Nevertheless, later, Jura Aisis and Babizända were substituted by Gublak and Aisid (later shifted to Aisika due to water supply problem) without due reason stated.<sup>38</sup>

The campaigners had to perform hard labor in the arid environment. Food and water shortages, diseases like malaria, diarrhea, and bilharzias were severe challenges to the campaigners. In addition to this, sanitation problem was a serious challenge to the campaigners. The campaigners were forced to bath in infected streams that led them to contract different diseases and threatened outbreak of an epidemic.<sup>39</sup> Because of these problems, the management bodies of the campaign program changed the location of the campaigners' camps. The camps where the campaigners stationed were so overcrowded that the toilets threatened by the epidemic outbreak. Thus, nearly half of Pawe's campaigners were relocated to an area 10 kilometers away from the original site. Similarly, campaigners from the Aiside site were transferred to a new resettlement site in Aisika where new sanitation facilities were constructed. However, the shortage of water and quick degeneration of toilets in the new Aisika site remained acute problems for the campaigners.<sup>40</sup>

In spite of these health and food problems, the campaigners managed to build 18372 huts without doors and roof covers, which was 70 percent of the plan (24000 huts) at the end of August. On September 1, 1985, the campaigners returned home after two months of stay in Mätäkäl.<sup>41</sup> In October 1986, a year after the campaigners left the area, visitors of settlement

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<sup>38</sup> Getachew, *Famine and Settlement*, p.216

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p.217

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 218—222

sites found that 7114 huts built in Aisika have been abandoned due to shortage of water and a threat from the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Army (EPRA). About 60 percent of huts built in Gublak site were also abandoned. However, the huts built in Pawe were fully occupied because Bäläs River was the sole provider of water to the Pawe site.<sup>42</sup>

Resettlement was one of the major factors of environmental change in the region of Mätäkäl. According to the RRC September 1984 decision, the type of settlement that was carried out in the Bäläs Valley was conventional that involved strong government intervention in selection of virgin lands with high productive potential and provision of heavy machinery for preparing settlement and agricultural sites. The government planned from the beginning the intervention of heavy machinery for the implementation of Bäläs Valley Settlement program. The settlement and agricultural sites, therefore, were cleared using graders and bulldozers<sup>43</sup> Over 33,244 hectares of forestland was cleared for the purpose of constructing villages and mechanized agricultural activities during the initial phase of resettlement. To construct 109 villages up to January 1986, over 9800 hectares of land was needed, which was further expanded over the next years with the increase of number of villages.<sup>44</sup>

Bäläs Valley resettlement site was established on vast virgin forestland through large-scale clearing of forests. This resettlement scheme had many adverse effects on the natural

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* p. 222

<sup>43</sup> Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, *The Challenges of Drought: Ethiopia's Decade of Struggle in Relief and Rehabilitation* (Addis Ababa, 1985), p. 165; Giordano Sivini, "Famine and the Settlement Program in Ethiopia" in *Africa (Rome) Anno. 41., No.2* (1986), p. 217

<sup>44</sup> "Tana Bäläs Yemigegnibet Dereja Achir Megilecha" (Short description on the status Tana Bäläs Project, available in Wolde Meskel Tariku Archival Center), pp. 11—18; Getachew, *Famine and Resettlement...*, p. 235

environment of Mätäkäl.<sup>45</sup> The regional task force, Abay Task Force, plan called for the construction of 130 villages in Gublak and Aisika where each village was assumed to have in average 500 huts. This made the total number of huts in Gublak and Aisika 65000 huts and construction of 109 villages in Pawe resettlement site required building of 54,500 huts.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, the highland resettlers came with their tradition of plow agriculture who engaged in clearing of additional plots of land to expand agricultural fields. Thus, the immigrant farmers became serious causes of forest destruction focusing on short-term fuel consumption and construction purposes rather than preserving resources for long-term use.<sup>47</sup>

During the initial phase of resettlement program, the total area of land alienated for residential, individual gardening, and mechanized farming amounted to 33,224 hectares of land. These hectares of land developed for mechanized farming and settlers' cultivation was further expanded in the coming years. The government was committed to expand more lands in order to accommodate more settler farmers and young settlers who would become independent from their households.<sup>48</sup> In addition to extensive land alienation, construction of village consumed huge resources of the region. Villages were constructed using the materials available in the region like species of bamboo tree, acacia and gum trees. Construction of one hut consumed on average 500 bamboo trees, 13 pillars prepared from acacia or gum trees.<sup>49</sup> Thus, to construct 30,000 huts for the settlers required more than 15

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<sup>45</sup> Getachew Woldemeskel, "The Consequences of Resettlement in Ethiopia" in *African Affairs*, Vol.88, No. 352 (Oxford University Press, July 1989), p. 368. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/722691>

<sup>46</sup> Getachew, "Famine and Resettlement", p.237

<sup>47</sup>Woldesillassie, pp. 173—174

<sup>48</sup> Getachew, "Famine and Resettlement", p. 237

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

million bamboo trees and 390,000 acacia and gum trees. Innumerable smaller vegetation were also cleared indiscriminately in the process of village construction.<sup>50</sup>

In addition to huge human labor deployed in the Mätäkäl Resettlement site, more than 25 bulldozers and about 140 tractors were deployed in clearing and preparation of land for settlement and agricultural field.<sup>51</sup> The hasty manner and urgency required for the establishment of conventional resettlement led to massive deforestation. Thus, the resettlement program and establishment of mechanized agriculture had resulted in untold environmental destruction in Mätäkäl.

### **Resettlement and Mechanized Agriculture**

Agricultural mechanization in Pawe Settlement area started with the establishment of the Tana Bäläs Project in March 1986 based on the January 1986 Ethio-Italian Agreement.<sup>52</sup> The project was financed by the Italian Government drought-stricken countries relief budget of which 150 million dollars was allocated for Ethiopia. An Italian construction company, SALINI COSTRUTTORI, took the responsibility for building the different development projects and another Italian Company, STUDIO PIETRANGELI, served as the consulting engineering firm for the Tana Bäläs Project. The Italian government agreed to provide immediate relief aid and agricultural machinery for settlers in Pawe.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Central Planning Commission Office, Sefafi Sefera Tabiyawoch Gimgema ena Eqid" (Addis Ababa, October 1980 E.C), p.4, Wold Meskel Archive Center

<sup>52</sup> Ethio—Italian Agreemen Signed on March 1986 on Ethiopian Side by Kassa Gebre, Minister of Construction and on Italian Side by Claudio Mareno, Executive director of FAI; *Addis Zemen* 45<sup>th</sup> Year, No. 115, January 24, 1986, pp.1 and 4

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

The Ethio-Italian Cooperation Project (the Tana-Bäläs) that was launched in March 1986 focused on two sectors: production (mechanized agriculture, agro industry, and a pipe factory) and general infrastructural development. It had played significant role in improving the life of settlers in the Pawe settlement area. However, the settlers were forced to organize in collective farms on cooperative basis and worked on communal land as laborers for food ration given to them twice a week.<sup>54</sup> The settlers had no right to own private property. They were dependant on food ration provided by Tana-Bäläs project for their labor services in the mechanized agricultural sector. For this reason, the settlers were unable to develop their own private assets.<sup>55</sup>

The Tana Bäläs project that was established with the objective of economic aid and infrastructural development for resettlers cleared and prepared about 23000 hectares of land for mechanized agriculture.<sup>56</sup> Salini had agreed to develop 50,000 hectares of land in Pawe settlement area for agriculture and other development projects.<sup>57</sup> However, in 1988/89 agricultural production season, the Tana Bäläs project cleared 22,432 hectare of land and of which the cultivated land was only 18112 hectares.<sup>58</sup> The 1989 report indicated that the engineering consultant made pilot study of land used in the Tana Bäläs Valley and identified availability of about 24,388.2 hectares of better drained black soil land and 40,823.1 hectares of better drained red soil land that was covered with bamboo.<sup>59</sup> The project cleared forests from black and red soils of the region without proper agronomical study. Forests from black soils were cleared for rice production through mechanized

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*; Gebre Yntiso, "Differential Reestablishment of Voluntary and Involuntary Migrants: The Case of Mätäkäl Settlers in Ethiopia" in *African Studies Monograph, Kyoto, Vol. 23, No. 1* (March 2002), p. 35

<sup>55</sup> Ethio-Italian Agreement; and Gebre Yntiso, p.35

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Addis Zemen*, January, 1986, p.

<sup>58</sup> "Ye Tana Bäläs Project Yemigegnibet Dereja Achire Megilecha", (Nehassie, 1981 E.C.), p. 17

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1

farming that left the area without forest cover and exposed the region to soil erosion. The population growth in the area also increased resource exploitation for construction, fuel wood consumption and other purposes.<sup>60</sup>

At the time when the Pawe resettlement was launched in January 1985, there were about 18,312 Gumuz and Agaw people in the project site of Bäläs valley.<sup>61</sup> Settlers began to arrive in Pawe in January 1985 and until 1989 about 57,980 family heads or 80735 family members settled in the Pawe settlement area. The arrival of this number of populations to the region increased many times the number of the indigenous population in the region, which led to resource depletion from the Bäläs valley region.<sup>62</sup>

Settlers' agricultural performance heavily depended on Tana-Bäläs project for land preparation and provision of chemical fertilizers and seeds. However, their production capacity did not reach the stage of self-sufficiency for the next three consecutive production seasons. For instance, during the first production season, 1985/86, the total land prepared for settlers for agricultural purpose was 2253 and of which about 2000 hectares of land was sowed but the produce obtained was only 1, 750 quintals, which was extremely disappointing. The total settler population during this time was 74, 801 which made average family share 0.023 thus settlers were highly dependent on daily ration.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Woldesillassie., pp. 174—177

<sup>61</sup> "Ye Tana Bäläs Project...", p. 2

<sup>62</sup> Hailu Gelaneh, "Pawe Settlement area and its Progress, 1985—1989," (Addis Ababa, May 1990), p. 8, available in Wolde Meskel Tariku Memorial archive center.

<sup>63</sup> Ma'ekälawi Plan Commission Office, "yä Säfafi Säfära Yä 1980 Eqed", p. 4; "Yä Tana Bäläs Project Yämigägnibät Däräja Achir Mäglächa", p. 13; "Tana-Bäläs Project Part I, Master Plan 3A" (September 1990), p. 133

During the 1986/87 production year, better improvements in agricultural production capacity of settlers were made. Since March 1986, Tana Bäläs Project began its practical operation in Pawe Resettlement site. The project with the support of settlers' labor prepared 10,674 hectares of land for cultivation and finally harvested 45,830 quintals of produce. Thus, during 1986/87 production season better improvements were made in farm field development and productivity when compared to 1985/86 production season.<sup>64</sup> However, this produce covered only 30% from settlers' consumption need of the time. The number of settlers increased to 82,806 people during the 1986/87 production season.<sup>65</sup>

It was also in 1986 that the Tana Bäläs project started scientific studies on soil characteristics and general agronomical conditions of the region. The study identified two major soil types: vertisols, and nitosols, and these soils lacked nitrogen and phosphorus contents that required for crop production.<sup>66</sup> Thus, the use of chemical fertilizers that substitute nitrogen and phosphorus deficiency in the soils of the region was recommended. Accordingly, peasants in Pawe settlement area began to use urea and dap-fertilizers for their crop cultivation, particularly for maize and sorghum cultivation since 1986. During this production season, peasants used 3000 quintals of fertilizers, and 390.6-liter liquid and 3,941 kilo gram powder insecticides. The use of these chemicals improved better the productivity rate during the 1986/87 production season.<sup>67</sup>

During the 1987/88 production season, the rains came late and in consequence put pressure on agricultural activity in the Mätäkäl resettlement area. Though settlers' participation in

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<sup>64</sup> "Tana Bäläs Ymigeñibet Dereja", p.14

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15; Hari C. Dewan, Fishaye Negash, Assefa Teferra, "Soil Fertility Evaluation of the Mätäkäl Resettlement Area" (Addis Ababa, March 1985, available in Ministry of Agriculture Library), p.6

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

the production process was better due to lack of coordination between Tana Bäläs project and Ministry of Agriculture, there was no significant improvement in quality and quantity of agricultural production.<sup>68</sup> The Italian Tana Bäläs Project managers signed agreement with the Ministry of Construction, not with the Ministry of Agriculture. This created misunderstanding in management directives of the production process.<sup>69</sup>

The 1988/89 production season marked a new phase in settlers' agricultural activity in Pawe settlement area. Tana Bäläs Project entered into production activity with its full technological capacity and skilled human labor.<sup>70</sup> New crops that could suit heavy black soil of the region were identified through soil investigation and experience. Thus, rice became one of chief crops of the region following maize and sorghum. groundnuts, chick pea, sunflower, soybean, cowpeas, and castor beans were also identified as suitable crops for the resettlement area.<sup>71</sup> The land prepared for cultivation increased to 22 thousand hectares, but crop-covered land size was 16,488 hectares, which made greater than the 1986/87 cultivated land that is 10,674 hectares. The produce obtained during this production season increased to 149,743 quintals. This produce resulted from maximum use of chemical fertilizers and selection of crop types that could give better yield.<sup>72</sup> However, during the next production season, 1989/90, security problem because of fighting between EPRP forces and the Därg expanded to the region and many of settlers were also attacked by malaria so that peasant participation in cultivation process was less. Furthermore, armyworm invasion also attacked crops in the fields during this production season.

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> See Ethio—Italian Agreement.

<sup>70</sup> "Ye Tana Bäläs Project Yemigegnibet Dereja", p. 15

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16

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

Therefore, land covered by crops and yield obtained decreased far more than previous years.<sup>73</sup>

**Table 2. Land Transformed into Agricultural Field from 1985/86 to 1988/89 in Pawe Resettlement Area**

Crop Types	The Size of Land Covered by Crops in hectares			
	1985/86	1986/87	1987/88	1988/89
Maize	489	3603	3164	3769
Sorghum	762	2786	5016	6294
Millet	28	2368	---	----
Noug	49	113	----	----
Teff	451	700	----	----
Sesame	191	65	---	-----
Chick Pea	229	400	506	1032
Cotton	87	225	---	1195
Soya Beans	---	414	1202	524
Rice	-----	-----	3907	4140
Groundnut	----	-----	704	1821
Sunflower	-----	-----	890	----
Cow Pea	----	-----	815	----
Castor Bean	-----	-----	243	-----
Kenaf	-----	-----	-----	337
Total	2286	10674	16447	18,112

Source: Ye Tana Bäläs yemigegnibet Dereja Achir Meglecha, p. 23

When the Därg regime fell in 1991, mechanized farming in Pawe Resettlement area dissolved. With the change of government in Ethiopia, settlers faced severe challenges for their life sustenance because they did not have private assets to support their life and they

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<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*, pp.17–18

were still not self-sufficient.<sup>74</sup> Thus, many resettlers were forced to return to their original home places. The settlers' population number dropped from 82,106 in 1987/8 to 26,660 in 1993/4 because of ethnic conflicts that broke out in the region after the fall of the *Därg*, which threatened the life of the settlers. Despite all adversities, significant number of settlers remained in the Bäläs-Valley resettlement area after the fall of the *Därg*.<sup>75</sup>

The economic activity of many settlers was seriously affected due to lack of oxen. Government interrupted mechanized farming service for settlers, agricultural inputs supply and other relief services. However, settlers were not in a self-sufficient position because they were under producers' cooperatives where property and land was owned commonly. Thus, they remained dependent on state and Tana Bäläs Project provisions and agricultural machinery services for plowing their agricultural fields. The sudden fall of the *Därg* regime in 1991 during when settlers did not attain the level of self-sufficiency led them into crisis.<sup>76</sup>

The new regime privatized the of use agricultural land that had been communally owned by settlers' producers cooperative. Thus, in 1993 the EPRDF regime redistributed 0.75 hectares of land to each resettled household. However, settlers did not possess oxen. Tractor service on individual holding continued for 1992 but since 1993, this service and supply of agricultural inputs was interrupted. Furthermore, Mätäkäl resettlement area has different soil characteristics. Those settlers who obtained land with red and brown soils cultivated and obtained better agricultural produce whereas those settlers who obtained land with

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<sup>74</sup> Habtamu Mäkonnen, "A History of Pawe Settlement Center, 1985—1999" Senior Essay in History (Addis Ababa University, June 2000), p.31

<sup>75</sup> Woldesillassie Abbute, p. 170.;Gebre Yntiso, p. 35

<sup>76</sup> The December 1995 Report on Settlers1994/95 agricultural activities, Fol. No. Pawe, Liyu.Woreda. Se. 5, File No. Ye sable Tefetro ADäga; Habtamu Mäkonnen, pp. 30—31

black soil agricultural production became difficult. Thus, many settlers in the post 1991 period continued to suffer from food shortage.<sup>77</sup>

Since 1994, because of interruption of anti-weed chemical supply and spray service, an odd weed type locally known as *akänchra* invaded Pawe settlement area and farm fields. Peasants were not aware of the consequences of this weed. Furthermore, in June 1994 armyworm invaded the settlers' farm fields and destroyed many types of crops at their early stage of growth. Due to these factors, production in 1994 production season declined drastically.<sup>78</sup> Thus, in 1995 settlers became victims of famine. Famine attacked 14,178 people from Pawe settlement area and about 128 lost their life due to lack of food. The Famine stricken people could not prepare their lands for the next 1996 production season or they could not rent agricultural machineries from the Tana Bäläs Project. Since 1994, Tana Bäläs project ploughed settlers' farm fields with fee or machinery-rent payments that covered by peasants themselves. However, many peasants did not have capacity to pay for the machinery service on their agricultural fields. Hence, many settlers once again were forced to look for from the regional and central Relief and Rehabilitation Commissions.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Gebre, p.35.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> See Yaregal Aysheshim's letter, President of Region 6, addressed to regional Relief and Rehabilitation Commission written on Nehassie 12, 1987 E. C with ref. no. Reg. 6/As/2800/6352/87 and Letter of Guangul Birhanu, head of Pawe special district agricultural office addressed to regional agricultural office at Assossa written on Nehassie 9, 1987 E.C with ref. no. Pa/Li.Wo. /Ag/Me/102/87, Fol. No. *Pawe Leyu Woreda*. Se. 5, File No. Ye sable Tefetro Adäga.

## State Farm

Another important factor of environmental change in Mätäkäl was the state farm project.<sup>80</sup> The *Därg* believed state farms to be key economic institution in transforming the agricultural sector. They were planned to be centers of innovation, adoption of technology in biological, mechanical, and organizational fields.<sup>81</sup> In addition, a major objective of state farms during the *Därg* regime was to tackle food shortage that widely prevailed in the country by transforming agricultural sector. As a result, state farms were highly committed to the production of food crops.<sup>82</sup> These farms were expanded in virgin areas and peripheral regions where better-forested physical environments were found. This activity, therefore, had devastating effect on the physical environment of these regions.<sup>83</sup>

Soon after the promulgation of the 1975 Land Reform Proclamation, the *Därg* established the *Fäṭan* Development Farm in Mätäkäl in 1976.<sup>84</sup> The Government established this development farm over an area of 1500 hectares of land. Many bulldozers and graders were engaged in clearing the dense forest that was found between Durra and Ardi Rivers to prepare the land for the farm.<sup>85</sup> This forest had served as source of natural resources for local people such as wild honey and different kinds of edible fruits that supplemented their

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<sup>80</sup> Dessalegn Rahmato, *Environmental Change and State Policy*, pp. 92—924

<sup>81</sup> Hayleyesus Abägaz, *The Organization of State Farms in Ethiopia After the Land Reform of 1975: Planning, Realization, Potential and Problems*, Vol. 46 (Saarbrücken: Verlag Breitenbach Publishers, 1982), pp. 61—62

<sup>82</sup> Hayleyesus Abägaz, p. 115; Ephrem Negash, "Problems of State Farms in Ethiopia" Senior Essay in Economics (Addis Ababa University, June 1983), p. 23

<sup>83</sup> Hayle Yesus ABägaz, p. 61.

<sup>84</sup> DMUAC, Fol. No.3047, File. 10 Ersha Minister, A letter written on Ginbot 18, 1968 E. C to Ato Taye Bayene, the head of Gojjam Province Forest Development and Conservation office; DMUAC, Fol. No. 163, File No. 278, A Letter written on Tir 2, 1969, From Mulugeta HabteMaryam, vice minister of Agriculture and Public Resettlement, to Fetan State Farm in Mätäkäl; See also the letter of Ato Girma Tolossa, Minister of Agriculture and population settlement, written on Hidar 8, 1969 with ref.no.ሐመ 21/3/1 addressed to Mätäkäl Fatan Farm, Woldemeske Archive Center, Agriculture Section, File no.አ6/መ1/6፣Mätäkäl Fatan Farm Account Investigation.

<sup>85</sup> Oral Informants Bewket Belay and Abeyou Engida.

subsistence economy. The forests of Durra valley had hosted different kinds of wild animals. However, these wild animals disappeared from the region with the destruction of this forest.<sup>86</sup> After three years of trial, the farm was found out to be unproductive because of its flat and marshy nature. For this reason, the farm was forced to change its location to the Bäläs Valley and hence changed its name to the Bäläs State Farm.<sup>87</sup>

This state farm could not expand further because there was shortage of labour in the region. The Gumuz were not voluntary to work on the state farm and highlanders did not want to go to this state farm area for fear of malaria. The Bäläs State Farm collapsed in 1991 with the change of government. It was initially established by displacing two Gumuz clans from the area so that it soon became the target of attack by the local people with the fall of the Därg regime.<sup>88</sup> The experience of Bäläs State farm shows that Därg established this state farm without due feasibility study. Amare Bantider's study shows that Ethiopian state farms during the Därg period were established without scientific study of ecological, social, and other factors.<sup>89</sup>

With the fall of the Därg and collapse of cooperative mechanized farming in Pawe resettlement area in 1991, private enterprises and institutions began to develop in the settlement area. When small towns appeared in settlement areas, the demand for wood and bamboo for construction purposes increased dramatically. Government and non-governmental organizations began constructions to open different institutions and

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<sup>86</sup> Oral Informants: Berihun Embiale, Bewket Belay and Fentahun Yismaw.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*; Ketema Abebe, "Socio-Economic Evaluation of the Current Land use in the Middle Bäläs Valley" (Ministry of Agriculture, January 1987), pp.60—61

<sup>89</sup> Amare Bantider, "Regional Analysis of Crop Production in State Farms of Ethiopia" (Senior Essay in Geography, Addis Ababa University, April 1987), p. 21.

enterprises.<sup>90</sup> These constructions used local raw materials. Following expansion and development of towns, poor farmers engaged in sale of bamboo and construction woods to support their livelihood. They collected these materials in their compounds and sold it for those who needed them for construction purposes. These farmers brought construction materials from distant forested areas and stored them in their villages for sale. This became one factor for the deforestation of remaining forests since 1990s. The Development of towns in settlement areas also increased demand for fuel wood and charcoal, as they became the sole sources of energy for dwellers and owners of hotels.<sup>91</sup> Thus, charcoal production became a widespread activity in the region that supplied charcoal to many towns in Mätäkäl. This caused rapid dwindling of forest-covered lands because more and more people engaged in the charcoal production and trade as supplementary source of their livelihood.<sup>92</sup>

The famous hunting ground of Mätäkäl, Awjamis forestland, also fell under the threat of deforestation following the fall of the Därg regime. This forestland had hosted different big and small game animals. In addition to its service as a hunting ground, individuals collected honey up to 30 *dawulas* (equivalent to quintal) from the Awjamis natural forest each year during the Imperial and the Därg periods.<sup>93</sup> Deforestation of this dense lowland forest that served as the home of many kinds of wild animals and the source of abundant wild-honey began after the fall of Därg. Dense forest from Java kebele, near Awjamis

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<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p.189

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 188—189

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> Informants: Agrew Worku, Reggassa Assegie, Yibas Guk and Abeyou Engida

lowland, destroyed after the current regime started settlement from the Jawi side since 1994.<sup>94</sup>

After the collapse of this farm, a private investment firm known as Pop Agricultural Development took the state farm's land in 1994. However, the firm abandoned this farm after two cropping seasons in 1996/97 due to the destruction of crops in the field, which was ready for harvesting by fire because the Gumuz of the region had grudge on state farm for the destruction of their natural resources.<sup>95</sup> In 1996/97, the southern half of the state farm's land was given to Mandura Organic Agricultural Development. In 1997/98, BÉngáz River Agricultural Development Firm took the northern half of the former state farm's land. These two agricultural investment firms fully occupied the former state farm area.<sup>96</sup>

Granting land to investors based on lease-right became common practice in Mätäkäl during the post-1991 period. This was done without due knowledge and participation of local community, and without detailed socio-cultural, agro-economic, and environmental studies. This granting of land and forest resources to investors severely affected the environment and livelihood of local people.<sup>97</sup> Since the livelihood of the Gumuz communities of the region depended on shifting cultivation and fallowing system, the expansion of more agricultural investors became a threat to their economic system.

The following table shows some of rain-fed agricultural investment schemes in Mätäkäl, which came into existence in 1990s. The table shows the rate of agricultural investment expansion in the region and the size of the land possessed by the investors.

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<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Woldesillassie, p. 120

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122

Table 3. Agricultural Investment and Size of the land possessed by Investors in Mätäkäl

No.	Name of the Enterprise	Woreda (district)	Area (Ha)	Farm Status
1	Bengez River Agro-industry	Dangur	2000	operation
2	Mandura Organic Agricultural Development	Dangur	3500	operational
3	Burez Endalama Agro-industry	Dangur	5000	operational
4	Zimbeha Agro-industry	Dangur	5000	operational
5	Diiza Agricultural development	Dangur	3000	ceased
6	Pawe Agricultural Development	Pawe	1000	ceased
7	Abbat Bäläs Agricultural Development	Pawe	5000	operational
8	Abi-Egzi Agricultural Development	Gubba	1000	operational
9	BeniShangul Gumuz Agro-Industry	Gubba	10,000	operational
10	Tesfa Mäkonnen Agricultural Development	Gubba	2000	operational
11	Baaruda Gebriel Agricultural Development	Bulen	750	operational
Total Hectares			32, 250	

Source: adopted from Woldä sillassie's Dissertation, p. 123.

As can be understood from the table, all of these enterprises engaged in the agricultural sector who were running for possession of vast agricultural land at the expense of vast forestland. The destruction of natural forest from the region of Mätäkäl for the sake of

establishing rain-fed agricultural farms has continued in the post-1991 period. The Benishangul Gumuz National Regional State did not formulate investment directives to guide, monitor, and evaluate the implementation and impacts of investment activities in the region.

Investment office at Assosa directed and headed the technical aspects of investment schemes in Mätäkäl, which was 1000 kilometers away from its head office. Thus, the district and zonal authorities have no real say on the technical aspects of investment projects in Mätäkäl. For this reason, natural resource depletion was growing from worse to worst condition. It was severely affecting the life and livelihood of the local population.<sup>98</sup>

The resettlement and state farm schemes of the Därg regime deprived the Gumuz of Mätäkäl of their livelihood resources like land, forest and water.<sup>99</sup> The Resettlement Scheme in Pawe area displaced indigenous Gumuz people estimated 15000 to 20000 and Bäläs State Farm also displaced people in two qebeles from their farmlands.<sup>100</sup> Virgin lands that the Därg regime put under control of the Bäläs State Farm since 1979 and Pawe Resettlement area since 1985 were the natural resource supply areas of the Gumuz communities of Mätäkäl. The dense wood and bamboo forests of Bäläs valley were sources of shelter and food for the Gumuz communities. Highlanders saw these areas for ages as abundant fertile lands that were underutilized because of the infestation with malaria and trypanosomiasis. They used these areas as hunting places and slave raiding

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<sup>98</sup> Wolde Sillassie, p.123

<sup>99</sup> Wolde Sillassie, p. 171

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p.52; Francesca Agneta and Massimo Tommassoli, "Pre-school Education and Priests' Schools in Pawe Resettlement Area" in *Resettlement and Rural development in Ethiopia: Socio-Economic Research, Training and Technical Assistance in the Bäläs Valley*, Paolo Dieci and Claudio Viezzoli, eds. (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1992), 343.

since long years ago. Since latter periods of the Imperial regime, government saw the Bäläs Valley as agricultural potential area.<sup>101</sup>

The intervention of the state in the Bäläs Valley for the development of state farm and resettlement project affected social and economic life of the Gumuz people. The Bäläs Valley had served the Gumuz communities as a place of hunting, gathering, beekeeping and other supplementary natural resources. The Gumuz lost these resources due to the development of state farm and resettlement project in the region<sup>102</sup> The Gumuz generated their income through gathering natural gum from the trees in the area and sold or exchanged it in markets found in the highlands or across the border in the Sudan. Through this gum exchange, Gumuz had earned supplementary cash income. However, the Därg government established the natural gum-processing corporation in Mätäkäl that mainly collected the produce from Gubba and Dangur districts. Thus, this state intervention in the gum process denied the inhabitants access to this resource.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, during the process of resettlement, campaigners cleared vast gum forests for the purpose of village construction and to use the gum trees for poles in building huts. This process eliminated important source of cash income for the Gumuz communities of the region.<sup>104</sup>

Forests were big assets for the Gumuz people of Mätäkäl. The destruction of forests meant the destruction or loss of other supplementary sources of income like hunting and

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<sup>101</sup> Ketema Abebe, "Socio-Economic Evaluation of the Current Land Use in the Middle Bäläs Valley," (Ministry of Agriculture, January 1987), p. 72; Kefle Gebru, "Land Use, Vegetation types and Farming Systems of the Middle Bäläs Valley (Pawe Settlement) Area (Gojjam)" (Ministry of Agriculture, Land Use Planning Team, October 1987), p. 29.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*; Getachew Wolde Meskel, p. 246.

<sup>103</sup> See the letter of Girmay Fitwy, the head of Gojjam province gum processing and marketing organization, written on Sene 25, 1979 with ref. no. *ዓ.መ/6-5/369*, that states about annual reports of 1979 E.C and his letter written on Hamle 19, 1978 E.C with ref. no. *ዓ.መ/መ-2/2274* addressed to provincial planning office, Fol. No. DMUAC, File No. *Ye Dur Mucha mirt Gebeya Dirjit* Report.

<sup>104</sup> Getachew, p. 246

beekeeping. Forests that had hosted many wild animals were destroyed due to resettlement program and mechanized agriculture. The increased number of settler population depleted the remaining resources in the settlement region. Thus, the destruction of forests was loss of supplementary diet and cash incomes for the Gumuz of the region.<sup>105</sup> The Gumuz could not proceed in their tradition of beekeeping in nearby areas of settlement and even in distant areas. They had important tradition of trust within their clans and across the clans in keeping beehives and honey collection. Settler communities took beehives and honey collected and left in the forest by the Gumuz people. This destroyed the habit of trust that existed within the Gumuz communities for ages.<sup>106</sup>

The establishment of resettlement and state farm projects since early 1980s in the region became a threat to the Gumuz cyclical form of land use system. The Gumuz agricultural system was based on shifting cultivation that was practiced by means of using a plot of land for two or three years and then left it fallow for five to ten years.<sup>107</sup> This type of agriculture required vast forests for cyclical use of the land and maintain the balance between man and environment. Thus, the destruction of extensive virgin forestlands by state farm and resettlement endangered the continuation of shifting cultivation as an economic system of Gumuz communities.<sup>108</sup>

By the time of data collection for this dissertation in November and December 2016, information obtained from Gubba Woreda communication office and local elders indicated

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247

<sup>107</sup> Dessalegn Rahmato, "Some notes....", p. 130

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

the presence of 181 agricultural investment schemes in Gubba district alone.<sup>109</sup> Many of these schemes engaged in either cotton or sesame cultivation. Each of the investment schemes holds more than two hundred daily laborers during the peak seasons of agricultural cultivation. Thus, it is clear to understand human burden on the natural environment and natural resource destruction<sup>110</sup>

The interpretation of the satellite images of 1972 and 1995 indicate that there are considerable changes in land use or land cover in the region of Mätäkäl. During when there had not been significant settlements in 1972, only scattered Gumuz settlements were found in the vast lowland areas of Mätäkäl. As the 1972 satellite image shows, the area was largely covered by the thick riverine, acacia and bamboo forests with scattered trees of other species. However, since the 1970s, the rate of deforestation had been accelerated (see 1972 and 1985 GIS Maps below).

The 1995 satellite image shows that more and more hectares of land converted to settlement and agricultural fields when compared to the 1972 land cover data. The changes observed in the 1995 satellite image analysis, therefore, could be attributed to all the aforementioned interventions over time that caused drastic changes in land use and land cover as compared to 1972 data.

In the 1995 satellite image, it is observed that there is dramatic change in land use/cover. The area was transformed increasingly from dense forests to settlements and agricultural fields. These changes in land-use/cover in fact might not only result from resettlement and

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<sup>109</sup> Gubba Woreda communication office, information obtained from Temesgen Beyen, Communication Officer of Gubba district; Oral informants: Alher Mohammed and Rejeb Algamer

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

state farm intervention because such as expanded agricultural land by the continued influx of immigrant farmers from the highlands, and land clearance by the commercial investors had their own contributions.

Figure 4. This GIS map shows the Land cover status of Mätäkäl in 1972.

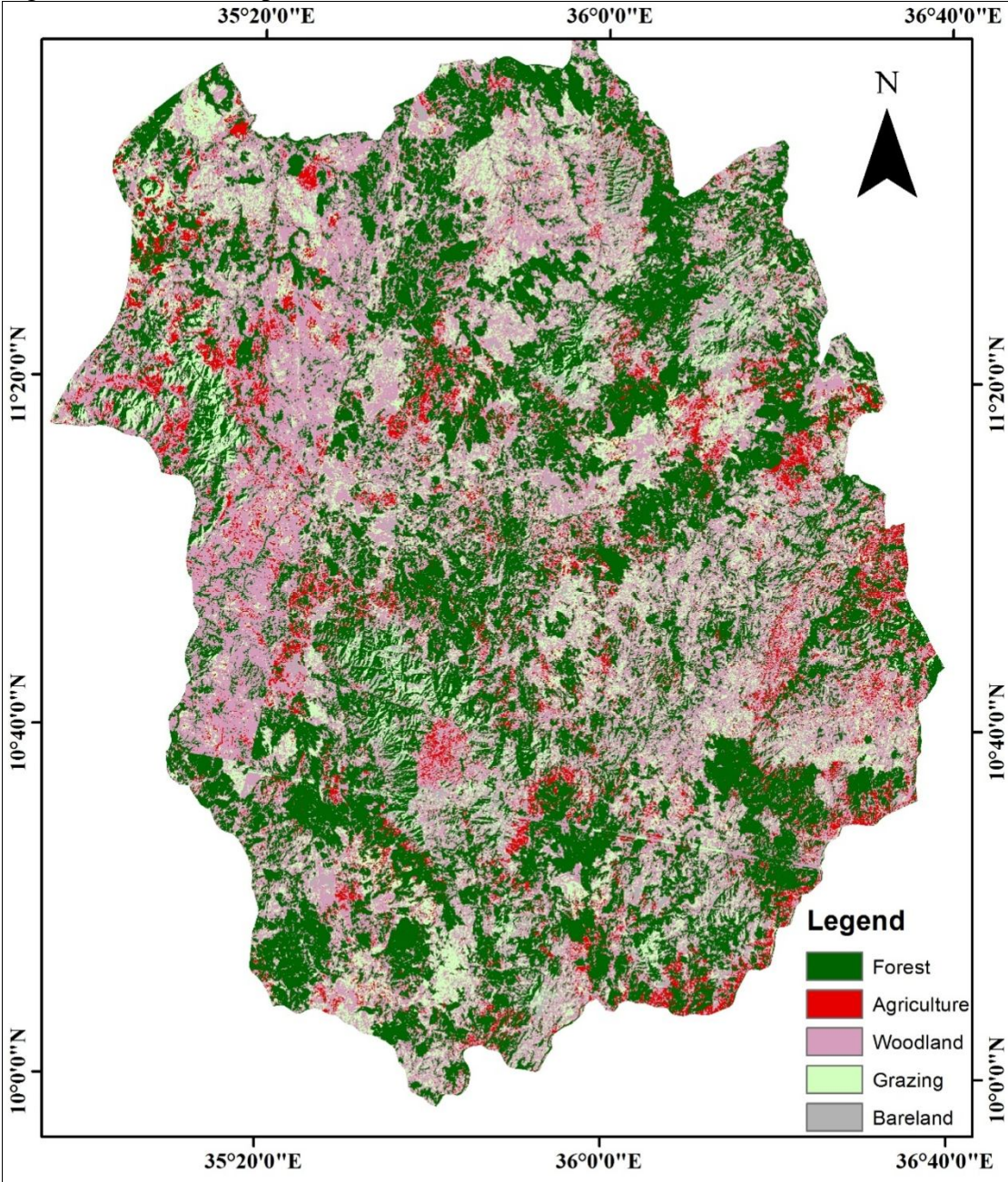
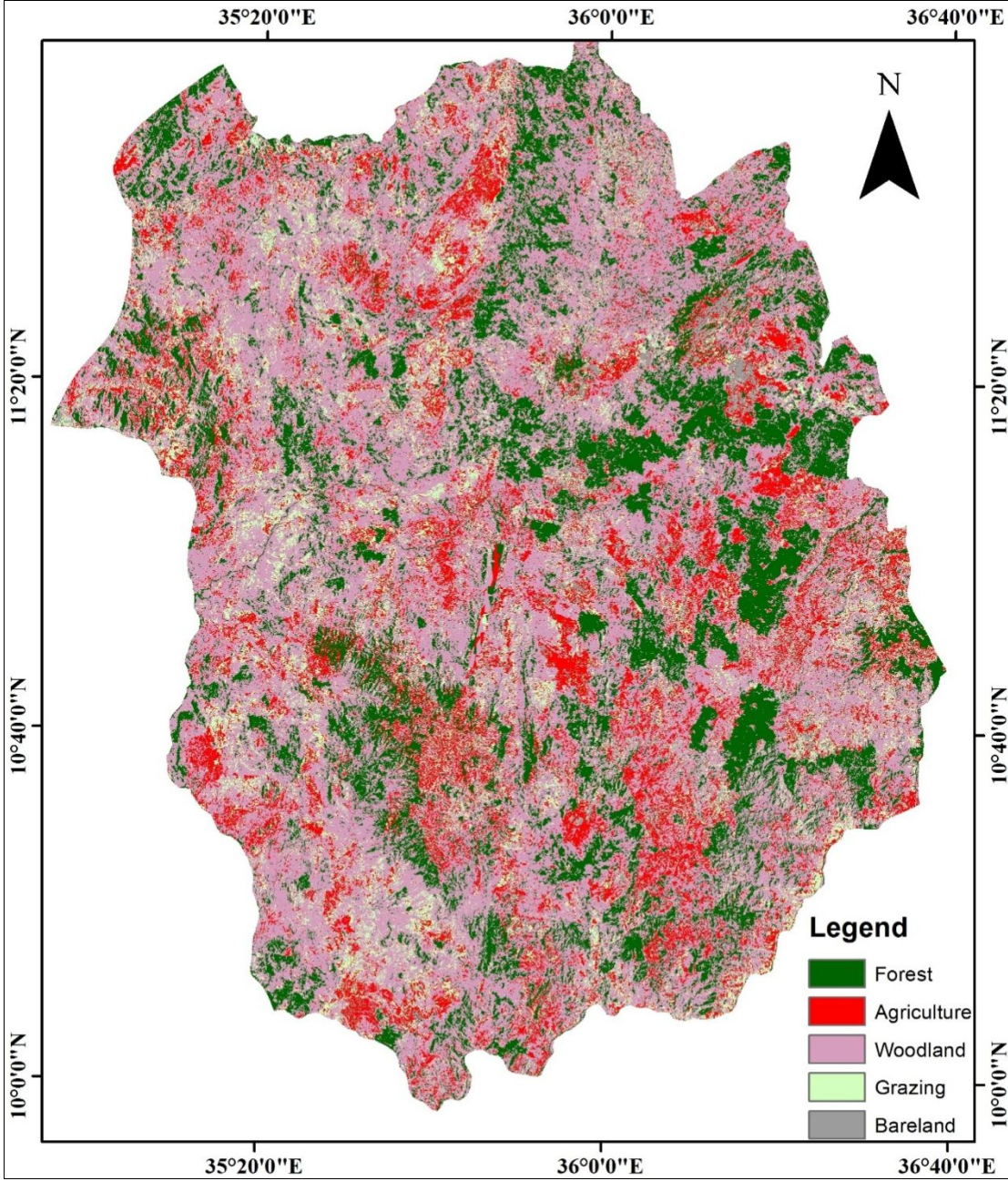
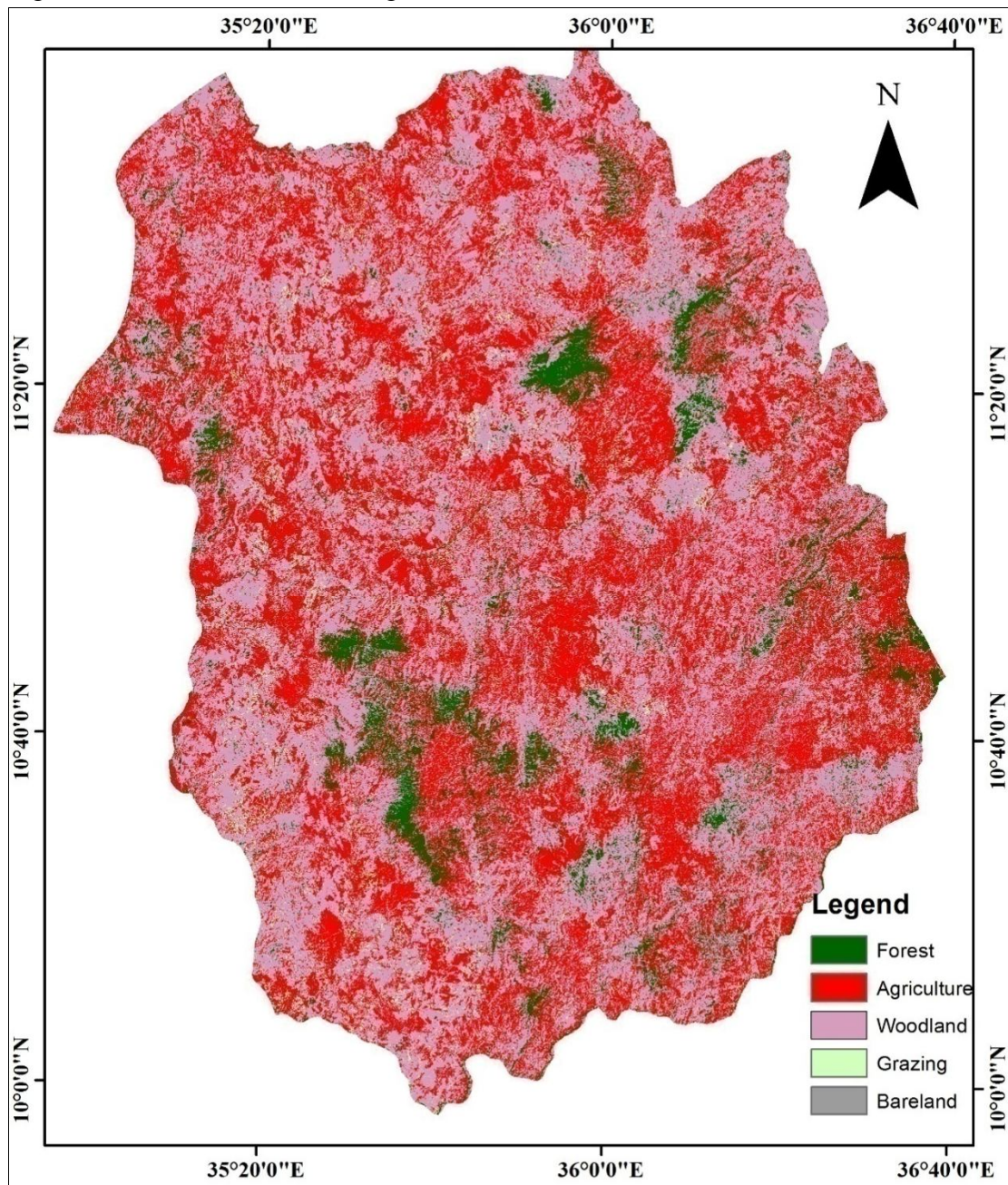


Figure 5: The 1985 Satellite image



Land cover Status of Mätäkäl in 1985

Figure 6: The 1995 Satellite Image of Mätäkäl



Land cover Status of Mätäkäl in 1995.

## War and Environment in Mätäkäl

Environmental landscape change in Mätäkäl during the last years of the Därg regime was also related to the war between the Därg and Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Party forces (EPRP). Mätäkäl was an important base area for the EPRP next to Chilga in north Gonder beginning from 1986.<sup>111</sup> The Commander of the EPRP forces in Qwara and Mätäkäl was Ayalnāsh Seménāh, the daughter of the famous rebel leader in Gojjam, *Dājazmač* Seménāh Dästa, during the early phase of the Därg's seizure of power. Ayalnesh established a command post at Bambudi near the Sudan border in Gubba and gradually expanded her control into the interior territories.<sup>112</sup>

During late 1986, EPRP forces attacked Pawe resettlement area and captured five Italians who were working at the Tana Bälās Project but released them later. EPRP forces also expanded to the south and controlled Wombära on June 28, 1989. The Därg launched a campaign aided with heavy machine guns and the air-force to reoccupy the southern part of Mätäkäl but it was in vain.<sup>113</sup> On July 30, 1990, EPRP forces extended to the southern parts of Ankäša district in Agaw Meder and destroyed the Därg's military camp that was found near Azäna town.<sup>114</sup> This was a major disaster for the Därg because it lost huge number of soldiers at the Battle of Azäna. The Därg's forces were restricted to major towns of Agaw Gimjabét in Ankäša, Čagni town in Guangwa and Pawe Settlement area beginning from September 1990. Beginning in October 1990, the Därg totally abandoned war with EPRP and concentrated its force on the Debre Tabor front against the EPRDF. Thus, the EPRP

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<sup>111</sup> EPRP News Pamphlet, Vol. 5, No. 3 (November—December 1988), pp. 5—7, IES MS, Clandstine, 1775/06/1.2;

<sup>112</sup> B/General Abebe Haile Sillassie, *Ye 17 Amet Filmya* (17 Years Battle) (Addis Ababa: Rhobot Publishers, 2006), pp. 234—235

<sup>113</sup> EPRP News Pamphlet, Vol. 6, No. 1 (August—September 1989), pp. 4—5, IES MS, Clandestine, IES MS, 1775/06/2.1. 2; Informant: Tsehay Sewasew—the first Secretary of EWP of Wombera by the time and Participated in the war that took place in Gessengessa and Bullän areas.

<sup>114</sup> Informant: Tsehay Sewasew

forces came to control the whole of Mätäkäl except Čagni town and Pawe Resettlement area and large parts of Agaw Meder.<sup>115</sup>

While in control of parts of Mätäkäl, the EPRP carried out several activities. One of this was its engagement in wood trade with Sudanese merchants. Thus, they established strong ties with Sudanese people and border administrators. They also engaged in wood trade with Sudanese merchants in order to solve their financial problem. Sudanese merchants badly needed palm tree (*Zämbaba*) from Mätäkäl that had high demand in Sudan by car body builders. Though we do not have data on the size of wood trade and forest destroyed in the process, Sudanese merchants came with their cars and the labor force that would cut the selected trees. What EPRP forces did was allow them to enter into the Ethiopian territory paying certain amount of money. Cutting and transporting the wood was carried out by the Sudanese merchants themselves. This EPRP's wood trade with the Sudanese destroyed certain tree species that were used for lumbering and car body-building from the western parts of Mätäkäl.<sup>116</sup>

After they controlled the region of Wombära district in June 1989, the EPRP also encouraged peasants to expand their agricultural activities. It distributed vast forestlands in Wombära and Zigäm areas to peasants. Particularly, Lomcha and Wogdi forests of Wombära and vast forest of Gissayta, Yemali and Gohanazh *qäbälés* of Zigäm were cleared during this time and turned into agricultural fields.<sup>117</sup> Peasants cleared these forests and established extensive new farmlands. EPRP imposed fee on peasants who cleared forests that amounted three birr per a new farmland. Hence, peasants expanded their

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<sup>115</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> Informants: *Sheik* Rejeb Algamer and Tsehay

<sup>117</sup> Informants; Jalleta Gidada, Fentahun Yismaw and Tsehay

agricultural fields and increased agricultural production in areas under EPRP's control. The primary motive of the EPRP was to get supplies for its soldiers from the increased agricultural produce. Particularly, maize was produced beyond the needs of local consumption and there was no market access during this wartime. Thus, many peasants threw away their maize produce in the field.<sup>118</sup>

After the fall of the Därg and defeat of EPRP and its dispersal by the EPRDF forces that came from the Sudan side at the end of 1991, EPRDF did not establish effective control over rural areas of Mätäkäl and Agaw Meder until early 1992. There was no government body which could prohibit peasants from clearing forests. Thus, Trimi forest in Gessengessa, forests of Kitar-Gochor and Amuma areas were destroyed during the first decade of EPRDF rule.<sup>119</sup> The forest of Baruda area that extended from Mora area to Gessengessa used to be covered by dense bamboo forest. This flat low-lying forest between Mora and Gässängässa highland was destroyed after settlement of landless peasants from districts of Säkäla and other parts of Damot during the late 1990s.<sup>120</sup>

### **Disease Control Efforts under the Därg**

Disease is one environmental factor that shapes human settlement pattern and affects farm and livestock economies.<sup>121</sup> As I have discussed in chapter 4, efforts to control human and animal diseases in Mätäkäl started in the 1960s during the imperial period. Though this effort showed important improvement in the control of human and animal diseases like anthrax, tuberculosis, rinderpest, smallpox and liverfluke, with respect control of malaria

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<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> Informant: Yeshe Alga Jarra and Bidika Yadetta

<sup>120</sup> Informants: Kenaw Gobena and Tsehay Sewasew

<sup>121</sup> Shepard Krech III, J. R. McNeil, and Carolyn Merchant (eds.), *Encyclopedia of World Environmental History, Vol. 1, A—E* (Routledge: Berkshire Publishing Group, 2004), p.8

and trypanosomiasis, the efforts of the imperial regime had made little headway. Hence, malaria and trypanosomiasis remained important challenges to settlement and livestock production, particularly in lowland parts of Mätäkäl. The Därg awas therefore forced to continue with its efforts to control trypanosomiasis and malaria to make the region suitable for settlement and agricultural production. Thus, this section focuses on trypanosomiasis and Malaria that had strong impact on human life and cattle breeding, which in turn shaped the nature of peoples' economy in the region.

### **Därg's Socialist policy and its Impact on Disease control**

The socialist policies of the Därg made less effective the country's struggle to control different disease problems in the country. During the Imperial period, these projects were largely carried out by the western governments and development agencies. For instance, in Gojjam including my study area Mätäkäl, British and Canadian veterinarian teams conducted vaccination programs to improve cattle health in the region. The budget for vaccination program was largely covered by the Canadian government.<sup>122</sup> As I stated in Chapter 4, American development agencies like USAID, CDC, and the Peace Corps carried out different development projects in pre-Revolutionary Ethiopia. In 1964 USAID provided about 108 Jeep pickup trucks to the Imperial government to facilitate the Emperor's program of Malaria Eradication Service (MES). These trucks carried spray canisters, boxes of powered DDT and staff members to spray houses across the country.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> See the letters written on August 4, 1973 and December 9, 1974 to Gojjam province agricultural office, Fol.No. DMUAC, 190 File No. 10, Gojjam Teklay Gizat Ersha Sira Tsifet Bet (gojjam Province Agricultural Office)

<sup>123</sup> James C. McCann, Historical Ecology of Malaria, pp. 73—75; "Imperialism in Ethiopia" in Government: *Miscellanea* 1, pp. 56—57

In spite of these contributions, the Därg categorized these international development agencies as agents of imperialist powers and suspended many of them from working in the country in 1975. For this reason, Peace Corps members working in different government institutions were forced to leave the country. Projects run by European and multilateral donors were interrupted and hence USAID, CDC, and other western donors withdrew financial and technical support to the new socialist government of Ethiopia.<sup>124</sup>

Hence, the Därg became beset with problems of financial and technical experts to undertake significant public health projects in my study area. The Därg government could not take significant measure against devastating cattle diseases in Mätäkäl in the 1970s.<sup>125</sup> The Därg's effort in this area was resumed only in the 1980s in connection with the implementation of resettlement program in Bäläs valley. In the 1980s, with the support of FAO and Italian Salini project, studies on the impacts of trypanosomiasis began in Mätäkäl. Thus, in 1986, a tsetse fly survey was carried out in the Bäläs Valley by a team from FAO. The survey was conducted only for three days and identified the presence of *Glossina Tachnoides* species of tsetse fly in the region. However, the survey study was not extensive.<sup>126</sup> Further studies on trypanosomiasis and tsetse fly control in Bäläs Valley resumed in 1988, which was divided into two phases. Phase I took place from May 1988-May 1989 for one year and focused on investigating of the spread and intensity of trypanosomiasis whereas phase II that took place from June-October 1989 sought to

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<sup>124</sup>Horace G. Ogden, *CDC and Smallpox Crusade*, p. 108; "Imperialism in Ethiopia", pp.56—57; McCann, *Historical Ecology of Malaria*, pp. 92—96

<sup>125</sup>See Dr. Hailu Gebru's letter exchanges with Ministry of Agriculture and Population Settlement, written on November 26, 1976(Hidar 17, 1969 E.C) with ref. no,448/86/69 and on December 10, 1976 ( 1/4/69 E.C) with ref. no.449/86/69. Dr. Hailu was animal Health Service Director of Gojjam Province,DMUAC: Fol. No. 190, File No. 10, second volume; Ye Gojjam Kifle Hager Erisha Sira Tsifet Bet (Gojjam Province Agricultural Office)

<sup>126</sup> Tana Bäläs Project Master Plan 3A, p. 226.

determine the prevalence of tsetse flies and identifying various fly species found in the Bäläs Valley settlement area.<sup>127</sup>

Types of tsetse that infested Bäläs River Valley were *Glossina M. Ugandensis* and *G. Tachinoides*. Both species infested large areas on both sides of the Bäläs River.<sup>128</sup> Further survey studies that were carried out from March to May 1989 in the Bäläs River Valley that covered over 100kms of both sides of the river showed high density of *Glossina Tachinoides*. The highest density of fly populations were found not only in the heavily wooded banks of Bäläs River but also along major tributaries of it that included Buhi, Ketem, Zaza, Changur, and Endsa.<sup>129</sup> The Därg also made efforts to control human disease in Mätäkäl, in particular malaria.

### **Därg's Malaria Control Programs**

Unlike trypanosomiasis, the Därg gave better emphasis to malaria control from early on. When the Därg took power in 1974, it strengthened the malaria control program in the region of Mätäkäl. Survey studies to control malaria took place beginning from 1976. About 527 malarous *qäbälés* were identified and mapped. Furthermore, 89, 492 houses and 143,400 families were registered as dwellers of malarious *qäbälés* of Mätäkäl region.<sup>130</sup> The Därg's malaria control program included application of DDT spraying twice a year in the malarous *qäbälés* from 1976 to 1981 for five rounds. This program significantly reduced effects of malaria spread in the areas where Agaws, Šinaša and Oromos settled. Nevertheless, malaria control program was not extended fully to the lowland areas of

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<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40

<sup>129</sup> Tana Bäläs Project Master Plan, pp.28—29

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

Dangur and Gubba because there was no roads that linked the lowland districts to administrative centers.<sup>131</sup>

According to the evaluation made in 1980, the Därg's effort to control malaria in Mätäkäl showed that rather than decreasing malaria increased paradoxically by 4.5 percent despite the above efforts. Control efforts could not cover the Gumuz areas of lowland Mätäkäl. The reason identified behind increase in malaria infestation was the refusal of the Gumuz Community against the spraying of their homes with DDT and inability to cover the vast lowland areas of Mätäkäl in DDT spraying with available 30 technique and administrative anti-malaria staff members of the Mätäkäl sub-office.<sup>132</sup> Thus, the vast lowlands of Mätäkäl remained vulnerable to malaria epidemics even during the Därg period.

It was under this situation that the Därg selected Pawe (Bäläs Valley region of Mätäkäl) as a large-scale settlement site in 1984/5. According to the RRC's September 1984 decision, the type of settlement that was to be carried out in the Bäläs Valley was conventional and involved selection of vast uninhabited lands with high productive potential. The government planned from the beginning to use heavy machinery in the implementation of the Pawe Settlement program. The settlement and agricultural sites were cleared using graders and bulldozers<sup>133</sup> Over 33,244 hectares of forestland was cleared for the purpose of constructing villages and mechanized activities during the initial phase of resettlement. To

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<sup>131</sup> Ye Mätäkäl Awraja Ye Limat Bazar Ye Oesqesa ena Propaganda Committee, "Mätäkäl ena Abyotawi Enqisqassiewa" (Čagni: Yekatit 1973), ---A Committee for Mätäkäl Awraja Development Bazaar Promotion and Propaganda, "Mätäkäl and its Revolutionary Movements (Čagni: February 1981 ), p. 38

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>133</sup> Giordano Sivini, "Famine and the Settlement Program in Ethiopia" in *Africa: Rivista Trimestrale di Studi e Documentazione dell' Istituto Italiano per l' Africa e l' Oriente*, Anno. 41., No.2 (Istituto Italiano per l' Africa e l' Oriente, GIUGNO 1986), p. 217

construct 109 villages up to January 1986, over 9800 hectares of land was cleared, which further expanded during the next years with the increase of the number of villages.<sup>134</sup>

The Tana Bäläs Project which officially began its activities in March 1986 in the Bäläs Valley was engaged in mechanized farming and infrastructural activities. This project built all-weather graveled road network of around 300kms length that made all villages in Pawe accessible. It also constructed primary schools and agro-industrial factories, two dams on the main Bäläs River for water pump irrigation and Gelgäl Bäläs River for potable water distribution for the entire settlement area.<sup>135</sup> However, the disturbance of the natural ecosystem created ideal condition for the proliferation of mosquitoes. The slow moving Gelgäl and Abat Bäläs River banks, dams, and irrigation ditches became breeding grounds for mosquitoes. Furthermore, settlement expansion in the area changed vector-host relationship. Malaria pathogens got sufficient human host that helped mosquitoes' duplication and proliferation of malaria. These conditions led to outbreak of malaria epidemic in the Pawe settlement area.<sup>136</sup>

The malaria epidemic that broke out in 1985 and 1986 was a severe challenge to the life of the settlers and their fledgling community. Particularly, the settlers from villages 31, 50, 49 and Mambuk town area were devastated by the malaria outbreak. These villages were constructed near river banks. This devastation terrorized settlers in other villages and forced many of them to return back to their original homelands. The mortality rate was so high in these villages that it necessitated the establishment of burial teams to bury dead

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<sup>134</sup> Getachew, *Famine and Resettlement...*, p. 235

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 175—176

<sup>136</sup> Aynalem Adugna, "Malaria in Ethiopia" [www.EthioDemographyAndHealth.org](http://www.EthioDemographyAndHealth.org), p. 6; James C. McCann, *The Historical Ecology of Malaria in Ethiopia* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2014), pp.94, 136

bodies. Except the team members, relatives, family members and friends were not allowed to go to the burial places and were forced to go to work place leaving the dead bodies even in their houses. It was the duty of burial teams to intern the dead bodies that consumed their full daytime.<sup>137</sup> Later, the villages of 31, 50 and 49 relocated to other areas.<sup>138</sup>

There was high mortality rate among the settlers of 1985/6 in Mätäkäl compared to other settlement regions. According to the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC), the mortality report of Mätäkäl resettlement was 11 percent whereas in Kaffa 4.2 percent, Wälläga 3.8 percent and Illubabor 6.8 percent.<sup>139</sup> However, the mortality rate of Mätäkäl settlers was actually higher than that reported by the RRC. During the first four weeks, the mortality rate among Mätäkäl settlers was 33.2 percent; for the next seven weeks it was 21.4 percent and for the last four weeks it dropped to 13.7 percent, which made the average annual mortality rate of Mätäkäl settlement area 21.5 percent. The infant mortality rate was even more severe and reached 76.3 percent during the first fifteen weeks, which gradually dropped to 52.2 percent during the last four weeks. Thus, death by malaria epidemic in the Mätäkäl resettlement area was alarmingly high.<sup>140</sup>

Different factors contributed for the high death rate among the Mätäkäl settlers. These included lack of resistance by famine stricken settlers, hot and humid climatic condition of the settlement area, which became unfavorable to highland resettlers and the government's inadequate provision of food for the new arrivals in the area.<sup>141</sup> Informants who are still

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<sup>137</sup> Oral Informants: Yalew and Abay

<sup>138</sup> Oral Informant: Agrew Worku, who was Kebele chairman in Belaya, Dangur district and was working with resettlement coordinators.

<sup>139</sup> Giordano Sivini, p. 231; Getachew Woldemeskel, pp. 363—365

<sup>140</sup> Getachew, p.365; Giordano Sivini, p. 233.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*; Sivini, pp. 237—238

alive in Pawe especially complain about the government's inadequacy of provisions of cooking utensils. The settlers arrived in Pawe weakened by famine. At the arrival spot, there was distribution of chloroquine and a few cups of powder and raw-maize and wheat. Many of the settlers did not get cooking utensils on their arrival. Therefore, the people were forced to eat raw chemicalized maize and wheat which led to dysentery that killed many of them.<sup>142</sup> Thus, the mortality rate in Mätäkäl resettlement area increased because of not only malaria but also absence of ready-made food to feed the settlers until they were ready to prepare food for themselves.<sup>143</sup> The flour given for baking bread or porridge in addition to maize and wheat was insufficient for a family even for a dinner. That was why the new comers were forced to eat raw maize and wheat. Thus, in addition to their physical weakness because of famine in their original homeland areas and the problem of malaria in the settlement area, and absence of readymade food or full equipment for food preparation contributed a lot to high death rate at least for the first five or six months.<sup>144</sup>

## **Efforts to Overcome the Challenges of Malaria in Bäläs Valley**

The Därg Government set up different health service institutions to overcome the challenges of malaria in Bäläs Valley. As of 1985, about forty-three clinics were established to provide health services to villages of settlers. The villages where clinics were

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<sup>142</sup> Oral Informants: Yalew Birhan and Abay Tesera. Ato Abay came to Pawe from North Shoa, Gishe Rabel in April 1985 and Ato Yalew came from Eastern Gojja, in the same year.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

not constructed included village 50, village 101, village 102, and Village 51. Furthermore, the government established two temporary hospitals in 1986 in village seven and village five using locally available construction materials like bamboo, grass and plastics.<sup>145</sup>

Modern hospital that constituted 154 beds and different medical service rooms was constructed in 1989 at village seven that replaced Shimäl Hospital. The new hospital had twelve buildings that consisted a drug dispensary, drug store, examination, diagnosis, delivery and other rooms.<sup>146</sup> This hospital was constructed with the financial and human resource support of the Italian Government. Some Italian doctors also worked in the hospital for about two years. Cases from different clinics of settlement areas and from the surrounding health institutions were referred to this modern hospital of Pawe.<sup>147</sup> The 1989 staff members report showed that twelve doctors, nineteen nurses, two sanitarians, three pharmacists and three laboratory technicians were working in the hospital at the time.<sup>148</sup>

The Ministry of Health also established one malaria control center in Pawe in 1985, which raised the number of malaria control centers in Mätäkäl to two together with the one found in Čagni. The Čagni malaria control center was closed in 1972, and reopened with the coming of the Därg regime. The anti-malaria activity in Pawe settlement area started before the arrival of the settlers. The newly arrived settlers were examined and those who needed protection from malaria were given prophylactic doses. After the settlers were distributed to different villages, prophylactic doses were distributed to them weekly and a health

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<sup>145</sup> Mätäkäl *Awraja* Agricultural Office, A Compiled Report of Activities from July 1, 1976 to June 30, 1988 (Čagni, July 1988), p. 256

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 256—257; Informants: Yalew Berhan, Abay Tessera, Akasha Kojjo, Fulla Gameda, and Debello Hika

<sup>148</sup> The 1989 Tana Bäläs Project Report, available in Pawe special district administrative office. P. 15

worker was assigned to each village to control the distribution of medicine and the problem of malaria in the villages.<sup>149</sup>

The major activities of the malaria control office were identifying and mapping malarious areas of the Bäläs valley region, undertaking registration of number of houses with posting codes and number of families who lived in registered houses, and spraying DDT twice a year.<sup>150</sup> The malaria control office recruited volunteers from settlers and trained them with basic skills of blood sample taking and malaria pathogen diagnosis. These trained settlers participated in different anti-malaria activities like spraying insecticides in the houses of villagers, clearing fields, bushes and draining stagnant pools of water that were suitable for the breeding of mosquitoes. These volunteers were also trained with basic knowledge of factors that affected the health of settlers.<sup>151</sup> Thus, the rate of morbidity and mortality decreased beginning from 1987 after huge devastation of human life. The anti-malaria campaign that took place in the Bäläs Valley with the participation of settlers themselves and coordination of the Ministry of Health enabled the settlers adjust themselves to the new environment and climatic conditions of the region.<sup>152</sup>

However, in 1988, 1991-1992 and 1997-1998 malaria epidemics broke out in Mätäkäl and other parts of Gojjam that extended up to the fringes of the highlands. In 1988 when the Därg government was occupied by war efforts with EPRDF forces, the issue health did not get sufficient attention. Malaria epidemic broke out in many parts of Gojjam including Mätäkäl and resulted in the death of many people. During the transition period (1991-1994)

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<sup>149</sup> Nibret Adamu, "A History of Pawe Woreda, Benishangul-Gumuz National Regional State, 1984—2009," (MA Thesis in History, Bahir Dar University, September 2015), P. 62.

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

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p.63

<sup>152</sup> Nibret Adamu, p. 63

anti-malaria activities in the region of Mätäkäl was weakened due to political instability and decline of medical and insecticides supplies.<sup>153</sup> A report by the Ministry of Health showed that the cause for the early 1990s and late 1990s wide spread malaria epidemic that included parts of highlands and highland fringes resulted from abnormal increase in minimum temperature.<sup>154</sup> Hence, the Därg's disease control policy did not achieve its goals largely due to political disturbance in the region during the late 1980s.

Generally, this chapter has tried to demonstrate how the Därg's resettlement and state farm projects in Mätäkäl resulted in disasterous effect on the natural environment of the region. Huge deforestation took place to implement settlement and agricultural projects. In addition to the Därg's socialist projects, civil war between the Därg and Ethiopian People's Party Revolutionary forces during the period of 1980s had also catastrophic impact on environmental change of Mätäkäl.

The resettlement program that began to be implemented in Mätäkäl in 1985 turned large tracts of forestland into settlement and agricultural fields. The conventional type of the resettlement program that was implemented in Mätäkäl was assisted by mechanized agricultural programs. Agricultural mechanization in the settlement areas resulted in largescale deforestation. Similarly the Bäläs state farm that was established in the region in 1979 cleared many hectares of forestland to establish farm fields. The Därg's policy to make peripheral environments suitable for settlement and agricultural development also emphasized the need to control malaria and trypanosomiasis. Though many efforts either to eradicate or control malaria were made, malaria remains the number one enemy of human

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<sup>153</sup> Informants: Yalew, Abay, Debelo Kika, Degu Ashebir, Bewket Belay and Fenta hun Yismaw

<sup>154</sup> Ministry of Helath, "Ethiopia:....," p.6.

beings in Mätäkäl as well as in Ethiopia at national level until this day. Similarly trypanosomiasis control program was also started in Mätäkäl in 1986 in order to improve cattle breeding in the settlement area. However, this program failed at its survey study level due to political disturbances that occurred in the region beginning from the end of the 1980s.

Warfare was another cause of environmental change in Mätäkäl. Beginning from 1989 the southern portion of Mätäkäl fell under the rebel forces. These rebel forces encouraged local peasants to expand agricultural products in the territories which fell under their control. This effort to increase agricultural production led to the destruction of large tracts of forests from the districts of Wombära and Zigäm. Hence, the environmental change in Mätäkäl was the result of many combined factors that operated simultaneously or one after the other.

## **Conclusion**

This dissertation has sought to understand the interface between the various populations of Mätäkäl and the natural environment within which they lived over the course of a century period from the late 1880s to the early 1990s. The over-arching goal of the dissertation has

been to reconstruct the contours of environmental change in the region and explain the dynamics of this change based on oral sources and written historical accounts.

Environmental history has been a dynamic field of study in African studies. Yet, it is at its nascent stage in Ethiopia. Several recent studies have broadened Ethiopia's environmental history and helped to locate complex relationships and the agency of actors. Benefitting from the vibrant African environmental history as well as recent studies on Ethiopian environmental history I have sought to write Mätäkäl's environmental history from perspective of multiple agencies which had been central in shaping it. Such an approach has enabled me to view the environmental change as a process that resulted from constantly shifting encounters between a range of social and political actors such as agriculture, resettlement and state intervention.

This dissertation has provided additional evidence to reinforce the findings and conclusions of several researchers on the complex subject of Ethiopian national political economy and environmental change overtime and across space. My primary intent has been to render agency to environmental actors so as to explore environmental change and transformation in Mätäkäl's environment and society.

Mätäkäl's environment has been shaped by the course of history. In the pre-1880s period, Mätäkäl's ecology was characterized by vast forestland that hosted diverse wildlife species, sparse human settlement and disease that kept out highland agriculturalists from settling permanently and exploiting directly the rich resources of lowland Mätäkäl. The variation in agro-ecology and climate had shaped the economic systems and settlement patterns of local populations and the environmental impacts of these systems. Hence lowland Mätäkäl was

mainly inhabited by the Gumuz who depended on hunting and shifting cultivation whereas highland parts to the east were inhabited by the Agaw, Šinaša and Oromos who were largely sedentary herders and practiced small-scale plow agriculture. I have shown that rather than live at equilibrium with nature as some traditions would suggest these different subsistence strategies were important in shaping Mätäkäl's environmental landscape. For example, fire was used by Gumuz and others as a land management technology and was responsible for reconfiguring vegetation, soil and wildlife in subtle ways.

The period from the late 1880s to the early 1890s was a period of environmental catastrophe in the history of Mätäkäl as well as across most parts of the country. This catastrophe greatly altered economic, social and demographic life of the people of the region. The fundamental cause was a rinderpest epidemic that finished off more than 90 percent of livestock resources of the region. The destruction of livestock by the epidemic resulted in severe famine. Famine was also attended by fatal human disease that devastated large agricultural communities in highland parts of Mätäkäl and the whole of Gojjam. Famine and disease in combination took a large section of the population from the region, which later led to the shortage of agricultural labor.

Soon after the Great Famine, the state interest to control peripheral region of Mätäkäl intensified. The late 19<sup>th</sup> century expansionism of the state altered the nature and subsistence systems of the earlier social and economic systems of the region and interventions over the environmental resources. This state's interest was further strengthened by the need for agricultural labor from the lowland communities and the encroachment of the British from the western direction. These developments pushed the

Christian state to establish closer control over the periphery and exploit the rich resources of this region and benefit from the growing international market especially in wildlife products. Particularly the period 1910s to 1930s marked the intensification of hunting and slave raiding in the lowland parts of Mätäkäl because ivory and slaves became major commodities of international and domestic trade of the time. These practices depopulated the lowland Gumuz, and wildlife diversity from the region of Mätäkäl. This period also marked a slow expansion of plow agriculture with gradual restoration of livestock resources during the post Great Famine period.

Beginning from the early 1940s, state intervention in Mätäkäl underwent important change with the restructuring of the administrative system in Gojjam and emergence of Mätäkäl as a separate *awraja* in 1948. The promotion of Mätäkäl to the status of *awraja* level strengthened political and economic intervention by the central state in the sub-province. Mätäkäl became a space for experimenting with various ideas of modernization and development that had developed across globe in the post-World War II period and has been quickly appropriated by the imperial state as a strategy. With regard to these “modernization” and development schemes in Mätäkäl they primarily focused on transforming the population from herders and shifting cultivators into plow agriculturalists. The new cadre of state officials appointed to Mätäkäl pushed the local people to effectively use uncultivated land. The officials even called for settlement of people in Mätäkäl from degraded and overpopulated parts of the country to develop plow agriculture and effectively use the vast uncultivated land available in the region. Based on this call, settlement of Wollo migrants in the region began to be implemented since the early 1960s

which became responsible for the deforestation of vast forestlands in Dawur and Mäntawuha areas across the Dura valley.

Modernization and development in Matakäl also entailed state intervention to control human and animal diseases. As part of this modernization project, vaccination for different kinds of human and animal disease began to be implemented in the 1960s. This project was supported by different international development agencies. The results were mixed. While significant results were registered in the control or eradication of certain kinds of diseases like smallpox, rinderpest, and anthrax, trypanosomiasis and malaria remained strong environmental challenges to the population of Mätäkäl.

The other important effect of the post liberation development in Mätäkäl was widespread distribution of firearms in the region. The defeat of Italian forces in the country in 1941 left behind huge number of firearms in the region which peasants looted from the camps of Italian soldiers after their withdrawal. This wide distribution of firearms among the peasants of Mätäkäl and neighboring *awrajas* in Gojjam and Gonder became catastrophe to wildlife destruction. The state had attempted to control unrestricted hunting by formulating laws and rules and regulations nationally. However, in the peripheral territories like Mätäkäl the effectiveness of laws remained impractical. Hence, hunting continued to be a major cause for the destruction of wildlife in Mätäkäl along with the destruction of their habitat through deforestation.

In the post 1974 period, the military regime espoused and adhered to socialist political economy principles and doctrines of national development. In 1975, the Därg government established the Forest and Wildlife Conservation Authority which was given the

responsibility of controlling and protecting the forest resources of the country. However, the wildlife resource was already dwindled and geographically restricted to certain areas, particularly along the Awjamis lowlands in northwestern Mätäkäl during the 1970s. The government employed resettlement program as a development strategy in the 1980s to resettle people from ecologically degraded areas in potentially fertile and productive areas which were available along northwestern and western parts of the country.

Following the 1984 famine, the Därg government settled more than 80,000 people in Bäläs valley and cleared more than 34,000 hectares of forestland to build villages for resettlers and develop mechanized agriculture to support producers' cooperatives organized by settlers. This program induced not only largescale deforestation which was home of different kinds of wild animals but also displaced about 20,000 Gumuz communities who had been living in this settlement site before the implementation of the program. Besides the resettlement program, the Därg also started a state farm project in the Bäläs valley which cleared extensive areas as a trial and error to find suitable site for agricultural development. This farm started its operation in Dura valley but moved to Bäläs valley after three years' trial when the land in Dura valley was found to be unproductive. Furthermore, the war of the late 1980s in Mätäkäl between the Därg and EPRP forces was also another environmental catastrophe that destroyed large tracts of forestland from southern parts of Mätäkäl mainly from Wombära and Zigäm districts.

This largescale clearing of forests from Bäläs valley to implement resettlement and state farm projects had also fatal health consequences on the life of settler communities. During the first two years of Pawe resettlement implementation in 1985 and 1986, malaria

epidemic brokeout and finished many settlers. One of the factors for the outbreak of malaria epidemic was environmental disturbance that created ideal condition for the proliferation of mosquitoes. Huge deforestation and settlement expansion in the Bäläs valley changed vector-host relationship that helped mosquitoes' duplication and proliferation of malaria that led to the outbreak of malaria epidemic in Pawe resettlement area.

The Därg government was forced to take emergency measures to overcome the devastation of malaria epidemic. The government established emergency service hospitals in the settlement area. In addition to emergency health service the government setup malaria control offices in the settlement area that engaged in survey study and DDT spraying. Hence, the morbidity and mortality rate Bägän to decline beginning from 1987. However, the problem of malaria remained a recurrent issue and continued to break out as epidemic occasionally.

Generally, the 1985/6 resettlement program was state sponsored social engineering project that assumed to alleviate the problems of environmental degradation and poverty in highland parts of Ethiopia. However, both in its conceptualization and execution the project could not address the root problems of poverty and environmental degradation. The settlers in Pawe became dependents on the government rather to become self-sufficient farmers. They became laborers on mechanized agricultural farm run by the TanaBäläs project and they could not build private assets because they were organized on the principles of producers' association. When Tana Bäläs Project terminated the provision of agricultural machinery in 1991 with the fall of Därg regime, settlers could not survive by themselves

and fell into a deep crisis. Hence, in 1991 thousands of the resettled people left the resettlement sites to trek back to their original residence area.

#### **GLOSSARY ON AGAW AND GUMUZ WORDS**

*Addula*—ornament of hunters' wives made from the nails of lion

*Adma*—was the name of a hunting team of Zeleke Liku, the chief of Belaya

*Alkamaja*—a type of Gumuz traditional trap made from iron.

*Atéb*—heavy instrument which Gumuz used to make long furrows.

*Bagullamba*---a type of trap used by Gumuz femals and boys to hunt small animals.

*Čaga*---Gumuz name for knive

Colba—a horn of buffalo

*Däga*—hihgland temprate Zone

*Debban*—means sky-god by the Agaws of Gojjam

DDT----- a Poisonous Chemical Used for killing insects

*Diza*—a type big growing tree found in Gubba and some parts of Mätäkäl

*Gumbea*—in Gumuz means stick

*Jabarti*—the Ethiopian Muslim merchants of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

*Kaféta*—short spear that was used by the Agaws of Gojjam during warfare

*Keyo*---a type of trap prepared from rope and used by the Gumuz to catch wild animals

*Korma Karabica*—a system of land division among the Oromo during their settlement in Wombära based on the tradition of where bulls' of individuals took rest.

*Kumalé*---a unit of land measurement among Agaws of Gojjam which is equivalent to 1000x1000 yards of rope measure

*Luba baasa*—an institution used by the Wombära Oromo to integrate the local Šinaša into Oromo culture and tradition

Mätäkäl - is the name of one of the seven clans of Gojjam Agaws

*Mindo*—a wooden bed trap prepared by the Gumuz hunters that could carry heavy load to kill powerful carnivore animals.

*Moc-moco*—a type of root tuber of a plant which had been used by the Agaws to preserve butter fresh from putrefaction.

*Muha*--- means spear in Gumuz language

*Oppa*---a type of fruit that the Gumuz women used to prepare sauce.

*Qolla*—hot lowland

*Šimäl*---local name for lowland Bamboo species

*Simpty*—another name for *Šimäl* particularly used by lowland Agaws and Gumuz

*Sully*—meaning cheetah by the Agaws of Gojjam

*Täbba*—major agricultural tool for the Gumuz, which has sharp pointed end made iron and with a wooden handle

*Tahqa*--- Gumuz name for arrows

*Wajja*---bamboo shoot in Gumuz

*Wayka*---a type of fruit wild-growing in the forests that looks like hot paper, which Gumuz women collected to supplement their food

## APPENDICES







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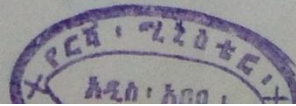
በመተካል አጭሮ ገዛት ውስጥ በየጊዜው ልዩ ልዩ የክብት በሽታ ተነስቶ ጉዳት ስለሚደረግ በርከት ያሉ ደብዳቤዎች ተጽፎአልናል ከነዚህ ውስጥ ጥቂቱን አንጠቅቃለን፡፡  
1ኛ. መስከረም 4 /60 ዓ.ም በቁጥር 12867 /278 /1  
2ኛ. የካቲት 7 /60 " " 4685 /278 /10 የተጻፈልን ደብዳቤዎች መሠረት በጭደራ በደክተር ታምራት ኃይለዓብሰ የሚመራ ተዘግቶ የክብት ሕዝብና ጋራ ክብሩ ደርጅት ጋር አዘጋጅቶ ወደ አጭሮ ገዛት ልክን ሕዝቡ በልዩ ልዩ ምክንያት ከብቱን አቅርቦ ለመስከተና ለመባከም ፈቃደኛ ባለሙያት ለመገኘት ለውሳኔ አብልጠት ገንዘብ ወጭ ሆኖ ሥራው በሚገባ ባለመሠረቱ የደረሰውን ንግድ በኒ 22 /60 ዓ.ም በቁጥር 1556 /60 በተጻፈ ደብዳቤ ገልጸናል፡፡

አንደኛው በዚህ አጭሮ ገዛት ውስጥ በገንዘብ ወረዳ ልዩ ልዩ የክብት በሽታ መነሳትን ያውራጅ ገዥ በፊርማው ማረጋገጥ ተጠቅሞ ሠራተኞች ክብሩ መደገፍ ጋር በአስቸኳይ አገልግሎት ነሰሰ 29 /60 ዓ.ም በቁጥር 12435 /10 የተጻፈልን ከመሆኑም ሌላ የዚህ አጭሮ የሕዝብ አንደገቢ የሆኑት የተከበሩ አጠቃላይ ዘላቂ ክፍያ በተጠቀሰው ወረዳ ገዛት ውስጥ የወተቱ የሣጠና የገንዘብ በሽታ ገብተው በክብታች ላይ ጉዳት ያደረሰ መሆኑን ለኢትዮጵያ ን.ነ.መ. የርክር ሚኒስትር ነሰሰ 29 /60 ዓ.ም በቁጥር 13 /60 በተጻፈ ደብዳቤ አመልክተው ሠራተኞችን መደገፍ አንደኛው ስለተባለ አርባቶኛ በገንዘብ ነት አስፈሪውን ክብሩ መደገፍ የሕዝብና ሣጠና ጋር ሁለት የክብት ክትባት ሠራተኞች በ13 /1 /61 ሰጥተናቸው ተጥሎ ያለው ሥራ በምሳ ጉደል ተከናወኗል፡፡

- 1ኛ. ከተሳካው 10,000 ዶብ የደስታ /የወተቱ/ ክትባት መደገፍ ጋር 8,700 ክብቶች ተክትበው የ1,300 ክብት መደገፍ ጋር ተባብሯል፡፡
- 2ኛ. 4,125 ዶብ የሣጠና ክትባት መደገፍ ጋር ተሰጥቶ በውሳኔ ተባብሯል፡፡
- 3ኛ. ከተሳካው 600 የገንዘብ መደገፍ ጋር 200 ክብቶች ብቻ ተክትበው የተረፈው 400 በደህና ተመልሷል፡፡

ከዚህ በላይ አንደተገለጸው ሁሉ የተከበሩት የሕዝብ አንደገቢ በአገሩ ላይ የልል ውን የክብት ስምባ በሽታ ገብቷል በሚለት ስያሪ ገጠመ ለበላይ መ/ቤት አመልክተው ያስወሰኑ ሲሆን ሕዝቡ ክብቱን አቅርቦ በዚህ መደገፍ አንደኛውን ስምባ ገጠመው ከተወሰነ ላይ ያገልገላሉት ጊዜ ተሰልፎ በክንቱ ተባብሯል፡፡

የገንዘብ ጠቅላይ ሚኒስትር  
ገ/ገዛት

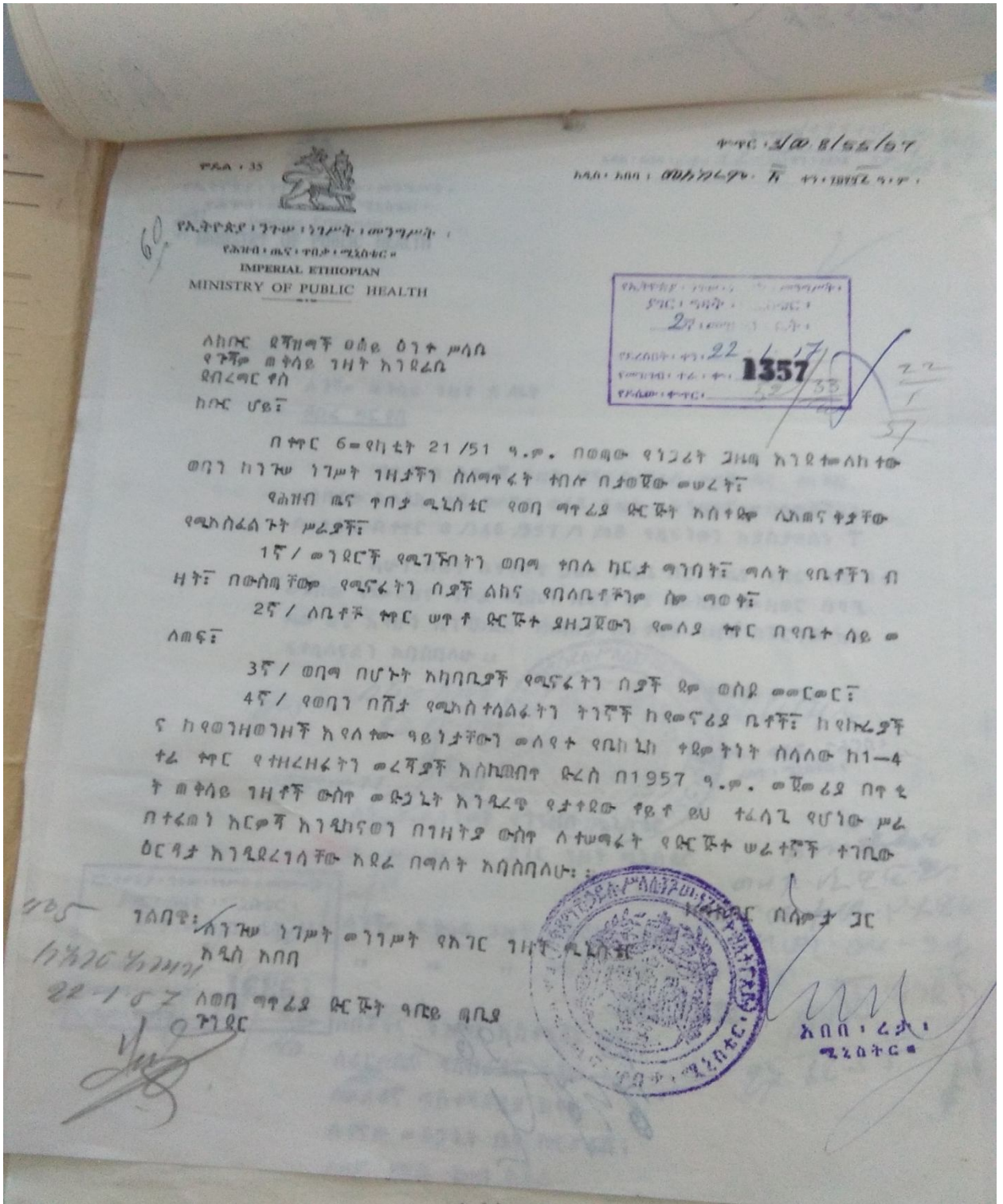


ደረሰ ታሰቦ





Appendix B—II





Appendix B- IV

የኢትዮጵያ ጊዮርጊስ ሚኒስቴር  
 የዕብላጥ ጉዳይ ሚኒስቴር  
 IMPERIAL ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT  
 MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
 MALARIA ERADICATION SERVICE  
 P. O. Box 3056, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

17. 1964  
 ቁጥር 9327/64  
 3-8-64

የሥራ ጉዳይ ሚኒስቴር  
 -2-  
 የሥራ ጉዳይ ሚኒስቴር  
 የሥራ ጉዳይ ሚኒስቴር  
 የሥራ ጉዳይ ሚኒስቴር


56/22  
 7/3  
 6

ለጉዳይ ጠቀላላ ገዛት ጽ/ቤት  
 ደብረግርባስ

በጉዳይ ጠቀላላ ገዛት የጠቀሰው ከወራሽ ገሽ የተከበረ ደጃዝማች ደብተር ብሩ  
 የወባ ጥሬ ደርጅት በከውራሽው ያቋቋመው ገዕብ ጠቢቅ ከ-ጋቢት 6 ቀን 1964  
 ዓ.ም. ጀምሮ ስለተዘጋ በከውራሽው ሕዝብ ላይ ችግር ሊደርስ የሚችል ሁኔታ በ-ገ  
 ለጽ በተቀረጸ 2/89/361/48 ማጋቢት 6 ቀን 1964 ዓ.ም. ለጉዳይ ጠቀላላ  
 ገዛት ጽ/ቤት በላይኛው ደብዳቤ ገልበዮ ለረዳት ችለዋል።

በዚህ በረቱ ለግንኙነት ወባዊ ክፍለ ሀገር አገልግሎት ሁሉ ለጠቀሰው ከው  
 ራሽው አገልግሎት የገዕብ ጠቢቅ ተቋም የተቀረጸው ከርታ ተነስቶ የገደባት በዛት  
 መዘገብና የወባ በሽታ የያዘው ሰው የሕክምና አርዳታ ሲደረግለት አገልግሎት የታ  
 ወታ ነው። አሁንም ቢሆን በዚህ ከውራሽ ውስጥ ስለወባ በሽታ የሚታተሉና በሽታኛ  
 በተገኙ ስለረባረቡ ሕክምና የሚሰጡ በቂ ሠራተኞች ጠቀሰው በሚገኘው ከጤና ክፍ  
 በበተጠባቢ ጋር ጉን ለጉን ሆነው አገልግሎት በበቂ ደርጅትና ሙያዊነት ጋር የተደረገ  
 ስለሆነ ደርጅቱ ተቋም በሚሰጠው አገልግሎት የተነሳው የላም። በአሁኑ ጊዜ በባህሪ  
 አጥረት ምክንያት ሀረ ትገኝ /ዲዲቲ/ በመርዕት ረገታ ከ-ጋቢት ወደ -ጋቢት በ-ዘ  
 የወርና ለታላቁት ሰዎች ሙያዊነት በሚደረግ ሕክምና በወባ በሽታ አገልግሎት የ-ገዘለስ  
 ልበት ዓይነት ላይ ነው። የደርጅቱ አገልግሎት ስለሰጠው ጊዜ ደረሰ ጠቀሰው አገልግ  
 ተገለጸው ሁሉ ከ-ጋቢት ወደ -ጋቢት አየተዘገመረ ሙያዊነት በሚደረግ ሕክምና ላይ  
 በላይኛው ደብዳቤ አርዳታ ሁሉ አገልግሎት የሚሰጡ ሁኔታ ለሚከተሉት ገደብ

ገደብ 1. የገደብ ገዛት ጽ/ቤት  
 ለጉዳይ ጠቀላላ ገዛት ጽ/ቤት  
 ጠቀሰው



የሥራ ጉዳይ ሚኒስቴር  
 የሥራ ጉዳይ ሚኒስቴር  
 የሥራ ጉዳይ ሚኒስቴር  
 የሥራ ጉዳይ ሚኒስቴር

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Appendix C—I Emperors' Decree of May 1969

የዓ ኢገበባ ዘክምነት ይህን  
ተጻጻፊ ጋይሉ ሥላሴ  
ሥላሴ አገዛዥነት ገጽ ገጽ ዘክምነት

አ ዓ ገ

በገዢው ጠቅላይ ገዛት የሚገኘው ሕዝባዊ የሚሰጠውን ከ1941 ዓ ም ሺዎር ያለውን ጠቅላይ ገቢ ለመክፈል አገዳጅ ስለተረገገ ፣ በዚህ ጠቅላይ የደረሰበትን ፍጥ ለማቃለል አስከ 1959 ዓ ም ድረስ ያለውን ጠቅላይ ጠቅላይ አድርገን ለታለ።

ሁለተኛ ባለረው ጊዜ አዲሱ የጥ ጭ ታክስ በሥራ ሳይ በሚወጣበት ጊዜ የሥራው አረጋገጥ ባሰከተለው አለግባባት ከሕገ ጭ ለተሠራው አድረጎት ከገኛ ር ተው የተተጠቡ ቢኖሩ ፣ ከባለጋራቸው አየታረተ አስከ አገዳ ወር ድረስ አገዳገቡ በመገገሥት በክል ያለውን ጠቅላይ አድርገን ለታለ።

የገዢው ሕዝብ በአገር አፍታሪነትና በታግኘነት የታወቀ አገደሙህት መጠን ፣ ይህን በመባባሉ ጥቃቅን ገዳይ የተተደሰ ስው ግጥራዊ አይገባም ።

የገዢው መሪት ሰራና ሀብቱ ሲሆን ሕዝቡ ሠርተና ከብር አገረን በጣባል ለገታ ለሰጣትና ለገብረ ሰቡ በሰጣዊ ኑ ጠገቅ መሆን የለበትም ።

የገዢው ሕዝብ ኑሮ በአርባ ሳይ የተመሠረተ ሲሆን አሁን አገደሚታዊው የልጣ ተገ ሥራ የያዘው በመሰል አገር በዚያው የተደገ አባቶች ባቶት ጠባብ መሪትና የርባ ዘገ ብቻ ሲሆን ፣ በጋራ ገልበትና በዘመናዊ የርባ መሣሪያ አስረፍቶ በሠራ ከረሰም አልፎ ለአገር ጥ ጭ የሚሰጠው በየጠረፍና በየተሳው አገር ያለው መሪት አስከህን ሳይሠራበት ተይቷል ።

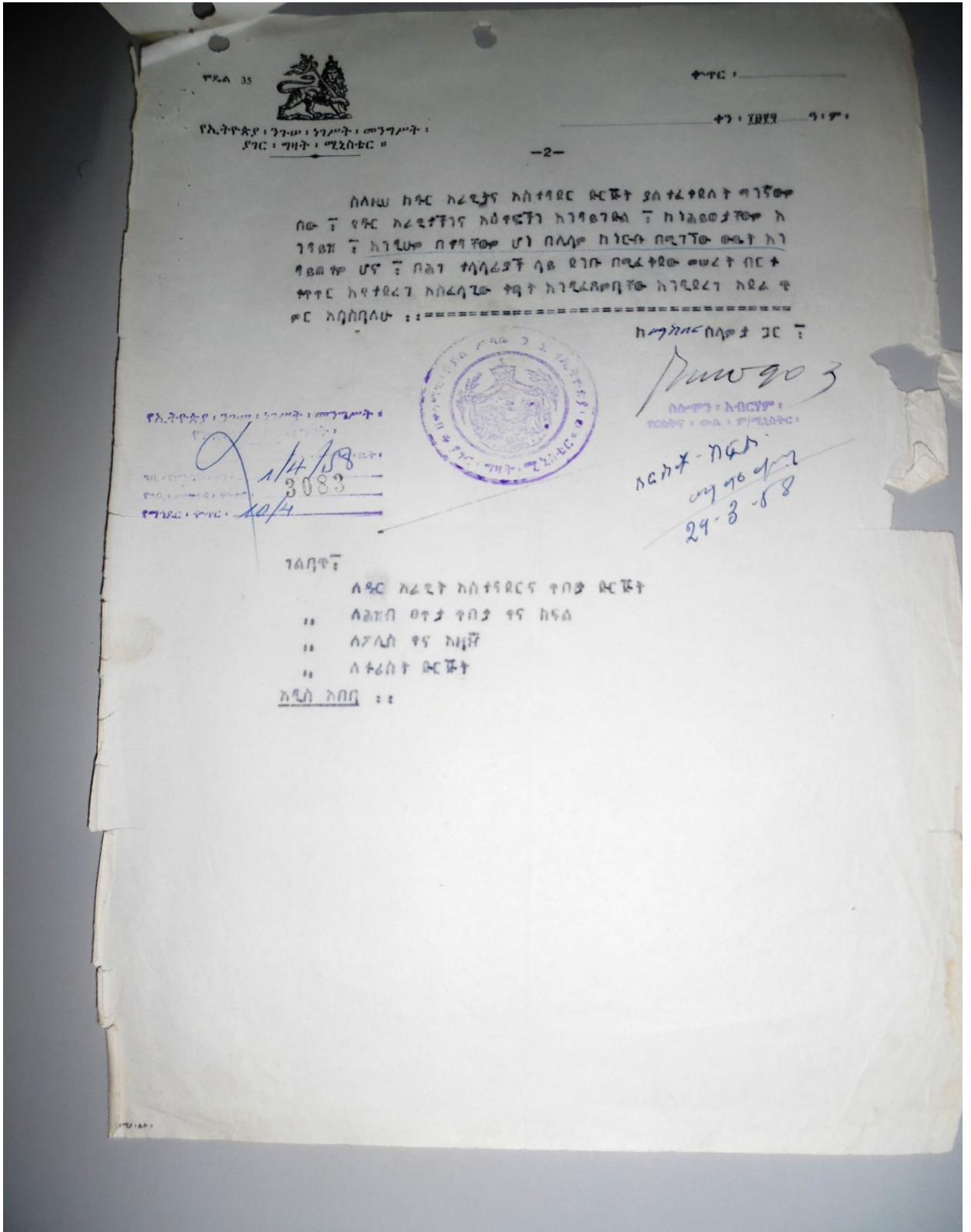
ወደረት ገን አየተጠና በመሰል አገር ተባብሮ የሚኖረው የገዢው ሕዝብ ወደሰራው ሥፍራ አዳላይ የሚያተናበት ጠቅላይ አስረሳገው አርገታ አየተሰጠው አገዳሠራ ይደረጋል ።

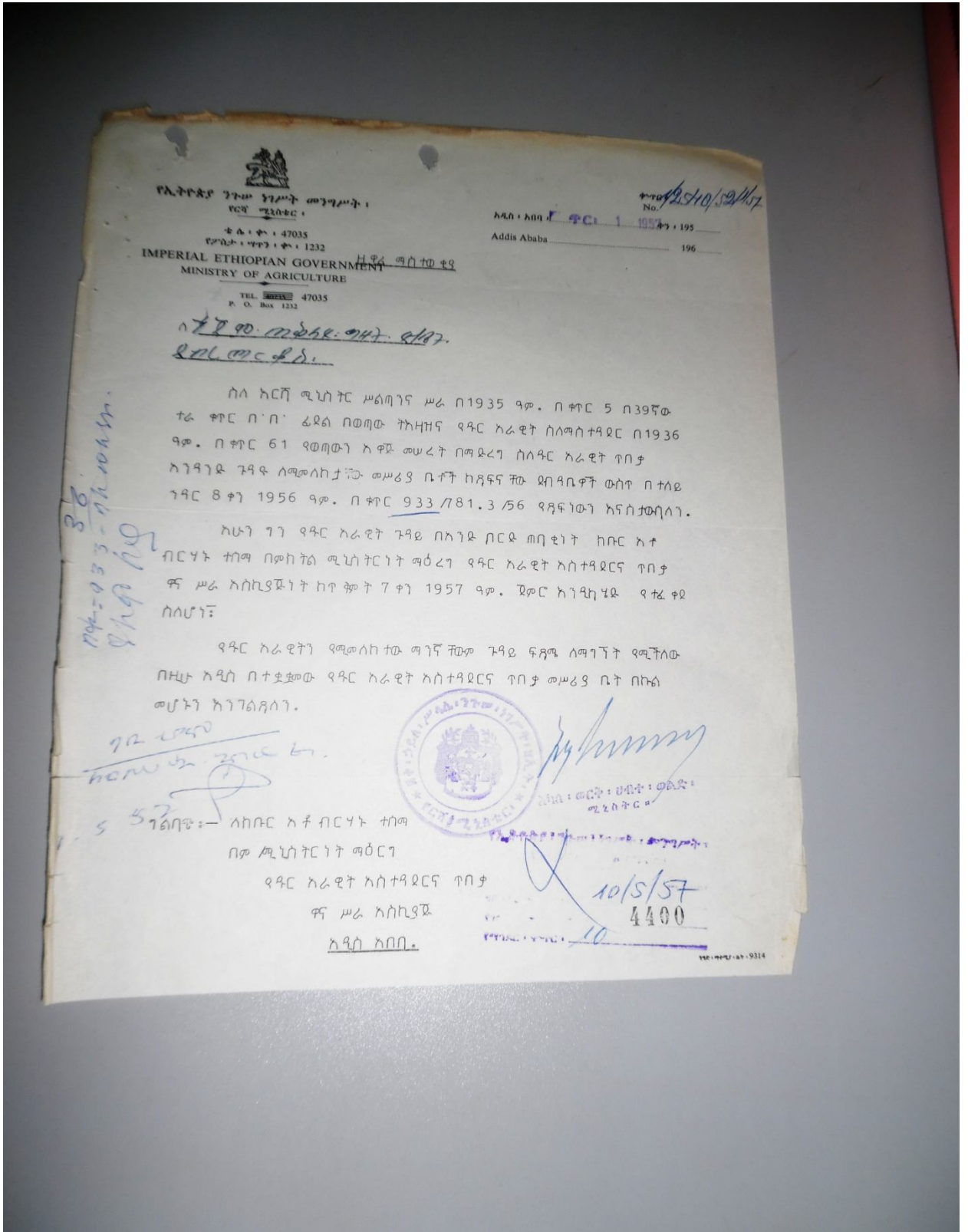














Appendix D—V





Appendix D—VII

8/7 *J* 16614/1  
ሐምሌ: 17. 1961

ለዘበር ለተና ሰጠኒል ታራት ህገዙ  
የበጌዳርና ሰግን ጠቅላይ ገዛት አገደረሰ  
ጉ ገ ደ ር

በዘር .ሆህ፣

በአሰሪና ደረ አውራጃ ደገገል በርና ደረ በሚባሉት  
ወረዳዎች ውስጥ ነጻ ህገዙ በጋራ አውረ በሚደገ አድርገዋል ስለተባለው ጥ  
ሩት በገዥ ጠቅላይ ገዛት ጽ/ቤት በጥር 14649/194 ሰኔ 27/61ጻፈ  
ለዘበርነትና ሲኖና የተደረገልን ደበዳቤ ገልባጭ አያስታወስን፡-

አጭ ተባብሮ የገገል ተ የተረገጠ ሀብት የሆኑት አራዊቶች በሕገ  
ወጥነት በሚደረጉ በጋራ ስለሚገደሉና በጭት የተረገጡ በኢትዮጵያ ገዛት  
አዳኝ ወደሰግን ገዛት አገደረሰቱ ወደረገ ዓቢይ ጥሩት ስለሆነ፣ ወገኛል  
ወርተዋል የተባሉት በጋራ በረዳው ጥሩት ተገዘው ወብተ በሚቀደሉት ፍርድ  
ቤት አየተረቡ ፍርድ ቤቱን አገደረሰሉና ጠቅላይ ገዛት በአሰባሰቡ ወረዳት ተ  
ረገጡ ፍጻሜ አገደረሰሉን በግዘበር አስታውቃለሁ፡፡ =====

*(Handwritten notes and signatures)*  
10.11.61  
ገልባጭ  
ለገዥ ጠቅላይ ገዛት ጽ/ቤት  
ደበረ ገደብ ፤

በግዘበር ሰላም ታገር፡-  
ግራ-ዝግግት፣ ታላቅ፣ ጠብቆ፣  
የአገር፣ አገራት፣ ልዩት፣ ሚኒስትር፣



Appendix D—IX

ቁጥር 774/99/  
ጥቅምት 26/1961 ዓ.ም.

ለጉጃዎ ጠ/ገዛት ፖሊስ ጸ/ቦት

ደ/ግር ቀበ:

774/

በመተከል አውራጃ በደንገርና በገዛ ወረዳ በረሃ ሥፍራዎች ላይ የሚገኙትን ገዢዎች የኑሮ አውራጃዎችን በአጭሩ በኩል በባህሪዎቻቸውና በሚገኙት ለገጠኞች በሕገ ወጥነት በዘመቻ መልክ እየተሸገሩ በሰጠው ገደብ በአድራጎቻቸው ይዘ ለሚሰጡት ለፖሊስ የሚገኙ ጠቅላይ ብዛታቸው ከፖሊስ ጋር ጋራ በላይ ከመሆኑም ይልቅ በውጤቱ መልክ እየሞሉ በሚሰጡት የገመገማ ተገር በወርዘር በየጊዜው አመልክተናል::/=

በመጨረሻም ጠቅላላ ጠረፉን ገብተን በአቀረብነት የገብተን አራጋሪ ላይ ይኸንታ ተገራግሎት ገለጬ የባህሪዎችና ሰዓጊ ጠ/ገዛት ፖሊስ አዘዥ በባህሪዎቻቸው ቁጥጥር አንዲያደርገው አመልክቼ የተፈጸመ ነገር ባለመኖሩ የኑሮ አራዊተኛ ያለ ሕገ ከመጨረሻው አላገኝም::

የየጠረፉ ፖሊስ ጠቅላይ አዘዥ ይህንን የመሰለ ሕገ ወጥ ተገባር የጠቅላይ ጠቅላይ ሰዓጊ በሥልጣን ተከታትለውና በአድራጎቻቸውም ለሰጠው ለገጠኞች ሰጠው ተገዛዥ መሠረት 15/ ወንድሞቻቸው ተገኝ አድራሻው በዚያው ጠ/ገዛት በደንገል በር ወረዳ ይሞላ ኪዳነ ሥሀረት 25/ ከበደ ጌንጫ አድራሻው በደንገል በር ወረዳ ተባ ማርያም 35/ አድራግ ለገጠኞች አድራሻው በደንገል በር ወረዳ ፈረድ ሚካኤል 45/ አዲስ ጌይሌ 55/ ወርቀ ጌይሌ 65/ አገተ ነሀ ጌይሌ 75/ ጥላሁን ባገላ አድራሻው ጌራ ወረዳ ገነቤ ማርያም 85/ ዘለቀ ሰላምሰው አድራሻው ጌራ ወረዳ ዝና ማርያም 95/ ለባቱ ላቀው አድራሻው ሙራ ወረዳ ቀዝ ኢየሱስ 105/ ለቩ ተከላ 115/ ተሻለ አራጋው 125/ አገል ገብረ አድራሻው በደንገል በር ወረዳ በኩሃ ማርያም ተከላ ውስጥ የሆኑ ተገጃዎች ጠቅላይ ገዛት በደንገር ወረዳ በአጭሩ በጸሃ ውስጥ ብውሰው በሚከተሉት አውጥቶ ማሳሪያ በመያዝ ከየካቲት እስከ ግንቦት/ወር/ 30 ቀን 15 ዝሀ ናቸው 25/ ወንድሞችን 35/ ፈቃዎችን ይህን የመሰለውን የሥጋጅ የጭርስጅ የቀጻና የጥፍር ገጠኞች የሆኑትን አራዊተኛ ሰጠው ለመሃዳት በሚገባ የተሰጠው ሰጠው መሆኑን የወረዳው ፖሊስ አዘዥ በቁጥር 02/27/23/61 ጥቅምት 13/61 ዓ.ም. በተጻፈ ያረጋገጠውን ሰለሀን በደንገር መሠረት ተጠቅሞ ለሚሰጠው ለገጠኞች ፖሊስ ታይነውና ተይዘው ለገጠኞች ለገ ይደረገ ዘንድ በሚከበር አመልክታለሁ::

ከሚከበር ሰላም ታ ጋር  
ወ/አለቃ  
ጸጋቆ ለሸተ  
የመተከል አውራጃ ፖሊስ አዘዥ



በሌ ተከለል ገልባጭ ፊርማ አለበት::

የግ/አለቃ ጌተ ደረሃ

















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## LIST OF INFORMANTS

Name of the Informant	Age	Place and Date of Interview	Remarks or short notes on Informants
<p style="text-align: center;">Abay Täsära (<i>Ato</i>)</p>	76	<p style="text-align: center;">Almu or village 5, Pawe. Interviewed on Hidar 22, 2008 E.C. /December 1, 2015/ and on Hamle 2, 2009 E. C. / July 9, 2017/</p>	<p><i>Ato</i> Abay is one of the 1985 resettlers in Pawe. He came from Mänz, North Shoa and arrived pawe on April 15, 1985. When Abay and his friends arrived Pawe, the area was covered by dense forest which became difficult for settlers to move through. It was later that roads opened up by the labor of settlers and with the help of dozers and tracts. <i>Ato</i> served as a <i>käbälé</i> chairman in the settlement area for a long period and also served as head of local court. Currently, he is engaged in farming.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Abdul Däné (<i>Ato</i>)</p>	70	<p style="text-align: center;">Mankush town, <i>qätäna</i> 2, interviewed on Tahsas 6, 2008 E. C./ December 15, 2015.</p>	<p><i>Ato</i> Abdul is one Gumuz elders living in Gubba who has a good knowledge on history of Gumuz of Gubba and their cultures and traditions.</p>

<p>Abeyou Engida <i>(Ato)</i></p>	<p>51</p>	<p>Čagni town, 01 , Interviewed on Tahsas 15, 2008 E. C. /December 24, 2015/ and Hamle 10, 2009 E. C. /July 17,2017/</p>	<p>He is the son of the famous Mätäkäl Agaw Chief, Engida Tässäma, and shares much of his father’s knowledge. He born and grew in Mandura district. He was grade 12 graduate and served as a guide when survey study carried out in Bäläs valley for settlement program. <i>Ato</i> Abeyou has a good knowledge on geography of Bäläs valley and its environmental change. Currently, he is working in road and transport office.</p>
<p>Adam Endaläw Gäbré <i>(Ato)</i></p>	<p>82</p>	<p>Čagni town, 01 <i>käbälé</i>, Interviewed on Hidar 14, 2008 E. C. / November 23, 2015/ and Hamle 10, 2009 E. C. /July 17,2017/</p>	<p><i>Ato</i> Adam is one of knowleable elders in Čagni town. Before the foundation of Čagnitown, he was serving as deacon in Sigadi Mikael church. When Mätäkäl Awraja established and with the foundation of Čagni town, he moved to Čagni and employed in a government office. In 1949, he began</p>

			<p>his job as registrar of Čagni Municipality. In 1950 he transferred to finance office. In 1962, he was appointed as head of Dangur treasury office. From 1965 to 1981 he moved to Dibati and served as the head of Dibati district finance department. In 1981, he appointed as the head of Mätäkäl Administrative Region finance office and worked at this position until his retirement.</p>
<p>Agräw Worku Yigzaw  (Ato)</p>	54	<p>Mambuk town, 01 <i>käbälé</i>, Dangur district. I interviewed him on Hidar 24, 2008 E. C. / Dember 3, 2015/ and on Hamle 4, 2009 E. C. / July 11, 2017</p>	<p>Ato Agrew was born in Bälaya Sanja Bärktoč <i>käbälé</i>. From 1976 to 1982, he served as <i>käbälé</i> Chairman. In 1982, he was elected as representative of Dangur district peasant association and began to reside in Mambuk town. During the implementation of Pawe resettlement program, he served as member of public mobilization and coordination committee.</p>

			After the fall of the Därg, he is leading his life as a peasant.
Akaša Kojjo (Ato)	88	Pawe, Village 34, Interviewed on Hamle 2, 2009 E. C.	He is one of the settlers who came from Hadiya region in 1985. He is very active and informative on the life history of settlers and the rate of environmental change in the Bäläs valley.
Alboro Dibaba (Ato)	93	Bullän, 02 <i>käbälé</i> , interviewed on Tahsas 1/2008 E.C/December10, 2015	Alboro was a famous Shinash elder who administered Bullän for about 17 years During the Därg period. He was representative of Nations and Nationalities conference during the Transional Period of ERPDF's rule. He also served as member and head of differen committees. He had very deep knowledge on the history of Mätäkäl. He passed away after my interview with him.
Alhér		Mankush town, <i>qätäna</i> 4,	Alhér is the grand-son of Banjaw Abu Shok, the famous chief of Gubba. During the Därg period, he

<p>Mohammad Nur Banjaw (<i>Ato</i>)</p>	<p>63</p>	<p>interviewed on Tahsas 6, 2008 E. C./ December 15, 2015.</p>	<p>was engaged in trading and farming activities. After the fall of the Därg, he was appointed as the head of agricultural office of Gubba district. By the time of interview, he was serving as the guard of telecommunication office, Mankush branch.</p>
<p>Alemaw Käbädä Bizunäh (<i>Ato</i>)</p>	<p>70</p>	<p>Däbrä Markos, 03 <i>käbälé</i>. I interviewed him on Tahsas 26, 2008 E.C.</p>	<p><i>Ato</i> Alemaw was born and grew in Baja district, Agaw Meder. In 1981, he was appointed as vice secretary of Mota <i>awraja</i>. After eight years' service in Mota, in 1989 transferred to Mätäkäl <i>awraja</i> to the position of chief secretary. After four years' service in Mätäkäl, in 1993 he transferred to <i>täklay Gizat</i> office with promotion. He served in Däbrä Markos until his retirement in September 2002</p>
		<p>Däbräzäyt tow, <i>käbälé</i> 02, Wombära district. Interviewed on Tahsas</p>	<p><i>Ato</i> Amsalu served for many years in the Womber district health office. In</p>

Amsalu Täfäri (Ato)	69	11/2008 E.C./December 20, 2015	2004 E.C., he retired and currently, leading pension life. His ethnic identity is trigre.
Ašäber B <span>ä</span> y <span>ä</span> n <span>ä</span> (Ato)	65	Dibati town, <i>k<span>ä</span>b<span>ä</span>l<span>é</span></i> 02. Interviewed on Hidar 29 /2008 E. C/ December 8, 2015. He is Agaw by identity.	Ato Ašäber served at different positions of local administration during the D <span>ä</span> rg period. After the fall of the D <span>ä</span> rg regime, he engaged in private business and by the time of interview, he was serving as the head of local conflict resolution committee. Ato Ašäber has a good knowledge on the history of ethnic interaction in M <span>ä</span> t <span>ä</span> k <span>ä</span> l.
Ass <span>ä</span> fa Ab <span>ä</span> j <span>ä</span> hu (Ato)	72	Čagni Town, 01 <i>k<span>ä</span>b<span>ä</span>l<span>é</span></i> . I interviewed him on Hidar 19, 2008 E. C/ November 28, 2015/ and Hamle 11, 2009 E. C. /July 18,2017/	He born and grew in Čagni area and became government employee since April 9, 1959 and served as a messange writer for about four years in office of M <span>ä</span> t <span>ä</span> k <span>ä</span> l <i>awraja</i> administration. In 1971, he transferred to Gubba district and served there for many years as a chief secretary of the district

<p>Assäfa Damtie Harriri  (Ato)</p>	<p>64</p>	<p>Čagni town, <i>käbälé</i> 02. Interviewed on Tahsas 10/2008E.C./ December 19/2015/ and Hamle 12, 2009 E. C. /July 19,2017/</p>	<p>He born and grew in Wombära. In 1981 E. C., he shifted his residence to Čagni town and engaged in coffee trading. Ato Assäfa has a good knowledge on the tradition and culture of Wombära Oromo and is very informative on environmental change in the region. Later, he transferred to Gwangwa and served as chief secretary of the district. He also served in Dangur and Mandura distrcts as a chief secretary. When the Därg came to power, he transferred to Bičäna <i>awraja</i> and served in the office of district peasant association. Then, transferred to provincial administrative office and served at different positions until his retirement.</p>
			<p><i>Ato Bärihun</i> is the son of <i>Fitawrari</i> Embyalä Gässässä who administered Mätäkäl at different levels of administration. At his</p>

<p>Bärihun Embyalä  (Ato)</p>	<p>58</p>	<p>Čagni town, 02 <i>käbälé</i>. I interviewed him on <i>Hedar</i> 19, 2008 E. C. / November 28, 2015/ and Hamle 15, 2009 E. C. /July 22,2017/</p>	<p>youth age, he was in Wombära while his father was the governor of Wombära district. He experienced the environment of different districts in Mätäkäl. During the Därg period, he served at different positions of Agaw Meder <i>awraja</i> as chairman of teachers' association, youth association, and youth association audit affairs. With the fall of the Därg regime, he transferred to Čagni and served as a teacher and <i>käbälé</i> administrator. Currently, he is pension and is serving as member of peace Committee of Gwangwa district.</p>
<p>Bäwkät Bälay  (Ato)</p>	<p>60</p>	<p>Čagni town, 01 <i>käbälé</i>, interviewed on <i>Hedar</i> 15,2008E.C. /November 24, 2015</p>	<p>He began his government civil service as a teacher in 1979 but after two years of his service as a teacher, he joined Bäläs State farm and served at different positions of the state farm. From 1992-1993, he served as</p>

			governor of Mandura district and later, until his retirement, served in road and transport service office.
Bedika Yaddéta  (Ato)	51	Čagni town, 02 <i>käbälé</i> . Interviewed on <i>Tahsas</i> 14,2018 E.C. /December 23, 2015/and Hamle 15, 2009 E.C./July 22,2017/	<i>Ato</i> Bedika was born and grew in Wombära. He attended his education in Čagni. When the Därg's Šengo was established he was elected the member of <i>Shängo</i> representing the people of Mätäkäl and stayed in the Shengo until the fall of the deg. After the fall of the Därg he returned to Čagni and he is serving in different sectors of government offices.
Chenqarro Şeno Gey  (Ato)	77	Bullän town, 01 <i>käbälé</i> . Interviewed on <i>Hedar</i> 30,2008E. C. /December 9, 2015/	He is one of known Šinaša elders in Bullän town. During the Därg period, he had been participating in local political and social administrations. Currently, he is serving as member of Šinaša elders committee for conflict resolution and peace

Däbällo Hika (Ato)	87	Pawi, Village 17, interviewed on <i>Hamle</i> 1, 2009 E. C. / July 8, 2017.	He is one of the 1985/6 settlers in Pawe who came from Hadiya and Kambata region. He is very informative on challenges faced settlers in Pawe after their settlement.
Dägu Ašäber (Ato)	88	Pawe, Village 23, Interviewed on <i>Hamle</i> 1, 2009 E. C. / July 8, 2017	He is one of Pawe settlers who came from Wollo in 1986 and very informative on the status of physical environment at the time their arrival and its change through the course of the time.
Dämeläw Bäyänä Bämano (Ato)	75	Bullän town, 02 <i>käbälé</i> . I interviewed him on <i>Hedar</i> 30, 2008 E. C /December 9, 2015/and and <i>Hamle</i> 24, 2009 E.C /July 31, 2017/	<i>Ato</i> Dämeläw served as member of local or traditional court system during the imperial and the Därg periods. Currently, he is a member of Šinaša elders' conflict relation and peace committee of Wombära district.
Dhéréssa Dämära Tiga (Ato)	75	Dibati town, 02 <i>käbälé</i> . Interviewed on <i>Hidar</i> 29,2008E.C. /December 8, 2015/ and <i>Hamle</i> 22, 2009 E.C/July 29, 2017/	He is one of Gumuz elders in Dibati. From 1976 to the fall of the Därg, he served as the member of the Ethiopian army. After the collapse of the Därg's power, he returned to his

			residence area and became a farmer. He is also participating in local conflict resolution activities.
Dhéréssa Yaddéta  (Ato)	59	Däbrä Zäyt town, 01 <i>käbälé</i> , Wombära district. I interviewed him on <i>Tahsas</i> 12, 2008 E. C. /December 21, 2015/	He started his life as a peasant but later attended modern education while he was adult and employed in government office. Currently, he is serving as the head of Wombära woreda civil service office.
Ejjäta Awi  (Ato)	71	Bullän town, 02 <i>käbälé</i> . I interviewed him on <i>Hedar</i> 30, 2008 E. C /December 9, 2015/	Served as <i>käbälé</i> chairman during the Därg period. Currently, he is a member of blood drying committee and also serving as member conflict resolution and peace elders' committee in Bullän district.
Fasil Täwachäw  (Ato)	82	Dibati town, 01 <i>käbälé</i> . Interviewed on <i>Hedar</i> 29, 2008 E. C / December 8, 2015/ and Hamle 22, 2009 E.C /July 29, 2017/	He was famous Šinaša peasant in Dibati district who had been imprisoned for about four years by the Därg accused as feudal. After the fall of the Därg, Abba Fasil is serving as member of Dibati district elders' committee for peace and conflict resolution.

<p>Fäntahun Yismaw Berru  (Ato)</p>	<p>74</p>	<p>Gysayta, Dihi Got, Zigäm district. I interviewed him on <i>Hedar</i> 27, 2008 E. C. /December 6, 2015 and Nehase 7, 2009 E. C/ August 13, 2017/</p>	<p>He is a peasant and served as the representative Mätäkäl <i>awraja</i> peasants' association since its foundation in 1976 and beginning from 1982 to 1989 the representative of Gojjam peasants' association. Currently, he is leading the rural life in Dihi Got.</p>
<p>Felaté Jirrata  (Ato)</p>	<p>85</p>	<p>Dibati town, 01 <i>käbälé</i>. Interviewed on <i>Hedar</i> 29, 2008 E. C / December 8, 2015/</p>	<p><i>Abba</i> Felaté was the famous Šinaša elder who came from Bullän in 1961 to mediate the Gumuz rebels according to the local tradition. He was also assigned the imperial government as the commander of local force against the Gumuz rebels since 1961. During the Därg period he served as commander of local militia. Since 1992, he was serving as member of elders committee for peace and conflict resolution in Dibati district.</p>
		<p>Mäntawuha <i>käbälé</i>, Säfar 1, Gwangwa district.</p>	<p>He was born and grew in Berber, eastern part of</p>

<p>Gänäté Luba Kassa  (Ato)</p>	<p>68</p>	<p>Interviewed on <i>Tahsas</i> 14, 2008 E. C /December 23, 2015/</p>	<p>Wombära, and started to live in Mäntawuha since 1962. During the Därg period he served as member of <i>käbälé</i> court. He is one of the wel-to-peasants in the Mäntawuha region.</p>
<p>Haffa Bäké  (Ato)</p>	<p>67</p>	<p>Bullän, <i>käbälé</i> 02, interviewed on <i>Tahsas</i> 1/2008E.C./December 10, 2015 and <i>Hamle</i> 24, 2009 E.C /July 31, 2017/</p>	<p>He is one of Šinaša elders, from 1974 E.C to 1981 E. C and again ffrom 1985 to 1988 E.C served as Chairman of Bisaky and Mora <i>käbälé</i>. By the time of interview, Abba Haffa was serving as the member of local conflict resolution committee. He has active memory on local history.</p>
<p>Hassän Lämna  (<i>Asir aläqa</i>)</p>	<p>95</p>	<p>Mäntawuha <i>käbälé</i>, Sefer 2, Gwangwa district. Interviewed on <i>Tahsas</i> 14, 2008 E. C /December 23, 2015/</p>	<p><i>Asir aläqa</i> Hassen was born and grew in Wollo, Mäqdäla. When he became matured, Hassen was employed as member of the imperor’s mobile police force and was assigned in Gojjam province, Däbrä Markos . When Gumuz rebelled in 1960, he was on of 50 police members sent to Mätäkäl from Däbrä</p>

			<p>Markos. Hassän was one of police members who assigned to restore peace from Mäntawuha side and stationed there. In 1983, Hassän was sent to Omedla for compulsory service. In 1984, he retired as pension and started to in Mäntawuha with Wollo settlers there.</p>
<p>Jalläta Giddada  (Ato)</p>	<p>55</p>	<p>Däbrä Zäyt town, 01 <i>käbälé</i>. I interviewed him on <i>Tahsas</i> 12, 2008 E. C / December 21, 2015/</p>	<p>When All Ethiopian Peasant Association established by the Därg government, Jalläta became the chairperson of Mätäkäl Peasant Association. Later, he transferred to Bahir Dar and appointed as vice chairperson of provincial peasant association. In 1982, Jalläta went to Addis Ababa and appointed as the head of All the Ethiopian Peasants Associan. After the fall of the Därg government, he was assigned in Dangur district administrative office as head of financial administration and later</p>

			transferred to his birth place, Wombära on similar position. Currently, he is working in Wombära district administration and security office as human resource development expert.
Käbädä Bayeläyän  (Ato)	79	Addis Abbaba, Arada sub-city, district 5, <i>käbälé</i> 03 around Yohannes Church. Interviewed on <i>Mägabit</i> 18, 2009 E. C. / March 27, 2017/	<i>Ato</i> Käbädä was born in Wombära in 1938, from the families of military class settled by <i>Nigus</i> Täklä Haymanot. He attended his primary and secondary education at Däbrä Markos and Buré. In 1958, he joined addis Ababa University college and graduated in Diploma in 1961 and employed in the Ministry of Interior. In 1968, he was sent to Bahir as director of Bahir Dar Town Development planning. He stayed in Bahir Dar from 1968—1973 for about five years working with the German town planners. Bézáwit Palace, poly Technic College, Peda College,

			<p>Bahir Dar Municipality and major roads of the town were constructed while he was in Bahir Dar. In 1973, Ato Kābādā was transferred to Setit Humāra appointed as border commissioner. After a year he transferred to Neqemt, Wällāga. When Dārg Came to power, he transferred to Addis Ababa and appointed as manager of urban development department and later transferred to Ministry of Urban and house Development. In 1991, he retired by pension and currently resides in Gullälé subcity around Yohannes Church.</p>
<p>Kälāmu Bāzabeh  (Ato)</p>	<p>82</p>	<p>Čagni town, 01 <i>kābälé</i>. I interviewed him on <i>Hedar</i> 18, 2008 E.C. /November 27, 2015/ and <i>Hamlé</i> 16, 2009 E. C. /July 23,2017/</p>	<p><i>Ato</i> Kälāmu was born in Buré Damot, Ašefa Maryam <i>kābälé</i> and went to Mätākāl in 1948 with his grand father when he was assigned as awraja secretary. When completed is education, <i>Ato</i> Kälāmu</p>

			went to Čagni and employed as a teacher. He served as a teacher until he retired pension in 2006.
Kenaw Gobäna  (Ato)	68	Čagni Town, 01 <i>käbälé</i> , Interviewed on <i>Hedar</i> 15, 2008 E. C./ November 24, 2015/ and <i>Hamlé</i> 17, 2009 E. C. /July 24,2017/	<i>Ato</i> Kenaw was born and grew in Wombära, Däbrä Zäyt and he is residing Čagni town since 1954. In 1968 was sent to Wombära appointed as the head of Däbrä Zäyt Municipality and stayed there until 1972. In 1973, he was elected to the parliament of representing Wombära district and stayed in Addis Ababa until the overthrow of the Emperor. During the Därg period, he returned to Mätäkäl and served as governor of Dangur district from 1975 to 1980. Then transferred to Awraja office in Čagni where he stayed until his retirement in 1992.
Mäkonnän Woldä Giyorgis  (Balambaras)	90	Gysayta <i>käbälé</i> , Zigäm District. I interviewed	He born and grew in Gysayta. During the Imperial perion, he served as <i>nächläbäš</i> or member of local security force and later promoted to vice

		him on <i>Hedar</i> 16, 2008 E.C./ November 25, 2015	governor of Gwangwa district. With the fall of the Imperial regime, Därg accused him as a local feudal lord and imprisoned him for three years at Addis Ababa. After his release in 1978, he went to his birth place, gysayta, and still leading peasant life.
Mäkuryaw Adegäh  (Ato)	95	Gohanaje <i>käbälé</i> , Adegheiti Village (Got), Zigäm district. I interviewed him on <i>Hidar</i> 17, 2008 E.C. / November 26, 2015/ and <i>Nähasé</i> 5, 2009 E. C/ Agust 11, 2017/	He is a peasant elder and also served at different local administrative positions as a <i>käbälé</i> chairman and local court or shengo for many years. He is very knowledgeable and still active. His memory of the Ethiopian administration since Ras Täfäri Era and his explanations on environmental change in the region of Zigäm is very impress.
Näşärä Hailäyäsus	78	Mäntawuha <i>käbälé</i> , Gwangwa district, interviewed on <i>Tahsas</i> 14,	<i>Ato</i> Näşärä Came to Mätäkäl in 1974 from Tigray and settled in Mäntawuha. He was engaged in hotel service

(Ato)		2008 E.C/ December 23, 2015/	and crop trade but this economic sector was not profitable for him. Hence abandoned it and currently, cultivating fruits on his small plot found at the outskirts of Mäntawuha town.
Rägassa Assägé Yäggo (Ato)	70	Mambuk town, 01 <i>käbälé</i> , Dangur district. I interviewed him on <i>Hedar</i> 24, 2008 E. C. / Dember 3, 2015/ and on <i>Hamle</i> 5, 2009 E. C. / July 12, 2017/	He was born in Bullän and came to Dangur while he was child. During the Därg period he served as <i>käbälé</i> chairman for five years. His main occupation is trade.
Räheb Algämär Banjaw (Shék)	60	Mankus town, <i>qätäna</i> 4, Gubba district. I interviewed him on <i>Tahsas</i> 6, 2008 E. C / December 15, 2015/	Shék Räheb is the grand son of the famous Gubba chief Banjaw Abu Shok. Currently, <i>Shék</i> Räheb is serving as judge of Mankush Sharia court.
Saidu Mohammäd Ali (Ato)	65	Čagni town, 01 <i>käbälé</i> , interviewed on <i>Tahsas</i> 10, 2008 E. C. / December 19, 2015/	He born and grew in Čagni and became a merchant but involved in different local administrative activities social court service, conflict resolution activities and still serving as member of elders'

			committee for peace and reconciliation.
Šifāraw Seyoum Akalé  ( <i>Ato</i> )	80	Čagni town, 01 <i>käbälé</i> , interviewed on <i>Hedar</i> 14, 2008 E. C./ November 23, 2015/	Šifāraw was born in Yilmana Dénša district and came to Čagni in 1950 with his father who was assigned as one of officials for newly established awraja. He began his job career as a teacher in Mätäkäl and later became inspector of Mätäkäl <i>awraja</i> schools and coordinator of Mätäkäl <i>Awraja</i> inspection department until he retired in 2001.
Seménäh Käbädä Aychäw  ( <i>Hamsa Aläqa</i> )	73	Däbrä Markos, <i>käbälé</i> 02. I interviewed him on <i>Tahsas</i> 26, 2008 E. C./ January 4, 2016/	He began his career as a police in 1961 and in 1965 sent to Bale province with his 150 friends from Gojjam province. In 1969 he returned from Bale and after his short stay in Bichäna Awraja, he was sent to Mätäkäl <i>awraja</i> and

			<p>assigned in Gubba district as commander of border police force. It was during time that <i>Hamsa aläqa Seménäh</i> experienced Sudanese nationals' exploitation of natural resources from Mätäkäl. After his return from Mätäkäl around 1976, he served at different positions in Däbrä Markos and Bahir Dar. Currently, he is pension.</p>
Täsäma Näya (Ato)	67	<p>Gelgäl Bäläs, 02 <i>käbälé</i>. Interviewed him on <i>Säné</i> 24, 2009 E. C. /July 1, 2017/</p>	<p><i>Ato</i> Täsäma Näya served as clan leader of Gumuz community ling Gelgäl Bäläs area in Mandra district. He is very informative on environmental change in Mandura region and on Gumuz hunting traditions.</p>
			<p><i>Ato</i> Şähay was born and educated in Dangela. He served in different <i>awrajas</i> of Gojjam province on varous positions. From January 1989 to October 1991, he served in Mätäkäl <i>awraja</i>, politically very</p>

<p>Şähay Säwasäw  (Ato)</p>	<p>60</p>	<p>Däbrä Markos town, 03 <i>käbälé</i>. I interviewed him on <i>Tahsas</i> 24, 2008 E. C. / January 2, 2016/</p>	<p>turbulent period to the region. On January 23, 1989, he was sent to Wombära, after the destruction of Däbrä Zäyt town on 8 January, 1989 by Oromo Liberation Front force. When EPRP forces controlled the whole Wombära, Ato Şähay and other government officials retreated to Čagni. Since July 26, the Därg government launched offince on EPRP forces to reoccupy Wombära. Ato Şähay himself participant in the battles that tookplace in Mora and Bullän but the government forces fell into disarray and EPRP forces continued their move to Agaw Meder. When EPRDF forces occupied Čagni town February 24, 1991, Ato Şähay was captured and imprisoned. But he was released after some time by the strong pressure from the people. In 1992, he transferred to</p>
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			East Gojjam and assigned in Gozamn district where he stayed until his retirement in September 2015.
Waki Jani ( <i>Ato</i> )	62	Ejanta <i>käbälé</i> , Madura district. I interviewed him on Sene 26, 2009 E. C / July 3, 2017/	<i>Ato</i> Waki is very active Gumuz elder who has interesting knowledge and skill of narrating Gumuz hunting tradition and status of physical environment of Bäläs valley during earlier times
Yaläw Berhan Tägäñä ( <i>Ato</i> )	61	Almu or village 5, Pawe. Interviewed on <i>Hedar</i> 22, 2008 E.C. /December 1, 2015/ and on <i>Hamle</i> 2, 2009 E. C. / July 9, 2017/	<i>Ato</i> Yaläw came to Pawe resettlement in 1977 from Mota, East Gojjam region. When settlers were organized into <i>käbälés</i> , he was elected and seved as <i>käbälé</i> 24 chairman. When they arrived Pawe, graders and dozer were busy clearing the dense bamboo forest to open up roads between village sites. <i>Ato</i> Yaläw was migrated to Mandura district in 1981 with 150 family members and settled in Dekul where Gumuz Communities alone were residing. However,

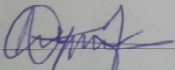
			they returned back after a year because of conflict with the local Gumuz communities. Hence, he has a good knowledge on the status of environment of Pawe before the beginning of Pawe settlement. They returned to Pawe when resettlement began in 1985. Currently, Ato Yalew is engaged hotel service and farming.
Yäsho Alega Jarra (Ato)	45	Däbrä Zäyt town, 01 <i>käbälé</i> , Wombära district. Interviewed on <i>Tahsas</i> 11, 2008 E. C. /December 20, 2015/	Yäsho is almost Young Šinaša but has better knowledge on local history. His father was famous hunter in the region. Yäsho is working as health service servant in Däbrä Zäyt town.
Yäsuf Šumé (Ato)	65	Mäntawuha <i>käbälé</i> , Gwangwa district, interviewed on <i>Tahsas</i> 14, 2008 E.C/ December 23, 2015/	He came to Gojjam in 1957 from Wollo and stayed in Gohanaj <i>käbälé</i> , Zigäm district. In 1975, Ato Yesuf moved to Mäntawuha and engaged in crop cultivation.
	70	Gelgäl Bäläs town , 03 <i>käbälé</i> , interviewed on <i>Säné</i> 23, 2009 E. C. /	He is the son of famous Gumuz elder of Mandura district. His father served

<p>Yebas Guke <i>(Ato)</i></p>		<p>June 30, 2017/</p>	<p>as local leader during the imperial period. <i>Ato</i> Yibas has a good knowledge on local history and environmental change in Bäläs Valley</p>
<p>Zahra Mohammäd Nur Banjaw  <i>W/ro</i></p>	<p>51</p>	<p>Mankush town, <i>qätäna</i> 4, interviewed on <i>Tahsas</i> 6, 2008 E. C./ December 15, 2015.</p>	<p>Zahra is the grand-daughter of Banjaw Abu Shok. During the first decade of EPRDF's rule, she served in the office of women's affair of Gubba district. By the time of interview, she was running her own private business.</p>

## DECLARATION

I, undersigned, declared that this dissertation is my work and that all the sources for the dissertation have been duly acknowledged

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Signature: 

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Date of Submission: May, 2019